

A Walk On The Beach

By Lawrence Tân JJR 69

In memoriam of Monique Lee.

It had been a while since I felt that death had never seemed to be so possible and so real, especially when it happened to someone so close to you and at such a young age. The feeling of loss is so overwhelming. The sorrow still lingers. I composed this piece while our whole extended family vacationed together in a rented beach house in Nag Heads, North Carolina a few years ago. As you can tell, it was not written for Monique specifically. She was there with us at the time when I jotted down these lines. Every time I read these lines, I can't help but thinking about her.

I woke up before six this morning and changed quickly into a more appropriate attire for an early morning walk, putting on my pair of long pants and a turtleneck just in case. I was not sure how it would be like out there on the beach. My brother-in-law was already out at the door with Lambmy, his dog. Except very few cars that occasionally passed by, the street was basically still asleep. We crossed the street, walked about a block and turned onto a public access path towards the beach.

The path actually took us to a good size wooden structure that housed the public facilities such as restrooms and a set of outdoor shower stalls. Beyond the public house, the path continued and crossed over a small sand dune proliferated with wild grass and onto a set of wooden stairs down to the beach. As we approached the public house where the ocean was still



hidden from view, the august orchestral symphony of the rushing and crashing waves can already be heard.

Hanging above and behind us, the moon still can be seen, fading and retreating by the minutes, making way for the promising sun for another bright and warm day. The sun was still nowhere to be seen, but just like a stroke of a brush, its aurora had already painted a small strip of the horizon with a comfortable bluish color. The beach, normally stretched for miles, was quietly covered by a thick fog. The visibility was just about five feet. As we proceeded onto the beach towards the ocean and its continuous thunders of the crashing waves, I was suddenly taken over by a sense of awe, submission and fear. It reminded me of a tragic journey along the coast of Vietnam which seemed like a lifetime ago...

Except for the crashing waves, there seemed to be hardly any soul around yet. We walked about a quarter of a mile heading towards North. It was such a strange and eerie scene as the silhouettes of a few early risers started to appear and disappear in front and behind us. As the fog started to dissipate, the outlines of the beach houses on the hill started to appear to the West. Except a few plastic bottles, the beach was relatively clean. The high tide deposited sporadic traces of the fine seaweeds about at least twenty feet away. I also noticed a lot of traces of busy creatures all over the sand. My brother-in-law told me that the crabs came out and were very active at night. By the traces, I could imagine that there was a whole nocturnal gathering of busy crabs there every night.

On the way back, as the fog started to clear up some more, we saw the tiny sandpipers rushed into the receding waves, trying to feed on whatever carried in from the ocean. Then like a constant and repeating game that they had perfected, they amused themselves by quickly evading the next incoming rush of the water. Along the way, I had saved three lives. A crab that got turned over on its back, it looked like it had been in a violent fight and lost one of his two large legs. Two tiny silver fishes washed ashore, one looked like still jumping around trying to get my attention and fight its way desperately back to the waters, the other looked more subdued. Nevertheless, I threw all three of them back to the waters. Some credit towards my children...I hope.

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