

# The Beach

*by* Tim Young

I wanted to go sit on the beach and enjoy a quiet moment but in my mind I understand that my body would not be moving in that direction. It was the middle of the afternoon and the sun was ferocious. The beach would burn me like a strip of bacon. All thinking would be focused on determining how to survive such heat. My original thoughts of a quiet moment would evaporate as quickly as the water on my skin.

I hated the beach for this reason but because of the water, the oceans' power and grace I was in spite of myself drawn to the boiling sand where my feet would fry. As I walked out the glass doors to the bright red deck I could see myself barefoot in the fiery sand and in the same moment dream of the cool breezes night would offer as I put together sticks for another kind of fire to keep the blessed chill off my bones, a fire of my own making.

I often thought about touching those slippery flames between my thumb and index finger. Somehow the yellow, orange and blue flecks on my fingers might find the means to comfort me. If I could only understand for the smallest part of a second but I didn't know as all the thoughts of flame, fire and sun abruptly leapt from my mind. I could no longer bear them. I could no longer find a place for them inside my head. I hated them and I hated the beach.

When evening and night finally did arrive after a million years I was drunk and weaving around on the blue linoleum floor of the beach house. It was all windows, glass doors and smelled of sea salt. Even at night, light still crept in like a snake to disturb my peace. I laughed when I thought of the word peace because I never actually had any. I never knew how to find it. It was constantly running in front of me like a carrot on a stick. In my chasing it, which I never really wanted to do, but couldn't help myself, I would feel

inadequate; I would feel more than a nothing. And then in my head would pour horrible arguments and shouting matches that I never even felt a part of. Voices that never belonged to me but to some ancient black force whose only intentions were to keep me in a cage. A hole. A jagged, rocky cave in a sheer blinding high wall of grey and white stone flashing in the sun.

I needed another drink, yet the more I drank the more terrified I became to look out the windows, which surrounded me. It was this terror that forced my eyes to scan across the innocent, clean, reflective panes. There were times I knew for absolute certain the windows were going to shatter and the shards of my reflection would descend on my flesh turning me a ghastly corpse of crimson. I could smell my blood and hear the glass breaking. I could see the hand of a man with a gun, someone with bullets on his mind. But then he would disappear and nothing would happen except the silence and windows holding steady.

Steadier than I was. I realized I was staring at the vodka in my glass. I swirled it around, my eyes moving like the liquid and so I fell down. I hit my head on the corner of the coffee table. I screeched. I reached for my forehead and found there was real blood on my fingers. I brought my hand down and rubbed the blood between my thumb and index finger as if the flames I was always so eager to explore. The blood was not burning me but turned my heart into a racecar. The color of the blood and its warm temperature surpassed all my expectations. I didn't stand back up for the longest time. I had forgotten about my legs and feet. They seemed no longer connected. Before I could even think about standing up I rubbed the blood from my fingers across both my cheeks. My heart remained in high gear. It was then it's force compelled me to rise from the floor and prepare for battle but instead of spears and swords, guns and bullets all I could see were rows and rows of vodka bottles. They were reflected in the window marching the long road into infinity. I picked up the one nearest to me and hurled it with all my strength

against the window. Now the shards left my mind to begin their actual flight and fortunately all flew away from me into the cool dark of night. I did not become hysterical. A soft wind blew across my face from the gaping hole where the windows used to be. I glimpsed stars in the sky and fires on the beach, flames reaching towards me. I sat back down in a pool of vodka, picking at the splinters of glass that surrounded me; I felt the sharpness of the edge. It was then I knew I was in a better place than I was before. It was then a sliver of peace entered my brain and I became quiet.

