

SUMMER'S SUNSETS

The baby blue waters eruptively splashing. The sweet creatures swim in the never-ending sea. The drips of cold water dripping from her wet hair. The instant excitement when a huge wave follows as she balances on her pink board. The silly faces at which she looks at through the clear reflections. The overlook from the dry sand. The salty smell, the white signs, the squawking of seagulls, and the patient fishing on the small, brown pier.

The covering of her hazel eyes from the floppy bucket hat. The shivering of which is stopped by the wrapping of her blue tie-dye towel. The glorious moments when she wears that white summer dress. When she sits on the picnic blanket re-reading that book. The colourful Pura Vida bracelets dangling on her wrist. The crazy jumps which lead to screams. The walking across the beach on a cold, chilly night. Her in those black sunnies she got at age five. Her constant laughs and cheesy smiles. The jaw-dropping moments when she surfs across the ocean.

The water fights. The tackles. The surfs together. The piggybacks in the early sunrise with stripes of orange and purple. The dancing in the rain as we watched the sunset. The sun peeking behind the horizon. The mesmerisation and joy whenever she saw a sunset. All the shades of golden yellow, orange, pink and purple. The palm trees blew in the wind.

The beach. The sunsets. All the memories. The memory of her teaching me to surf and that ecstatic smile when I got it. The memory of us diving into the water with a loud splash. The memory of us chasing each other in our matching plain black bikinis. That's not the memory that replays in my mind.

It's the one where we sit side by side on the dry sandhills, overlooking the beautiful beach. She wears that white summer dress that makes her eyes pop. Her brunette hair is free and blows wonderfully. The calming sounds of the waters. The repeating chirps of crickets. Our hands are locked together. The sun setting in front of us. She turns to me and smiles.

"I don't want to stop seeing sunsets. I want to stay positioned on this beach forever, watching the glorious sunsets you know I love. All of that with you, Maya."

And it was forever like that. The giggles when we met at each other's windows, having sneaked out quietly. The running in our sneakers through the familiar streets till we made it to the beach. The beach is all empty. Deserted. But every day, when people left, the beach wouldn't be lonely because we'd be there. Huddled together for warmth while shivering and eating our sensational sweets. The captivating sunset there in front of our hazel and blue eyes.

I think everyone forgot about Summer. Whenever I go to the beach, everyone seems happy. They have grins all over their faces and I can tell they're having fun by the roar of laughter. I don't like coming to the beach anymore. I only had to come because Angelina told me to get out and have some fun at the party on the beach hosted by our classmates. Fun. No one seems to cry or shed tears whenever we go. No one seems to think even for just a minute about Summer. They've moved on. Forgotten.

I'm the only one that hasn't. And so, I stand in front of the food table with pop music blaring and people dancing and screaming on the beach late on a Saturday night. My wavy blonde hair is still dripping from the shower as I stand in that white dress. The dress with short sleeves and comfy material. The dress she wore all the time. My blue eyes fighting to shed any tears.

“Maya! We’re going to have water fights in the water. Want to come?” my eyes snap away and turn to Angelina in her black jeans and a blue jean jacket. I shake my head and Angelina shrugs confusedly before walking away.

My classmates' race and splash into the cold water as I stand at shore. All alone. No one has noticed me much. No one has asked me how I've been the past 3 months. No one has even noticed that I'm in her summer dress. When she was here, I was always noticed but now that's even less.

Clears tears drop from my blue eyes and I try and quickly wipe them away. I remember that day when we had water fights in the ocean, with goosebumps running up our spines. I'd shove her and she'd push me harder until she hugged me and told me she didn't like having water fights. Water fights were for fun. She didn't like fighting her best friend for fun. Instead, we stopped and looked at the sky with its rich shining sunset while our feet stood beneath the water.

“All the sunsets you see are mine. Think of me whenever you see a sunset” she giggled, and I rolled my eyes. Sunset obsessed.

But I understood why. The tropical feeling with the rutilant shreds that made up the sky. The perfect golden yellow, the burning red, the deep purple that glides into hot pink. The orange sapphires. I'm starting to shiver and shake. All the noise drains out as my mind replays her cute little voice and that very same sentence. Over and over.

“Nice sunsets huh?”. I turn and see a boy with silk black hair, fully dry. So, I wasn't the only one who didn't go in the water.

I blink away tears and smile a little. “Yeah. The sunsets belong to Summer” I mumble and the boy stares at me perplexed.

As the wind swirls around us, I feel a certain trust in this boy. My heart starts to race, and I turn away from the sunset and eye him. He looks new to the school. I've never seen him before, until now at this party. “My best friend who died. Summer. She was a surfer. She was going to be a surfer before she um...” I stop and a warm arm wraps around me.

“Shush it's okay” he comforts, and I lean in closer to this stranger. “I bet she was amazing. These sunsets” he looks over at them and my eyes follow. “Did she like them?”.

I nod and giggle remembering non-stop how my best friend spoke about them. She'd call me every morning and start rapidly speaking about photos she'd seen on the internet. Everything, sunsets.

“She loved them. Obsessed. Never stopped talking” I chuckle a little and the boy smiles gently. “They're how I remember her. I remember all our memories. The way she described them. That smile on her face as we'd sit on the sand watching it” I close my eyes and listen to the sounds of chaotic classmates.

“Let's do that,” his voice says, and I feel new hands as my fingers loop into his. He drags me onto the yellow sand, and we sit together. Like old times.

“Thank you” I stutter and the boy nods as his hair blows in the wind.

Side by side, we sit, watching our classmates splashing in the water and the sunset behind them. The amazing colours that I know Summer wouldn't stop chatting about. My fingers are still looped in his and neither of us refuses to pull away.

"I'm Henri, by the way" he whispers to me randomly.

"Maya" I reply, and his deep brown eyes light up. Then I turn to the sunset and nod. "And that's Summer" I bite my lip hoping I don't sound too weird.

"Nice to meet you, Summer. I promise to take care of your best friend" he says, and I realize he means me. Tears fall and Henri hugs me. I don't know what this boy has been through in his life, but he knows how to help me. He notices me and I know he'll care for me too.

Maybe he was a sign from Summer. Maybe her sunsets were not enough. Maybe she had to send me a new friend. Not a friend that would be my new best friend, but a friend where I'd smile and be silly again.

My eyes stare into the sunset and Henri's does too. "I like your dress," he says closer to my ear and I squeeze his hand. This was how you got all the boys Summer? With this white dress.

I haven't been in the water since she drowned that Tuesday night. Turned away for two seconds and that bobbing head was gone. Her voice was heard but the water took her away. It rushes now and the water calls for me.

"Do you want to go in?" I ask Henri and indicate to the water.

He nods and I run with him to the water. All the while Summer's Sunsets stare overhead with a wide and happy grin.