

BEACH

SHORT SHORT STORY NO.48

Late at night, alone on a beach. The only sound is the noise of the waves rushing towards the shore. There's no one around to try to stop him. Despite what he is about to do, his mind is at peace.

Still, he's offered himself one last chance to live. Taking his phone from his pocket, he types a short message. *Can we talk? Please call me.* Selecting a name, he presses 'send' and watches as the tiny 'D' appears beside the name to signify delivery and waits for an answer.

Seventy miles away, sitting in a pub, a phone beeps. 'Look at this,' says the recipient, showing it to the girl seated beside him. 'What do you think?'

'Don't answer,' she replies, spitting out the words venomously before taking the phone and passing it around the table. Everyone there used to be friends with the boy on the beach but they're not friends anymore. They've decided to hate him. It's a gang mentality. Bullying. 'You're not going to answer it, are you?' asks the girl when the phone is passed back to its owner. He looks at it and doesn't even hesitate.

'No chance,' he says.

Enough time has passed. He knows that no answer is coming. He shivers suddenly in the cold and can't understand how it's come to this. This is not to lessen his pain, which is severe. This is because he can't bear to be in a world where such people exist.

Originally, he had thought about pills. But he didn't want to survive. This made the most sense. After all, he can't swim. All he has to do is go out far enough and it's out of his hands.

He doesn't take his shoes or clothes off, preferring the idea that they'll weigh him down. And he doesn't want to be discovered naked. There's something crude about the image and he wants no part of it. He takes a step forward and keeps walking until the water is knee-high. It feels so strange on his boots. Heavy. He continues on until it's around his waist and further until only his head can be seen.

And this is it. The moment of no return. Continue on or turn back. Looking towards the shore, he wonders for a moment whether it's possible to keep going. To survive. To come back stronger. To bury every one of them. To wait for his moment. To be able to say no, I don't want you. It's too little, too late. Whether that would dissolve this pain of betrayal from his mind.

He looks out towards the horizon, where there is so much peace, and back to the shore, where there is so much struggle, and everything seems clear and obvious. For the first time in a long time, he feels calm. He decides. He focuses on the only sensible direction and starts to move towards it.