

WATER BLANKET

It was late afternoon, and extremely loud inside his beach house. His girlfriend and her friends had started drinking early in the morning, and were obviously not accustomed to it, like he was. He felt like throwing them out, well at least outside. The only time they ever went outside was to get something from their cars, or late at night when they would commiserate together on the front porch. He couldn't understand how people could stay here, and never go anywhere near the beach or outside during the day. Instead, he decided to let the day, run its course, knowing that a majority of them would eventually pass out. Resulting in them to swear tomorrow what a wonderful time they had, which included drinking all the alcohol in the house. Including the vodka that was hidden under the kitchen-sink cabinet behind the cold-water supply pipe. Her friends were more expensive to keep hydrated than fed, and he was convinced whatever they did eat lined the toilet a half-hour later, thus making more room for the alcohol, and their numerous pills. Collectively, their purses were a traveling pharmacy, and all their designer drugs carried a minimum seven refills, refillable at those chain store pharmacies; they never enjoyed shopping, or being seen in. However, it was summer, and he loved this place. Unfortunately, he had no intention of turning his beach house into a year-round abode that would diminish its seasonal value. Especially, that solitary week in early August when he stayed by himself, or what his girlfriend enjoyed calling weekend to weekend. He needed some time alone, so he put his sandals on and decided to go out for a walk, knowing his destination would be an isolated stretch of beach over the berm. Walking past his driveway, which was designed to accommodate two cars, but for this weekend the cars were parked out on the road. All the vehicles had vanity plates, and some of the owners had vanity marriages designed to last a minimum of five to seven years, and then end in ugly legal proceedings. He walked over the berm to his favorite location and sitting down, he smiled. The view was magnificent, and on the horizon a lone sailboat appeared and disappeared for him, depending on how long he looked at

it. He was alone and started to go through his usual beach routine, which included synchronizing his breathing to the ocean waves, closing his eyes, and feeling his heart rate lowering. For anyone longing for a flawless beach scene, this was the perfect place - a mirage. He felt like it was his hidden treasure that he did not own, but enjoyed immensely. Removing his sandals, he lowered his arms so that his fingers could dig into the warm, dry, coarse sand; Sticking his fingers down into it like some exploring probe. His fingers feeling the only limitation they had were his imagination. He thought someday; they would extend down forever. Stopping, he raised two fistfuls of sand over his head, and waited for an ocean breeze to release the sand into the air, knowing it would never return to the exact place of its excavation. A breeze, then lifted his hair. He was relaxed, calm, and content, but knew he would not fall asleep. Wondering why do people fall into sleep, it's not like it's an accident. Not knowing why he opened his eyes and to his right, about three hundred feet away someone was walking down the berm. Realizing, this place wasn't as secluded as he once thought. Some guy was walking at a middle age pace and stopped abruptly, throwing his sandals in the water while lowering his back in one seamless motion, as if it contained no bones or constraints, and ripped his tee-shirt off disregarding it to the ocean breezes. He wondered, who was this guy and what was he doing here. This guy didn't appear to be deranged, angry, or any harm to himself, possibly somebody's weekend guest, who got loose. He didn't know what to do, so he just sat there, and watched deciding to give this guy a name; The Ripper, because of what he did with his tee shirt. This Ripper approached the wave line, as if taking measurements with his feet, marking the sand above where the waves were encroaching, stopping occasionally to stare up at the sun. What was he doing, and why was he doing it? He stood up to get a better view; The Ripper frantically erased all his marks, then let out a primeval yell to accent the error of his calculations, stepping back, he placed a set of marks, pacing wildly back and forth from the oncoming waves, as if timing their arrival and departure. The Ripper turned and waved, son of a bitch. The Ripper knew

he was being watched the whole time, and that didn't stop him from laying himself down in the sand in accordance with his marks. His feet were by the water so that the next ensuing wave, made it slightly above the top of his waist. The waves came and went. A long strand of seaweed had settled on The Ripper's chest, he flipped it in the air. At certain times, The Ripper extended out his arms and legs resembling a starfish, or a beached snow angel. Lying there motionless, and with each wave coming closer to being covered, as if the waves were some approaching water blanket, providing some type of protection. The Ripper was still there, but for how long could he continue whatever this was? , and with each wave, there was a raising of the water blanket. He strained to see if the head was submerged. What brought The Ripper to this point, smiling, he knew why he came here through the years to this special place. He stood up. The Ripper was under water an excessive amount of time, and how was he breathing?. Maybe using a small bamboo rod or tube, that had to be it. Laying there in the water with it inserted into his mouth, very ingenious. This new-found explanation did not last long; The Ripper wasn't holding anything when he arrived, and more disturbing nothing was sticking out of the water. He ran, and searched in the water, but all he saw was a distorted reflection of his own face. He knew his eyes were playing tricks on him .He remembered his childhood at the beach standing ankle-deep in the water , digging his toes through the sand believing his toes were anchors preventing him from being taken away .His childhood flash back did not last very long.He remembered, The Ripper had sandals, and a tee shirt that he disregarded before this all began. He searched the water for anything floating, wondering, why did the water feel like it had no temperature to it? He flinched because something had touched his ankle, now he knew he was in the correct spot, thankfully.Bending down , and with his hands, he searched for some type of body part under the water . He screamed, having grabbed a handful of seaweed and threw it in the air, never realizing it was on his back. He became frantic beating his hands and swinging them through the incoming waves. He was screaming. Where are you? , where did

you go? , his searching placed him further away from the shoreline, then intended. His waterfront retreat was not secluded, and never was for any time. The berm was an ease-way to the beach, and he did not see the four teenagers that were standing by the railing on top of the berm looking down on him. Two boys and two girls, one boy with short hair and a deep tan, a perfect candidate to live within a beach house of his own someday was standing behind a girl with long blond hair, while the brunette girl who was wearing shorts that were too short with a tank top that was nowhere near the top, stood off to the side, mesmerized by her cell phone. They were watching him, and he started waving frantically at them, yelling call the police, call the police, hurry. It's an emergency. The boy with the short hair laughed, asking how crazy do you think that guy is. While the other boy answered with his own question; how high do you think that guy really is? , because it must be some ass-kicking stuff the way, he's acting down there. The brunette rolled her shoulders and continued clicking away on her cell phone. The short-haired boy continued his commentary, saying look he's been out in the sun too long, and lost something, like his mind. Laughing, the other boy said maybe it was the guy's first time at a beach. The girl with the blond hair turned and yelled at them. I think that's Mister? , what's his name, my father knows him. He owns that house we just passed by with all those cars parked outside it. Go there, help him, he needs help. The long-haired boy started laughing saying look at the seaweed on his back, doesn't he resemble an angry sea monster splashing around in the water. The brunette attempted to take a picture on her phone, but was distracted by an urgent text message from somebody, and never took the picture. All everybody knew was that the girl with the long blond hair was always the voice of reason. She continued looking over the water, while clutching the weathered wooden handrail on top of the berm, that rattled whenever it was touched by human hands. That girl was convinced, her father knew the man who was now frantically swimming towards a distant sailboat out on the horizon. Her friends were off the berm, and yelling for her to join them in the season-ending party, at that bar where their

fake I.D. 's were working perfectly this summer. She thought. He must be an excellent swimmer in order to reach that sail boat all the way out there, but it appears; he has the situation under control, and knows what he is doing, maybe in hindsight, he should have anchored his sail boat closer to the shore, and then she ran off the berm to rejoin her friends. If she had the time, and looked, she would have seen a worn and tattered sandal entwined with some seaweed around its sole, still bobbing around effortlessly with nowhere to go, waiting. An ensuing wave would eventually take it under to its destination, while a lone sailboat traveled through the horizon in the late-afternoon sun.