

Under the Waves -Madeleine Roytfeld

I remember sitting there, the milky white waves calling to me. The sapphire ocean begging me to join it in its beauty. I remember staring back in admiration at the seemingly gentle water, wondering how something could ever be so beautiful. I remember sitting in the midst of pearly white sand, emerald palm trees, and an assortment of seashells, and wondering, *should I follow my temptations into the silky water?* Then, I found no harm in the endeavor. In fact, looking back, I don't know why there was even a grain of hesitation in my 6-year-old self. But looking back on your life does bring back a lot of questions, some that will go on being unanswered. However, I know for a fact that if I had been a little more hesitant, this story would not be in front of your eyes.

I had succumbed to my desires and waded into the water. Splashing around, admiring the majestic scenery, it was my internal paradise. I waded deeper and deeper until my parents were no longer in sight, and my feet could not touch the rocky ocean floor. I looked down below me as I continued to swim, mesmerized at the sights underneath.

The life and energy of what lay beneath the water was perhaps more enchanting than what was above it. Fish with the most unique colors, ranging from a dark crimson to a beige yellow, swam in different directions, all with individual destinations, yet somehow, perfectly synchronized in a special way. *Life ran like an ocean*, I remember thinking. *Individual lives, individual goals, but still, somehow synchronized.*

Then it happened. I looked up from my underwater dream and heard it before I saw it. The same sound of a crashing wave that drove me to the water. The same splash that transfixed me, the sound a colliding wave made as it hit the ocean. I looked up, in time to see people on the shore cowering in terror, nearby swimmers frantically swimming toward the beach, screams of

scared toddlers ringing in my ears. Then, with one gulp, I was swallowed into a whirlwind of fear.

The wave sucked me in like a magnet. I wanted to open my mouth and scream, *I have nothing to give to you, why take me?!* But I couldn't. The wave did not care, so it took me into what I once thought fascinating, and showed me that fascination could easily turn to pain. It tossed me around in its currents to a rhythmic beat of trepidation. I collided into a beautiful coral, cutting off part of its top. I cut my head on a rock beneath me, and water filled my goggles and my lungs. I was losing my breath now, I could no longer see or hear, and I was gulping water unintentionally. I saw fish in the distance frantically swerving, no longer was there the synchronization I had previously so deeply admired. I saw traces of my own blood dissolving into the sapphire sea. Tossing back and forth, the once calm, soothing warm water, now seemed to ebb away at my skin, and all I could feel was a cold, terrifying sensation.

I closed my eyes, as if admitting my surrender to the water. I could not face what was happening to me. I closed my eyes, saying, *I surrender*, over and over again until the pain overtook my thoughts.

The next time I opened my eyes the water had calmed, and it cradled me in its currents back to the shore as if I was a baby.

Looking back does bring back questions, but it also brings answers. I guess I could say I learned not to venture far from the safety of my parents, but I also learned that fascination, being enchanted, can make you lose sight of more important things. Dreams are powerful, and while they have the power to do amazing things, they also have the power to destroy the amazing reality we already have. Dreaming big is one thing, a thing that we should all do. But dreaming to ignore reality, while comforting, also has consequences. There is always a point in our lives

where we want to ignore reality, and wish that it was nonexistent. But sometimes we all have to remember that a dream can take you very far, but it can also take over. For that day I had a stunning reality, until I dreamed so much I lost touch or reality, and that dream became my nightmare.