

## serenity.

The sun shone like it would never set. Each ray an individual representation of strength, courage and beauty, a billion stories untold. As she hit my skin, I felt her powers bronzing me, forcing me to absorb her enchanting energy that flowed so elegantly into the atmosphere. As her victim, I surrendered willingly, accepting each ray like a gift I'd been longing my whole life for. Only she could make me golden, and today I glistened like a prized trophy, beaming with the utmost joy that she was kind enough to hand me with. She smiled at all of us, and the ocean smiled back, shimmering rhythmically into the skyline above us.

The clouds danced gracefully as she blew them sweet honey kisses and fluttered her eyelashes in unison with the waves that flowed below her. I purposely trailed my post-water, wrinkled feet through the warm, flaxen sand and refused to pick them up from the ground. No steps were being taken, just a continuous flow of unexplainable, glissading motions that made an unusual brushing sound at every moment of friction. Every grain of sand that passed through the gaps between my toes created a sensation that I could only describe as therapeutic. I was being caressed by the elements, and their touches had such a powerful effect but at the same time, such a tender approach. Magic.

When I am beside the ocean, every sense I own and feel is multiplied by a thousand and sent straight to the depths of my heart. A simple stroll along the horizon can set my soul on fire, making me feel like the blazing inferno that I've always longed to be.

In a trice, a salty and pungent aroma spreads like wildfire beneath my button nose. The smell is so crisp and potent that it is tenacious enough to follow me for the whole walk that I take along the never-ending sands.



The many different scents of salt, fish and seaweed fuse together to remind me of home. The colours of the rainbow are spread across the canvas that lies before my ocean eyes. The sea is so wondrously blue, yet the palm trees remain so green and pigmented. I am treated at every glance I take, a whole palette of colours attacking my eyes with such breathtaking ferocity.

In moments like this, I often find myself having to stop, pause and breathe. I feel it's important to really take in the beauty of the moment that I'm living in. I must be sure to always remain grateful for my surroundings and remember that nature is so much more powerful than I. After all, if I, The ocean's child, proceed to love, cherish and look after her, maybe, just maybe, she'll continue to look after me.

Which brings me to today, Sundays. I know what you're thinking, and I don't blame you, it's natural.. but no, I'm not talking about church. While Padre and my brothers wake to spend the day at church worshipping the Lord and fulfilling their Christian entitlements, I feel the need to devote mine somewhat differently. It was Madre who began the tradition. 17 years later, and I still follow the Sunday routine habitually.

I wake at 5 and gallop straight to the beach, being sure to avoid every obstacle that is sent in my direction. I always arrive just in time to watch the sunrise and ignite her flames, alluring the whole world into an abrupt awakening. I watch in adoration for hours before finally getting to work. Although admittedly, sometimes her elegance sends me into a field of procrastination, as she distracts me from the primary purpose that I am there for. I place myself at the very beginning of the beach, the first area that allows trespassers, and I begin to work my magic.

I remove the humongous backpack from my tired shoulders and sling it on the floor. Why does such a small girl need such a big bag you ask? Well, Inside I am loaded with ammo (and by ammo I mean 2 jam sandwiches and a few other vital supplies). I'm not even particularly fond of jam... or sandwiches as a matter of fact, but if you hadn't already guessed, I'm a vegetarian, and a fussy one too. Padre has no clue how to cook for me, or sympathy for me and my dietary requirements either. He says I get what I'm given. He just doesn't understand that friends aren't food. After all, wings are for flying, not frying. How would he like it if I started nibbling on his arm? Oh, how I'd kill for one of my mother's famous Croquetas de setas right now! Even though I'm fussy, mum always found a way to my heart through her delicious dishes.

Stuffed in my backpack, alongside my far from gourmet jam sandwiches, lie a vast stash of bags (biodegradable, of course). These are what I use for my weekly beach clean up challenges that I set myself. I start at one end of the beach and attempt to remove all of the litter and mess that is placed before me. I tirelessly follow along the same path, gathering hundreds of plastic bottles, cigarette ends, broken glass and other leftovers of the lazy, cruel and self-absorbed so-called 'human-beings' that have wondered these beaches throughout the week. Even though I do this weekly, it will never get any easier, or less devastating to see the harsh reality and the sheer mess that others are creating for the generations to come.

This immense ocean that stands before us covers over 70% of the world's surface. I understand it though. It's like once they throw it away, they forget about it but once you take into account that these are the actions of approximately the 7.7 billion people that walk this earth, that's a dangerous amount of waste. In fact, every 8 seconds, a whole bag or twos worth of plastic is thrown into the ocean. That adds up to 8 million tonnes a year. Currently, there is more microplastic in the sea than there are stars in the Milky Way galaxy, and if that didn't scare you enough, then you should know that it takes anything from fifty to one hundred years for a plastic product to be broken down enough to not be harmful.

Besides filling and destroying the ocean, people forget that they are tearing away the homes and lives of beautiful sea creatures. I'm sure you've all seen those plastic beer holders lying around. You know, the round plastic circles that are used as packaging? They are the most lethal of killers when it comes to our marine friends. Turtles and Otters are known to swim right through them, and in the process get caught in the rings and slowly choke to death. The plastic can stretch but unfortunately will never break, which is why so many innocent animals lose their lives to these harmful products. So, if you ever see these plastic packets, do the universe a favour and cut the rings open before you dispose of them!

Honestly, I don't expect everybody to be die-hard philanthropists, but a little display of compassion and care from others would make a big difference. After all, how can man not fear nature? He who can rain or shine upon us. How stupid of them to believe that their actions will not be back to bite them on the butt one day. I just hope that 'one day' isn't anytime soon, which is why I do all that I can to save her. Besides, there is only one ocean, she should be treated with love and respect at all times. Mother and I have always been passionate about the ocean and its creatures, it's just a shame that the same can't be said for many others around here.

On the spur of the moment, all aspects of mental and physical functionality are brought to a dramatic halt. Among fields of disrespect lied a creature so wonderfully prepossessing. My attention was drawn like the tide to a wave. Thankfully I didn't step on the being that laid in the exact spot of my next step to be. Ahead lied the most enchanting creature, which made a change to the sea of drinking cans and crisp packets that surrounded him. I've seen many a seahorse in my time, but this one was different. He was a shade of blood orange. He was squamous, and his skin was so iridescent that it gleamed so similarly to the sparkling ocean waves that he had previously been floating in. Gently, I ran my fingers down his body, my fingers meandering their way around his wonderfully curved tail. The pattern of his skin was so rough and inconsistent, I felt like I was playing a Latin percussion guiro. His outer shell looked like it had been decorated with reindeer antlers. I was utterly blown away. This tiny creature was a work of art.

The closer I get to him, the more I begin to sense something peculiar. The seahorse lied so helplessly still, almost like he was in a deep sleep. He looked so peaceful and pure that I didn't want to wake him. Something inside me told me not to leave him. I felt a disruption in my energy, that warned me that all was not well. I began to notice the small rips at the bottom of his tail. In between the tears were minuscule pieces of what looked like broken up fishing line web.

I scooped him carefully into my sandy hands and placed him into the Tupperware pot that my sandwiches had been in. I filled the bowl with enough sea water for him to drift in until we got home.

I paced the streets of Costa Adeje like I never had before. Swiftly, I swerved in and out of the traffic jam of people that filled the streets on this sunny afternoon. I did all that I could to keep a posture upright enough that would allow me to maintain the balance of the pot so that my new friend... Frito wouldn't be disturbed.

As Frito and I arrived home, I took him straight into the kitchen. I filled up the sink with bottled sea water that I'd collected earlier on at the Puerto Colon beach and positioned him carefully into the water. While I allowed him to adjust into his new temporary habitat, I foraged around my kitchen cupboards in search of the first aid box. After finding the kit, I took out a large reel of bandage and got cutting. I managed to cut a piece of material so tiny that I could enclose his little, wounded tail.

First and foremost, I had to find a way to remove the pieces of netting from his precious little tail. With the smallest tweezers I could find, I managed to pluck away slowly and steadily at the parts attached to him. My heart raced frantically as I worked my way nervously around his wounds with the greatest of precaution. All those years of playing my favourite board game operation came

in handy

Frito seemed so much better after I had completed my surgery. His charmingly, diminutive eyes shone brighter than ever. He lit up the room, and after weeks of caring for him, bonding with him, and healing with him, he began to light up my life.

Alas, like everything, all good things must come to an end. I know better than anybody that Frito's home is not in the sink of a small townhouse. Just like how Shamu doesn't belong in a glass tank at SeaWorld. I've poured my love into this tiny soul, and I think it's time I took him back to his real home. He'll never forget me, I know that for sure. More importantly, I most certainly will always remember him.

Feeling as if I was immersing myself into a state of purpose Deja Vu, I grabbed a large Tupperware pot and placed my friend delicately into the water-filled container. He looked at peace. I put him in the front basket of my bike and rode gracefully along the narrow cobbled streets. I rode the long way today so that I could wholeheartedly cherish my final moments with Frito.

As we made it to the beach, I took him to the very best part of Puerto Colon beach. This was the very spot that Mother used to take me. We adored it because unlike the rest of the beach, the seabed was so flat and smooth and had hardly any rocks at the bottom. With Frito snuggled into the palms of my hands, I crept leisurely to where the shore met the sand. I gave Frito one last kiss and smiled foolishly as his scaly skin fondled with my rosy lips. "Be free Frito, be free" I screamed at the top of my lungs as I placed him softly into the strangely calm ocean.

## inconsolable.

I stood gormlessly in the same spot for 5 long minutes. In that time, my feet had been tickled by the shoreline a hundred times. The seagulls had been singing the same song on repeat, like a broken record. Even the palm trees moved consistently in the same swaying motion, but Frito didn't. Frito was still. Completely and utterly still. As I watched him float along the ocean's surface, I felt a numbing pain stroke my face as a tear descended down my cheek.

## Another love lost to the Ocean.

I laid down on the sand, laying sideways so that I was still in the direction of the Ocean. Hours went past, and Frito slowly swished backwards and forwards with the shoreline, until finally landing washed up in the exact place I found him in the first place. I grabbed his stone cold body and laid him down beside me. With my piercingly cold hands, I carved a portrait of my mother in the sand above me. My pinky became the paintbrush as I made sure that every detail represented her undeniable beauty with accuracy.

As I lay impotently beside the waves, I stare like a hawk prowling for his prey and evaluate their every move. I view in mournfulness as the tide washes her picture away, just like how it snatched her away from me. I jumped up and began to tear away at my clothes.

"I'm coming, Madre. I'm on my way!"

I submerged myself completely, lying horizontally with my feet raised and my head cushioned beneath the abundance of waves that greeted me. Today marked the fourth year of your absence, yet I've never seen you so alive. I opened my fingers wide and brushed my troubled palms through your continental shelf and felt your silk embrace pass through the gaps in between my chubby, wrinkled fingers. You're particularly vociferous today with your greeting, too powerful for me to tame - but then again, I wouldn't want to. You are my medicine.

How have you been Hija?

Dreadful. I hate school. I hate home. I hate myself.

Some mornings, my own consciousness is my alarm. My bloodshot eyes unlock at an hour forbidden to most. Tears load my eyes as I ask God what I did to deserve my awakening this morning. Gormlessly, I stare at the ceiling, as if in between the cracks and cheap emulsion lies an ounce of motivation. I'm yet to find it. I drag my corpselike body along the road and hear the bells of hell calling for me. I enter through the gates and see complete juxtapositions of myself. They scream, smile laugh and play. I don't remember how to laugh anymore. As I drag my heavy feet along the chalk ridden ground I feel the eyes of a million follow me. Their laughs harmonise with my footsteps. I gaze into the sky and for a moment, I feel at ease. The bright blue blanket that covers this earth is a mirror image of you. Sometimes, if I stare for long enough, the sky begins to ripple like my heart when I hear your name.

Padre doesn't want me anymore. He can't handle me... or the emotional baggage that I carry. He can't look me in the eyes without crying, he says that it's because he can see you, but I can't help but think that they are merely tears of shame. I wish I could tell Dad how I felt, but my mind and mouth speak entirely different languages. I am a human contradiction. I want to turn my life around, yet I want to die. I want people to think I have no weakness, Yet all I do is cry. I want to be the best everything, but I don't want to try. I want to stop hurting myself, but that's all I seem to do. I don't want people to see my scars, yet I want them to know that I'm scared. When I wake up, I want to be happy, but I don't want to wake up anymore.

I wonder what life would be like if you were still here with me?

I am always here with you, Princesa.

We then laid for hours. We spoke about the day you and dad taught me how to skim stones. I remember practising this skill until sunset. By this time, I classed myself as the stone skimming champion of Los Cristianos. I remember the exact sound produced, as the pebble rippled across the ocean's surface. To this day, the dunking sound still penetrates my ears. I told you about Frito, to which you responded with a comfortingly subtle kiss planted onto my rosy cheek.

inconsolable.

You became a songbird... 'you are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are grey'. You sang me to sleep while caressing my silk, corkscrew-curly, mermaid's hair. It's like I was being sent to sleep by the rhythm of your heartbeat. Suddenly, the palm trees became your back up dancers, swaying in unison with your husky, enigmatic voice. The rocks were your audience, overlooking in complete and utter admiration.

Goodnight Madre.

Goodnight Bebe.

Today was different. Never the less, I dived head first into my ocean. A sea of thoughts unprocessed, to find that nobody had ever taught me how to swim. You ignored me for most of the day today. I have come to the realisation that you are the tide mentally and physically, drifting in and out of my life, eternally indecisive, unable to discern whether you desired the solidity and safety of land or the wild freedom of the ocean. I opened my eyes wide and endured the burning of the salt water with vigorous intention. Take me with the current. I'm not sure whether I hate life on earth... or simply crave life in liquid.

The sea of Saudade is flowing tonight, and I am drowning before the tip of my toes have even met with the shoreline. Though I don't want to be saved, I am saving myself. Because isn't it better to be drowning in the deep blue ocean than sinking in your own min? Submerge me, please. Let me be your victim.

I am now stuck in the middle of the ocean.

Voluntary Apnea. When you're drowning, you don't actually inhale until right before you black out. No matter how much you're freaking out, the instinct to not let any water in is so strong, that you won't open your mouth until your head is exploding. Finally, you allow the water to invade your lungs. It's peaceful, desirable, perfect.

I have finally reached my utopia. Our utopia, together.

inconsolable.

I'm with you now, Madre.

I'm with you now, Frito.