

Thanksgiving

The foul aroma envelopes me the second I stop out of the car, matching my already irritable mood. When I inhale I immediately want to retch, but I doubt the addition of my vomit would make the rancid seaside cocktail of bird and seal poop, seaweed, and salty air smell any better.

“God, it smells awful,” my cousin remarks, wrinkling her face.

“Let’s just go down to the beach,” my mother replies. Pointing down to the rocks on the beach where dozens of seals are flopping around on, she continues, “We can just take some photos, then leave.”

As my mother leads my relatives down to the beach, I place my sleeve to my nose, praying that I’ll be able to block out the stomach-gurgling stink. Then, with a deep breath, I trudge after them, walking as fast as I can with my sandals.

I hate walking in these stupid shoes.

They slap against the sidewalk making a “thwap” sound that makes me want to kick them off and flee the vicinity. The vicinity being the five mile radius that heard the ridiculously resonant sound of styrofoam sandals hitting concrete. And paired with the lovely trait of making my presence known to anyone with ears, they rub against my feet leaving angry, red marks where the straps are. I consider pitching myself and these atrocious shoes off the starwell I’m stomping down and into the ocean, directly into the Creator of The Stench™.

Finally, I reach the sea shore at the bottom of the stairs where my family is already taking photos of the seals basking on the sea rocks. I wish I could join them, soaking in the sun, unbothered by their own scent. But instead I wander to a more secluded area of the beach. Captivated by the hypnotic pattern of the waves washing up onto the shore, I draw closer.

Directly, in its path.

Immediately shrieking from the frigid grasp of the ocean’s slimy fingers, I leap back in horror. Now, this would be a good time to be thankful I was wearing sandals.

Well, no.

Because along with a bone rattling chill, the ocean also delivered heaps of sand into my shoes. And don’t be mistaken. For the sand was nothing like the soft, fine sand you see in those photos of Fiji’s beaches, no, it was the sharp, coarse “sand” that felt more like miniscule knives stabbing into your skin. Combined with the water coating my sandals and feet, the sand clung to everything, making the chafing sensation from the straps even worse. The pointy edges of the sand dug and grated against my skin like the ultra coarse sandpaper used to get paint off wood. I looked down at my feet almost expecting to find tiny ribbons of flesh where the sand had viciously attacked my skin. My shoes had effectively tuned into graters, scraping my feet as it would a nice block of cheddar.

I walk back to my relatives trying not to grimace as my flesh is gnawed to the bone.

“I’m going back up,” I say, turning before they can pry further.

The whole time I limp to the showers (conveniently placed all the way on the top of the aggressively steep stairs), I resist the urge to scream in agony.

As I turn on the faucet to rinse off the sand, I breathe a sigh of relief (before instantly returning my shirt to my nostrils). Water has never felt so soothing.

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