

Apocalypse Beach

It's sunset.

You're sitting on the beach, sitting on the cool, white sand with your arms wrapped around your legs and your head is back and you're listening to the breakers...and you're dying.

Part of you wishes that the cataracts clouding your vision would miraculously dissolve away, affording you one last look at the world, one last viewing of the sun drowning in the limitless sea. But then you remember the bodies; you can smell them, you know they're there, rolling and tumbling in the surf, sprawled along the shoreline like soldiers cut down in some beach-head assault. Maybe it's better this way.

BOOM BOOM BOOM

Memory has claimed all the sights and sounds you once associated with this place: the squawking birds, the blaring radios, the jocks, the kids, the bikinis, all gone, now there is only

BOOM BOOM BOOM

And...the smell.

The smell is very bad. The stench of putrefaction, miasma of melting flesh.

The breeze is nice...as long as you don't breathe it. Just let it play across you like a light, flickering tongue, tousling your hair, sharpening your nipples, caressing

your genitals. But don't *breathe* it. Because if you do, you'll know. That it's necrophilia. You're making it with a dead thing.

The sun is almost gone. The sun is waving good-bye. The sun is collecting its toys and going home. It doesn't want to play with you any more.

But the breeze stays on. It plays doctor with your sightless, scabby, grotesque body and you let it. You let it because it's the only friend you have left.

The tide is coming in. The tide will soon tug at you insistently, wanting to add another dash of humanity to the Pacific stew.

All your life you've feared death. Death was proof that God was unkind and perhaps even evil. Now you see it differently. Death no longer exists in caricature, a mocking, strutting nothingness brandishing a set of immutable chains and raking your nightmares with ghastly laughter. Now death has stepped into the open and you see it for what it is. You admire its zeal and unfaltering devotion to its mission.

And although you don't have a religious experience *per se* and no master plan is revealed to you, during your final moments you feel at peace, ready to face whatever happens next.

As the darkness settles over you, you don't fight it, you don't writhe, you don't kick and scream. You lie back on the cool sand. And you wait. Inside your head, you wait. For that stinging kiss.

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