

Remembering Forever.

The waves are hypnotic.

Rushing into the shore, crashing against salt-encrusted boulders with a spray of white foam. They sway in and out methodically, swirls of blue and green and silver flaring up from the deep. Little swatches of seaweed, and tiny fish bump into one another, pulled by the current, unable to resist, unable to fight back. The sea is like the maw of a giant beast, growling and angry, pushing against the confines of gravity.

I stare out at it, transfixed, hypnotized. The motion of the waves soothes me, lulls me into that place that doesn't need to feel, the place that can just watch, just sit and be content to gaze forever at the unchanging ocean. It is so big, so devastatingly huge, I feel a small shiver of fear when I look out at it. It is frightening in its' enormity. I know it could swallow me whole, hold me under, and rip the air from my weak lungs, spit me back out again without ever thinking anything of it. It could kill me, and still, it would sway, unchanging, uncaring.

The rock is cold beneath my thighs, the kind of cold that seeps into your bones and turns you numb from the inside out. I am numb all over now, anyway. I have been numb for a long time. The memory of what it was like to feel is a distant, fleeting thing, taunting me with flabby fingers and reminding me of what I've lost. My breath creates a small puff of condensation in front of my face, before it is whisked away by the unforgiving wind. My hair whips out around me, carried in the gale.

I hug my knees closer to my chest, look only straight ahead. I am afraid to look to my left, where I know I will see something I am so desperately trying to forget. I hear it there, whispering to me, taunting me, cajoling me. It chuckles wetly at me, breathes on me with its

rank, sour breath. I tremble slightly, but I know that it is only my imagination, nothing more.

What could be out there that is so bad, that causes me to feel this kind of fear?

I have forgotten. I used to know, a long time ago, when I could still hold memories in my dull, numb brain. Now I just get the feeling that tells me to stay away.

Temptation gnaws at me, little sharp teeth picking at my subconscious. If I could just look, just once, I could see for myself what it is that frightens me so much. I could understand why I feel the need to run away from that creeping shadow in the corner of my eye. And maybe, just maybe, I could *remember*.

But no. I am far too scared. Too weak. So I will sit here, huddled on my rock that is immune to the sea, and wait.

Seasons change. Months change, and days change. I feel time wearing away at my thin bones, feel the air turn heavy, and the cold get colder. I feel it all, but I do nothing about it. The cold does not affect me like it once did. I know I have to live with the cold now, forever. The waves are roaring, malicious and angry. They crash and batter against the rocky cliffs and shrivelled pine trees, eating everything in their path, and choking it back out with flawless indifference. The water almost, but not quite, reaches my rock, because there is a bubble around me, an impenetrable, untouchable bubble. It is the cage that binds me here, doomed to sit and stare out at the place that took everything away from me forever.

A jellyfish scuttles by. It looks to be caught in the raging current, helpless to do much more than ride the wave. It bobs and flips, its little pink tentacles drifting behind it in a tangle of delicate ribbon. The pink is dulled by the ever-present slate-iron sky, but still I look at the little pink creature with slightly dazzled eyes. Everything is grey here, in this frozen world, grey and depressing. Even the slightest wash of color is like the sun breaking through the clouds after a

screaming storm.

There is a break in the swell, and the jellyfish rushes to swim back out into the deeper water, get away from the razor-sharp rocks near the shore. I let out a long, sad sigh, the sound carried away by the howling wind and becoming nothing more than an echo.

I have seen 756 jellyfish since the day I died.

The weather here stays the same, always. Like it was sculpted to fit a certain mood. Brash and cold, just on the cusp of winter.

I hear the whispering again. It lurks just behind conscious thought, tickles that morbid part of me that wants to know, *needs* to know. What is hiding just to my left? I know I know what it is, because I have looked before. The curiosity has gotten the best of me, on more than one occasion. I just always forget after I have looked, like the sight was too awful for me to hold on to.

Just a peek.

My head turns slowly, tremulously, giving myself time to reconsider. My pulse beats thinly in my throat and wrists, blood rushing to my ears and melding with the sound of the ocean. My face feels frozen, unable to move from whatever expression is etched into my features.

I see her.

She is floating on the water, wrapped up in a silent bubble of her own. She is stretched out in a starfish shape, arms and legs splayed, revealing porcelain-pale limbs. Her clothes is soaked through, bogged down with salty ocean water. Her hair fans out around her head, pale blonde and drifting in loose tendrils. Her eyes are closed, lids pale and lifeless. Her face is bloated and puffy, her skin a pasty white. Flesh hangs from her face and arms, water-logged and rotting.

Bile fills my throat, acidic and sour. I turn away, because I can't look at her anymore.

I can't look at myself anymore.

The horizon is bleak, green speckled hills streaked with jagged cliffs and caves that open up like gaping mouths. It is beautiful, in a sad, endless sort of way.

I don't remember how I died. I remember the act of dying, of course, but the reason behind my death – how I ended up drowning in the freezing Atlantic ocean – is a mystery to me. I was sitting on this rock, exactly as I am now. I remember the smell of brine and the taste of sea-salt on my tongue. I remember the way the cold wind caressed my bare arms, taunting, how it blew my long hair out in a dizzying array of swirls and knots. I remember feeling the odd, sudden, need to let the water lap at my arms, let it wash over me like a blanket and wait for it to invade my lungs and tear the life away from me. I remember the feeling of being watched, eyes peeking out from the shadows behind me and cataloguing my every move.

I remember being pushed.

But then I was falling, and sinking, being ripped apart by a freezing numbness that paralyzed my body and dragged me down into the dark depths of the ocean. Up and down. Left, right. Colors. Colors everywhere. Blue, yellow, aqua, green. I couldn't move my limbs. I couldn't feel my limbs. I knew I was supposed to have an arm here, a leg there, but there weren't any. There was only me. Only my mind, only that voice screaming and begging for my toes and fingers to wake up. Screaming for my arms to push, and my legs to kick. To save me. To do something.

Only blue. Only cold.

The water was everywhere, in my nose, my ears, my eyes, consuming me whole and tearing at my flesh until I was no more, just an empty shell, floating on the glassy surface of the

sea.

People came. People I recognized, people who mourned me and who were trying to find justice for me. They came in waves, so many that I was shocked. I hadn't even known that many people cared. I tried to talk to them, to yell and scream at them, until finally, I realized with a sort of numb agony, that they couldn't hear me, would never hear me again. Because I was dead, and there was no coming back from that.

People don't come as often anymore. The ones that do come, I don't recognize. They are strangers, simply here to enjoy the view, contemplate their own existence. I don't try to talk to them. I know it might help, speaking even if no one can hear me, but I don't see any reason in trying to come to peace with my death. I am still dead, either way.

I used to wonder if I might see a bright light. Something to show me that there is more than this, just waiting. Maybe that there is even a God. I don't wonder that anymore. I know there is no God, because God is supposed to be kind, and merciful. This is my own version of hell, and no merciful god would subject me to this.

They never found my murderer. Maybe that's why I'm still here, where it happened. Because nothing has ended yet, no matter how many years go by, how many people forget about the girl who died on that dreary beach in the middle of nowhere. The monster who killed me disappeared from everyone's mind, and got to live a long, happy life with their family. They didn't get their punishment, and I will never get my freedom. I am chained to this beach now, as I will be for eternity.

Thunder booms from overhead, and my mind wanders. Time means nothing here, for the dead, where shadows speak to me, and skeletons call my name. There is a knowing calm that settles over my mind, and slowly, completely, my thoughts begin to unravel. Memory is captured

by the wind, blown away into an incandescent fog. That old familiar fear sidles its' way up my spine, creates a shield around my curiosity.

And there, just to my left, I know there is something I am so desperately trying to forget.