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# Case In The Ocean From My Life

## Going Overboard

“The only thing to fear is, fear itself” is what I had drilled into my mind to brace myself when I went kayaking for the first time. Clinging onto those words by FDR, I thought I would be able to brave through this new experience unscathed. Little did I know those words would float away from me like my sandals did when I found myself underwater. Let me tell you something. I would have rather baked on the goddamn beach than flounder about like I did in the middle of the freaking ocean. For Christ’s sake, who knows what I was attracting with my bleeding ankle?! You may not think the ocean to be a scary place. Hell, anyone would want to just jump into some cool water to escape the scorching heat of a New England summer. Trust me. I understand. But let me remind you that I wasn’t the one splashing around in that nice in-ground pool that’s behind that summer home of yours. You might say I know what’s like to “play with the sharks.” Granted, I didn’t—or at least I hope I didn’t—really play with sharks, but when you find yourself in the middle of the ocean, desperately clinging to a sinking kayak, fear will be pretty much play around with your mind.

I never was really an outdoorsy person. To tell you the truth, I bet you could have found me most of the time during the first twelve years of my life in front of a screen. Call me crazy, but to me, watching those funny characters like SpongeBob SquarePants and Timmy Turner from “Fairy Odd Parents” on T.V. seemed more amusing than engaging conversations with the bullies at school. They weren’t the stereotypical bullies from TV that beat you up and stole your lunch money. They were more like the “let’s never play with this kid because his voice and color of skin is weird” kind of group. You could say I felt isolated, but I didn’t care, because I knew there was a place where I could escape to. Just a few streets and rough turns from my house was my friend George’s house. Simple and quaint, the house’s exterior was split between blue vinyl covering on the top and rugged brick wall on the bottom, with a clean white border in the middle. In the front of the house was the most awkward tree in the neighborhood. Its broadleaf leaves literally turned green during the fall and lost its leaves during the spring. George, my sister Julia, and I always thought that tree was simply retarded, and it hasn’t changed since. The inside of the house wasn’t anything out of the ordinary, except for the obnoxiously loud wood-creaking staircase and the dark elm shelves that held treasured mementos of the family that shook even if you tiptoed across the floor. The house seemed like a house of glass, in which anything and everything was ready to break.

I spent most of my days after school at this very peculiar house. And in that very house lived a very peculiar person. My friend George was the laziest procrastinator I ever met. We both went to Catholic elementary schools, so we both knew how tough the teachers were on us, especially with homework. I’d always start and finish my homework right away, while in the meantime George would just throw his homework under the bed, never to be found until his mother collected it when she would vacuum his room. Instead of homework, George used to whip out his ol’ PlayStation 2 and play. After a while, I eventually kicked the good habit of homework and played with him instead. I could credit him for introducing me to the world of technology, but I can definitely say that his procrastination and laziness rubbed a little off onto me (to this day). He was a good kid, just a lazy one.

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As you may imagine, life as a young kid was utterly relaxed and laid-back. School work was a joke, and life after school meant videogames, homework, and the occasional soccer practice. George, Julia and I had it easy. Well, until Ron, George's father, finally made his big attempt to force us out of the house.

Ron was an easygoing man in himself, but he simply detested our sedentary lifestyle. An traditional man with traditional morals, he hated how we were "wasting our childhoods" playing videogames and not playing outside. We all knew there wasn't anything really to do, except walk around the street or play basketball with their rinky dinky hoop. He would always impose on to play outside. He'd set up our bikes—which I personally didn't learn how to ride until two years prior (I know that's sad)—for us to ride, and always had a basketball fully pumped with air to play. I can't say now that we didn't have fun, but we all knew in our hearts that we'd rather hold a game controller in our hands than a basketball.

Had I known how much of a toll living that way as a kid would have on me, I would have never touched a videogame in my life. I remember it being a typical summer day. George and I, as usual, were lounging about in his room, playing SmackDown vs. Raw 2006 on his PlayStation 2. We played a little bit outside during the morning to at least say we did before the heat started up at noon. It was serene. The gentle breezes of the house's air conditioner casually blew across the room, while the white blinds and silver curtains swayed like trees branches with the fall wind. However, everything became silent as Ron's boots climbed up the stairs: Thump! Creak! Thump! Creak! The fan lost its faint whirl, the TV seemed as if mute, and every breath we exhaled was without a single sound of puff. We knew what this meant. And we were prepared to tell him the truth. Our hearts beat and beat, pumping tons of adrenaline through our preadolescent bodies. Wham! The door of the bedroom flung wide open as our hearts leaped out of anxiety. Our eyes followed up the colossal mass that was Ron's body, that led to us being greeted with a grin.

"Well boys", Ron started to explain, "I know you're all busy playing that game of yours, but let me tell you that I got a surprise for you." George and I looked at each other. I don't what that surprise is, but I'm guessing it's not a new videogame.

Ron continued, "I've noticed you guys kind have grown out of just biking around the street and playing basketball, so I thought of all of us trying something new. I was thinking we could all go for some kayaking. And since you guys are new to it, I thought it'd be nice to start at some place safe, like Short Beach. Julia already said she'd love to do it. How about you two? I bet you guys got nothing better to do."

George and I both looked at each other again. I don't really feel like going anywhere. But I guess the beach isn't half-bad. Julia said she'll go too. So, I guess it's going to be worth it.

"Sure," I replied. I wasn't sure whether Ron was really honest about wanting us to experience something new, or that he was just going overboard with trying to get us out of the house again. Either way, it was a bad idea to refuse him anyway.

George, on other hand, was still contemplating whether to do so. His mom had just bought him Sly Cooper 3 and he'd been dying to play it. But I guess he figured it better to hang out with Julia and me at the beach than play videogames by himself. "I guess", George finally replied. And thus the tragedy begins.

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It was the middle of the July and the mosquitoes—just for my luck—were just starting to prey us once again. The Sun's rays shone with unparalleled brightness, as well as scorching heat to boot. Some say that “the grass is always greener somewhere else” but just the way the grass was reflecting all that light felt like the “greener grass” was here. George and I, exhausted and dripping with sweat, were just finishing with packing the final items of the paddles for the kayaks and the life vests as Julia walked out onto the porch to talk to us. I yearned for the coolness of the inside, and the only single breeze that escaped the house only teased me more.

“Hey guys,” Julia asked hurriedly, “what do you guys want on your sandwiches?” Her irked voice and tapping feet suggested that she didn't want to be outside either. We didn't care about the food. We just wanted to go back inside. “Suit yourself,” Julia quickly replied to our silence before scurrying back inside the house.

Thanks for the help, bitch. After a few more items to attend to, Ron and we made our way to the truck. Our backs ached with pain holstering the kayaks up while he tied them to the roof of the truck. I found it ironic how we would go to a beach, you know, to cool and whatnot. But instead, we're going to go floating in heavy plastic boats that don't let us touch the water. We saddled up everything else and finally started our way to Short Beach. Along the way, I contemplated how this would work out, going kayaking for the first time. Would it be exciting? Even more than a videogame? If you wouldn't think I wouldn't actually ponder about this, you're right. In fact, I did this mostly for the sake of distracting me from the suffocating heat in the truck and the sizzling leather seat that was barbecuing my ass.

At last we reached the beach. Seagulls wailed under a blazing sun. My feet sizzled above the sweltering sand. Although carrying a cumbersome kayak, I ran for the coolness of the sea shore. Ron, George, and Julia soon followed with their kayaks. As we laid down our kayaks on the water, I gazed up toward the sky. It's tranquil blue sheen would have been reassuring during an anxious time like this, but the ominous blackened clouds that have cloaked it only delivered fear. I clumsily boarded the kayak; the body rocked left and right without balance. My sister boarded it as well; we were in a two-person kayak. Ron handed us one paddle.

“Here's a paddle, guys. I'm sorry, but I only got one. I've been meaning to get another one...” I knew this wouldn't turn out well.

Julia took the initiative and started paddling out to sea. She fumbled around with it at first, but I didn't have to wait for us to start moving. It was a magnificent feeling. Our kayak swayed calmly as we swiftly glided by. I fixed my eyes upon the glassy green surface of the emerald green water. Ron soon caught up to us.

“I know you guys are having fun, but don't go too far out. I heard on the news that it might start to get bad later.” We paddled around some more. Now it was my turn. I awkwardly fumbled it as Julia did. Julia giggled as we started going backwards. Damn it, why is this so hard? I started to paddle forward. Yes! Wow, this actually more entertaining than videogames for once! That feeling didn't last long. My arms started to ache as I labored, exhausting all my energy paddling the kayak around.

It didn't take long for me to notice that a storm was brewing. The waves around us had started thrash about wildly. The wind was picking up; we braced ourselves against breezes as sharp as a blade. The dark clouds gathering above us smirked with an unparalleled malice. The comfort

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of the shore was barely within our eyesight. Although my hearing was vulnerable to the wind's fierce howling, I was able to heed Ron's faint shouting. "Get to the shore! It's time to go!" My heart started to beat like a thousand African war drums, anticipating the fight of a life to come. The sweat accumulating from my palms made the paddle rather incapable to maneuver. The shore seemed out of our reach. My lost my cool.

"Damn it! Damn it! Damn it! We are so fucked!" "Shut up! Just keep paddling!" Julia replied frustratingly. I continue to fumble with the paddle once again. I felt hopeless, desperately floundering about in the middle of the ocean. I also felt extremely aggravated. Who'd give two fledgling kayakers a two- person kayak with only one paddle to paddle around in ocean riptide? Time was running short, and our—or rather my—efforts fighting the riptide were for not. I concentrated all my energy to move forward, but my body strained trying to fight against the unyielding current. My chest felt heavier with each stroke. Julia took the paddle from my exhausted hands, taking on the task to reach the shore. She too succumbed to tiredness.

We were trapped. Marooned in the middle of the ocean within a bobbing kayak, we were left powerless against the elements. Our bodies were depleted the all of our strength. Without warning, my body spontaneously jerked as our kayak flipped over. My eyes burned intensely from the salt water. I gagged as I swallowed some too. Julia and I found ourselves floating in the ocean. We were stuck between a rock and a hard place. We could have swum to shore, but we were so tired and the kayak had begun to sink. Water had filled up the kayak's cavity to the brim, but we had to hold on. All hope seemed lost. Then, suddenly, Ron turned back and started tugging on the kayak. "Hold on guys!" Ron yelled over the wind, which screaming stronger than before.

It took some time—he was quite exhausted himself—but soon enough we found ourselves hugging the shore. I leaped out for joy to be on dry land once more, while the ocean's waves continued to crash with a rage fueled by its unsatisfied hunger for our flesh. As the three of us brought our kayaks back to the truck to load, George—who never left shore due to his uncompromising laziness—was completely confused of why Julia and I were soaked. Neither of us were in the mood to talk. Ron finished packing our things for us and we left the beach without a word.

After that fateful day, it seemed apparent that Ron felt hesitant to ask us out for more outdoor activities. I wasn't in the mood for going outside, but also for playing videogames. It seemed that I was still in a shocked stupor. Julia got over it quickly, and it wasn't before long that she got back to kayaking with Ron and George. I, on the other hand, didn't want to even get near the water, except for swimming in George's safe pool. If I were to look back on it now, I could say I went little overboard—pun intended—after what happened to me. It seems totally understandable that if you were to kayak in a storm in a two-person kayak with one paddle without experience, you were pretty much asking to fall over. But I took it to heart, all that fear that possessed me during that time of absolute panic and despair. It's ironic how I told myself that "the only thing to fear is fear itself", but I never knew I'd be consumed by it. I thought I'd never be able to go back to the water again. It literally took a year to shrug off all that shock. Although I've kayaked plenty of times since that incident, to this day I still can't look at ocean without contempt.