

The Rays of the Sun

I was driving down the road peacefully, drifting in and out of conscious thought and letting my body do the driving for me. It was a somewhat overcast day; not the best vacation day, but at least there wouldn't be many other people there. I was fine with taking what I could get, always have been. I can't remember ever truly "wanting" anything, at least not in the same way the people around me seem to want things. Furthermore, I've never really cared too much about my wishes or dreams either, and I kind of just go with the flow – see where it takes me. At this very moment, driving down the road alone like this, it was taking me to the beach. I didn't ask for this vacation, it was given to me by my boss.

"Take a day to relax, you deserve it." She may have been the one to bring it up, but I suspect most of my coworkers also believed I needed a break. Truth is, I didn't care either way.

As I drove further and further along the road, I noticed fewer and fewer cars driving with me. This furthered my suspicions about the beach being relatively empty, which was good. However, as I got close to the beach, I noticed that there was nobody at all driving with me. The road was eerily empty. It was unsettling, but I wasn't all that concerned. Not until I got to the beach.

My theory was correct, as there were a few small stalls set up on the sand, as well as some towels, umbrellas, and even an unfinished sandcastle or two. Signs that people did in fact come to the beach, about as many as I expected. Even though signs of people were there, the people themselves were nowhere to be seen. It was deeply, deeply unsettling. It looked as if the people vanished suddenly, and without warning. I could feel my panic rising from that alone, yet there was something still more disturbing: the ocean was gone.

I could hardly believe my eyes. I refused to believe what I saw was real. I looked around frantically, scanning everything for signs of life, but I saw nothing but a barren wasteland. The ocean was a desolate desert and even the trees and grass before the beach were dying, though I hadn't noticed until now. I had no clue what to do. Where was everyone?! I got in my car and drove back, away from the beach. The roads, signs, and stop lights were in perfect condition, just like all the things left on the beach. The condition of all the manmade objects struck an eerie contrast to the dying plant life all around me. When I reached the city it was even eerier. The

city, just like the beach, looked like it was evacuated quickly and suddenly. It was horrifying and unsettling.

“Where am I?!” I yelled to no one, for there was no one there to hear me.

I got out of the car and began to look around frantically for signs of human life. My cries echoed throughout the desolate city as fear began to truly set in. I was all alone; there was nothing left. The horror of it all struck me like a brick. Legs collapsing, I fell to the ground. On my knees, tears began to flow. Then, after all of this, I began to laugh. I laughed and laughed. The laughter lasted several minutes, and just like my cries, the laughter echoed throughout the entirety of the dead city.

Once the laughter had subsided, I felt a calm wash over me. Once I had a hold of myself I realized that darkness was setting in, and I decided I needed to find a place to take shelter. Anywhere would’ve worked, but I was inexplicably drawn to the now-empty library. There may not be a single person in sight, but books can always give ample company, for a while at least. So, after gathering some food and supplies from elsewhere around the city, I drove to the library and set up base. I settled down in the sci-fi section, using a nearby couch as my bed. It was getting late, but before I went to bed I needed to find a book of some sort to keep my focus. I figured reading anything at all would help significantly for keeping my sanity. As I was looking for something interesting on the shelves, a book fell off a few feet away from me. I went to pick it up and put it back where it belonged but was stopped in my tracks when I saw what it was.

“Oh my god.”

It was a slim paperback book. The book was crudely made, and sloppily written, but it had charm – and nostalgia. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. Why was it here? How was it here? I was in shock because this was *my* book! I had completely forgotten about it. I wrote the book when I was about ten years old, and I was so incredibly proud of it at the time. How did I forget about something that was so important to me? Suddenly, the world flashed white.

I saw a child standing before their parents. The child was being screamed at by their father, and they were scared. “You will never be a writer! Who would want to read this shit?!” The child was in shock. Why were they so unbelievably angry? The mother walked over to the shredder and inserted the sheets of paper that once held the child’s dreams on them. As the paper

was dismembered, the sound of the shredder echoed within the child's heart. Their dreams shredded right in front of them, they never dared dream again.

I found myself back in the library, and the sun was rising. Apparently, I was out for quite a while. I was shaken up, but I finally thought I knew what was going on. I walked outside into the light of a new day – the light of truth. My eyes downcast, I walked forward with no regard for where I was heading, until I looked up and found myself in a wide-open field, with nothing but grass in sight. My eyes rose upwards towards the sky. I gazed directly into the sun, basking fully in the glorious radiance of it. It didn't hurt at all, in fact it felt nice gazing into the light. While keeping my gaze locked on the light I knelt down and pleaded with the sun.

“Please... I want... I want to go home.”

Then, there was nothing.

Later, I found myself lying down, relaxing on the beach. The chatter of people all around me filled me with great relief. I sat up and smiled as I looked out over the great blue waves of the ocean, with the rays of the sun shining upon it.

Prompt:

Your character heads to the beach and expects to have a fun day splashing in the waves. When they get there though, they find that the water is gone, or at least it's not in sight.