

Runner up under 25. OutStanding LGBTIQ Short story competition 2017

A day at the beach by S. Valias

I know nothing about the beach.

It's hot and windy and the sand feels itchy against my bare feet. Ruby and Sandra are wearing nice-looking bikinis and yelling and generally having the time of their lives. There are weird hair-ball plants that seem almost sentient in the way they float rapidly towards the sea.

Ruby, long dark hair flying in every direction, turns back to look at me. I must be lagging behind again and looking uncomfortable, as she smiles at me reassuringly. I smile back.

Sandra is waving at someone in the distance. I forgot my glasses so I can't see them.

I look so out of place, covered up with a T-shirt and shorts, surrounded by so many beautiful, semi-naked people. This is so awkward, why did I even agree to come??

I mean, sure, I used to love swimming, but that was years ago, and besides, what's so fun about getting sand stuck in unmentionable places, anyway?

Like I said, I don't 'get' beaches.

I sit awkwardly on a towel, trying to keep the sand out of my shorts. Soon I get bored and riffle through my backpack for my drawing equipment. Maybe I can draw some of the attractive people I can see... It turns out I haven't forgotten my glasses, after all! They were at the bottom of my bag, as usual. I put them on and properly look at Sandra's friends. I don't recognise any of them except for Ruby. She's just as gorgeous as ever...

But one of Sandra's friends catches my eye and winks at me. It's not my fault if I'm blushing, they're really attractive! They have short green hair and a really butch style. I swear they are the walking stereotype of non-binary people. I'll have to ask Sandra what their pronouns are... For some reason, I get up from the towel and follow the group into the water. I am so going to regret this when I have to take a shower... Oh well...

I spend my time sneaking glances at the green-haired kid. To be fair, it's been a while since I've seen someone so attractive and I'm a little starstruck. They have so much energy and charisma and they're constantly surrounded by what I perceive to be 'adoring crowds'. But that might just be me.

I take Sandra to one side and ask her about them. Turns out I was right, they are non-binary. They're called Jay.

"Jay."

I try saying the name to myself quietly. It has a nice ring.

Of course I'm too nervous to go up to them, but hopefully the alcohol at the party this evening will change that.

I'm enjoying the time I'm spending at the beach... which is weird but, I suppose, understandable. I even stop feeling self-conscious about not wearing a binder. The feel of the water, freeing my movement, reminds me of happier, simpler times.

Jay is blessing on sore eyes and I'm having fun riding the waves and dunking my friends.

I barely even mind when the lifeguard says, "Don't swim over there, **girls!**"

As the wind starts to blow cold and the sun is saying goodbye, we all begin to pack up, laughing and hugging. I still dislike having sand in my pants but it's not as bad as I thought it would be (a part of me says it was worth it).

I know a bit more about the beach, I can understand why some people might enjoy it, and I know a lot about Jay, with the promise of learning a lot more.