

Love is a Beach

By : delirium

Mia's social status is beyond outcast, which is why she was so happy to have graduated the viciousness of high school and released into summer break. However, she is still puts up boundaries between herself and most everyone in the world because of an incident that left her scarred, but Mia's walls are caging her, rather than protecting her. Her OCD, depression, lack of self-esteem, severe germophobia, and severe phobia of life in general trap her from being the person that she is. Her only friend convinces her to go on vacation with him and a few other people to the beach, which she is not happy about, especially since it deals with things like car-trips, sand, hotels, dirty water, salt-smelling air, etc. What she is most unhappy about is the thing that bullied her and rubbed her fears in her face from third grade, through senior year: Ethan Davis. Mia has enough stress to tackle through without him going on the same trip, but can she tackle Ethan? Can she even manage herself? An OCD clean-freak at a beach with the slob who makes fun of her every move and word? Is there even a possibility of this ending well?



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Love is a Beach : Chapter 1

Sorry this is so short! The next chapter is longer. The main purpose of this is to be an introduction...read on! :)

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They all say nobody is perfect. I agree, because everyone has their own definition of perfect. However, if the things you do, the talents you have are considered perfect to the majority of people, then why not do it? What is the point of anything that doesn't strive for perfection? If you are terrible at one thing, you should be perfect at something to make up for it. This is a pretty evil way of thinking, because once you think about it too much, then you're completely consumed in the denial that might otherwise be known as your life. It takes the better person to accept imperfection. I guess I'm just not the better person.

~

Now this is perfection, I think to myself while raising about my three-hundredth square of chocolate to my lips during my favorite scene of *The Sound of Music*, the boat scene and the conversations that follow. Well, to be precise, it's my twelfth piece, not three-hundredth. Only thirteen more until the box is empty. From this description of how my day has gone so far, it might seem as though I had just broke up with a boyfriend and am eating chocolates I have bought myself and watching a sappy movie. The only thing true about that is that I am watching a sappy movie. The chocolates belong to my sister, who is allergic to the milk in the chocolates, a boy has never looked at me with any other expression than disgust, and I hate spending money.

Minus the fact that I'm getting fatter with each bite that I take, I am in complete contentment. My sheets have been washed last night, so I woke up to a clean-smelling bed. I remembered that it was summer vacation, so I of course popped in my favorite movie. And honestly, who watches their favorite movie without eating?

All mornings should be like this. No immediate stress and no talking to people. Those two things kind of very strongly link to one another in my case. I can't stand talking to creatures that probably judge me even more harshly than I judge myself, which is saying quite a bit.

To my great annoyance, the sun has started shining through the gaps between the blinds onto the screen. Determined to be as lazy as possible, I set my chocolates at the foot of the bed and contort and extend my body into the most uncomfortable position in unrecorded history and my hand reaches to adjust my blinds, while still paying attention to the movie.

BAM! Out of nowhere there is a crashing noise (which turned out to be the door slamming open against the wall), our dog Mocha barking, a loud shout from both my sister and cousin, causing me to be startled to the point where I scream and completely fall out of my bed. I note that the blinds aren't even all the way fixed.

"What is your *problem*?" I shout at the still-laughing juvenile, pathetic excuses for human beings, while helping myself up, and pushing Mocha away from me. Dear god, I *hate* animals.

My explosion just prompts more giggling from them, and more barking from especially when I complete my task of fixing the blinds and pause the movie. "Aw calm down Mia, we're only having a little fun," laughs my sister Paige, punching me in the arm. She is literally over forty pounds lighter than me, but it still hurt.

"Ow! Scaring me and interrupting my movie wasn't enough? Now you have to *hit* me too?"

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"Ooh, must be that time of the month," says my cousin Molly wide-eyed, holding back a giggle.

I frown, less than amused. "Yeah, for you," I reply acidly, looking pointedly between her legs, waiting for her reaction.

"What?! Is it showing?!" She looks down there too, to find nothing. "That's not fair," she wails. "Why do you have to be such a bitch?" She and Paige both glare at me.

"It is commonly referred to as karma. Now get out." Seeing as all three of us are thoroughly annoyed, they comply, with only a few words to me.

There are many sad things about this situation. One) for something like this to happen was not unusual, two) Paige is thirteen and Molly is fourteen, three) I'm turning nineteen this year, four) I should be used to this by now, but I still get scared, and five) I'm the only one in this house who has a problem with this happening.

I mean, my aunt tells them not to do it, that "people like me" shouldn't be messed with, but it's too difficult for her to hide the fact that she is counting minutes for me to leave for college. Congratulations, Aunt Kay, your annoying niece will be at the opposite end of the country, so no one can threaten the normality of this family.

I was officially diagnosed with OCD and clinical depression when I was like, ten. I've been seeing a therapist since then, every week. If routine dies, I die with it. If things are not to the point where people think that they're perfect, it upsets me. I look at it like this: I am the exact opposite of perfect, so to make up for it, everything else has to at least come close.

It's understandable that everyone who knows me hates me at least a little bit, especially with Aunt Kay. I mean, she didn't exactly ask for Paige and I. Well mainly, me. She thinks Paige is something of a gift from God, even though she has to take her to the allergist all the time and be careful what Paige eats, Paige is still one of the sweetest creatures that could ever walk the earth, from her perspective. Me on the other hand, I'm highly difficult to get along with, and avoid people as much as possible.

However, to compensate for my abysmal personality, Aunt Kay never has to worry about cleaning the house, due to my intense germ phobia.

I squirt hand sanitizer on my hands before returning to my chocolate, and rewinding the Sound of Music to the part where I left off, thinking how hard life is when you're constantly being judged. Everyone judges everyone, but I feel like I bear the brunt of that judgment, because I have both terrible looks and a terrible personality. In fact the only one who doesn't judge me is-

"Imagine all the people...living for todaaaaay...!" My thoughts are interrupted by my ringtone, knowing that there's only one person that could possibly be calling.

"Blake?" I can't keep the smile off my face as I talk to my best friend in the entire world. Well, that is a somewhat less pathetic way of saying that he's my *only* friend in the entire world, but it doesn't matter.

"Mamma Mia, here I go a again! Mamma Mia, how can I resist ya?" Blake sings back at me, while I laugh.

When we were talking one time, Blake and I both agreed that if we were movies, I would be a scientific documentary and he would be the greatest musical film of all time. Like, a combination of all the classics put together with a few modern-day ones. Honestly, those assertions are pretty accurate, because I am a walking encyclopedia of science and he is a walking Broadway musical, and he can get along with anything with a pulse.

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Because of these key traits about us, I would be going to Harvard on a physics scholarship and he would be going to Julliard as a theatre major. We were unhappy about the distance, but were pretty happy the way it worked out, since we'd both got into some of the best schools in the country. The one difference is that Blake is naturally talented, but I'm not naturally smart; I just have no life.

"So what do you want?" I inquire.

"Morning to you too!"

"Hey, it's barely nine! I think I'm entitled to ask that question. Especially since your normal waking up time is like, noon." It's true. There were so many instances in high school where Blake would oversleep and nonchalantly show up with his smiling face. It happened ridiculously often; it was worrying if he showed up on time for an entire week.

"Mom woke me up. She wanted me to say bye to Charlotte since she's leaving home for the first time for dance camp."

I can imagine his facial reaction. "Don't roll your eyes! Charlotte is so sweet. She just might be the kid to prove my 'all kids are assholes' theory wrong." Blake had no idea how lucky he was to be blessed with such a cute, caring little sister. I would give anything if we could just trade sisters.

Blake laughs. "Your sister isn't too bad herself." See? He just has an incredible way with people. "Just a little immature, that's all."

"Oh please. That is not all. Going back to the original question, what do you want?"

"Would coming over be too great of a request?"

"I'll let you in this time."

"Great, see you in ten!"

I hang up, clean my phone with a Wet One wipe, throw the wipe away, and return to the chocolates and the movie, willing it to come to a good stopping point before Blake came, but knowing as well as anyone who has common sense that there is no such thing as a good stopping point in the Sound of Music before the ending, which was pushing limits. Oh, my love for the Sound of Music could move mountains.

And this, folks, is why I only have one friend.

~½

Thanks for reading! :D

Chapter 2

"When I find myself in times of trouble, mother Mary come to me! Speaking words of wisdom, let it beâ!" is Blake greeting as he swings my door open cheerfully. I do my best to try not to crack a smile, but my attempts are in vain. Oh, how I love singing The Beatles with my gay friend. There's just nothing like it.

~

Honestly, our love for old movies and music is what has kept us together as friends since the eighth grade. We met when we were in eighth grade. Blake was the new kid and I was the fat kid. Besides those general descriptions, we each had other social disadvantages: my entire was plagued with acne and I was hard to talk to and Blake was the only gay boy in eighth grade. As outcasts we stuck together, and I had found the only person I could really be myself around.

I remember the exact circumstances when we met.

It was halfway through the year in eighth grade. Blake had three choices: to sit with the popular kids who made fun of him, to sit all by himself, or to sit next to the fat girl with blistering acne who was eating lunch at an empty table. For whatever reason, he chose the third option. I guess everyone hates sitting alone.

"Hi, I'm Blake. I'm in your history class," he introduced himself. I nodded and looked down; I was unaccustomed to someone being so nice to me.

"Do you mind if I sit with you?" Did I *mind*? Um, I barely had any human conversation in my whole life, and someone was offering to keep me company, and even had the decency to ask whether I minded. Why in the world would I mind?

Instead of saying all that, however, I simply shrugged. Blake smiled and sat down across from me with his lunch. He saw my Beatles water bottle and broke into a huge grin. "Hey, you like the Beatles?"

Shyly, I nodded. As usual, I was at a loss for words. It was a bit shocking to have someone talk to me.

"What's your favorite song by them?" I shrugged. He must've thought the reason for my sitting by myself was because I was a mute.

He was unfazed, however. "Me too. There's just too many." Without warning he broke into singing "Obla di, obla da! Life goes onâ!" I couldn't help myself. I smiled.

Blake stopped singing. "Hey. Was that a hint of a smile I detected?" He pretended to be in shock.

I nodded and said softly, "I like that one too."

I thought his eyes would pop out of his head. But instead of saying something obnoxious like "wow, it talks!" he just said, "You have a nice voice. You should talk more." The degree of his niceness shut me up for the rest of lunch.

Well, almost. I debated with myself to ask him a question, and halfway through lunch, I made up my mind to ask him. "Why does everyone hate you?"

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"I'm gay," he said matter-of-factly. Well. That was different. I mean, I wasn't homophobic or anything, but that kind of confession never happened in our little tiny Californian town, especially not in middle school. He didn't seem to care one bit.

We sat quietly through most of lunch. When the bell rang and we got up, I felt it would be courteous to thank him for sitting next to me, or say how lovely it was meeting him. However, I could muster up no more than an "I'm Mia."

~

However, in high school, Blake's infectious personality won tons of people over especially when talking to gay guys became a cool thing, and he got massively respected and I remained an outcast, even when my horrendous skin cleared up half way through senior year. Despite all of his other good friends, he still talks to me, not caring about my social status. It takes a truly, truly good person to stay friends with someone like me, when there are so many other alternatives.

"Hi. Why are you here?"

Blake pretends to look shocked at my "hostility" and then sings, "You say YES! I say NO! You say goodbye! I say hellooooo! Hello, helloooooooooo!"

"I'm here because you told me I could come, remember?"

"Vaguely," I respond, with a flick of the wrist.

"There's dog hair on your bed," says Blake, picking at the scattered bits of Mocha's brown fur on my marble-white blanket.

I turn pale.

"They did it again?" he asks.

I nod hurriedly, while rushing to the closet and getting my small vacuum cleaner. "Mmm hmm," I reply distractedly, flicking on the on switch, and sterilizing my bed. Blake watches idly as I put my little vacuum back in the closet and tear the covers off the bed, carrying them to the laundry room. Blake follows me.

"Well, what prompted you to leave home so early?" I ask curiously, trying to avoid tripping over my feet.

"I wanted to ask you something."

"Ask."

"Well, I'll wait until you're done. Here let me help you." Blake lifts the blanket out of my arms.

When we're back in my room, Blake sees the paused movie. "Oh the Sound of Music! Can we finish it?"

I wave him away and ask, "Why wait to ask the question?"

"Because if I asked you while you were walking, you'd crash into a wall or something." Blake grins.

"Well, I'm sitting, so spit it out!"

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"I was wondering if you wanted to drive down to Long Beach with me and a few friends."

I stare at him, wondering what could possibly possess him to ask me of all people, such a question, when he must already know my answer. I want to say something, but I just keep staring at him, unable to comprehend what he is asking.

"You know my friend Emma? Well, her parents have a beach house in Long Beach, right near the beach. But they're not using it this summer, because they're headed for Paris. But they said that she's welcome to invite a few friends to stay there." Blake finishes his explanation with a smile. His smile fades slightly when he sees the look on my face.

"What do you think?" he asks cautiously.

What I want to say: What do you think I think?! Couldn't you have guessed what I think after knowing me for five years? I mean, what you're saying involves some of my greatest fears ever, not to mention that I don't even think Emma likes me that much, because she falls into the category I have personally named "most human beings." Are your friends even alright with you asking the biggest freak ever to come with you? Why are you even asking me this? So you can hear me say no, and you can have the sweet joy of me admitting my own oddness to you? Orâ lorâ ;

What I say: "That's a lovely offer, and if I were a normal person, I'd most likely readily accept. But I'm not, and I'd like to respectfully decline. The Sound of Music sounds like a really good idea to right now." I reach for the remote, but Blake blocks my arm with his.

"Come on Mia," he urges. We're not going to be in high school next year anymore. We're not going to see each other every day. You're going to *Harvard*. Who knows how well we'll be able to keep in touch?" He picks at a loose thread on my pillowcase.

"Irrelevant," I mumble, snatching the pillow away, and heading for my desk drawer.

"Let me finish. You're always afraid, and this time you're afraid to have fun. I know it's hard to control fear, believe me. But I think you should go. I mean, ten years from now, you're going to want to look back on all the fun you had, not the fun that you could have had but were too scared to. I mean, let's be honest here, you didn't have the time of your life in high school. But this is just one experience, and really, what's the worst that could happen?"

"A shark could eat me." I open the desk drawer and instantly locate the scissors. *Slice!* I throw the thread in the garbage, and arrange my pillow back onto my bed.

Blake half-smiles. "If I promise you that a shark won't eat you, will you come?"

"Blake, I know that if I come, I'm going to manage to disgrace myself in some terrible, unforeseen way in front of your friends, who by the way, don't even want me."

"Well, wouldn't you rather regret going than not going?"

"Not if a shark eats me," I say stubbornly, finishing the pillow and sitting back onto the bed.

"Mia. I hate to think of you sitting at home studying while I have the great time that you deserve to have. You've missed out a lot of opportunities. Why miss another one?"

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"Why not?"

"Well, it's one more regret."

"Just one."

"And if you go, it'll just be one less regret." I start to think. He gives me a four hundred-watt smile, knowing that I'm not at a solid no anymore.

There's a knock on the door. Of course, when I'm in my room alone, it's always, "hey why not drop a nuclear bomb on Mia?" but when Blake visits, people have the respect and consideration to knock first.

"Who is it?" I ask warily, knowing exactly who it is. Paige and Molly open the door and come in without my permission and rush towards Blake.

They sit on the bed next to him and start spewing out everything that they hold in their minds (which, quite frankly, isn't much, let alone anything interesting or valuable).

Most girls believe that gay guys only know how to talk about hair, makeup, and clothes, which is not Blake's style at all, but my sister and cousin are girls who hold this belief.

They are truly relentless. They make an infinite number of inaccurate comparisons between Blake and Kurt from Glee. And while they're doing that, they keep asking him where the best places for makeup are, where does he get his hair done, what does he think of Katy Perry, etc.

He doesn't seem to mind. In fact, he looks more amused than annoyed. Blake is the god of patience. When Molly goes as far as to ask him for a manicure, he even laughs out loud. "I'm only good at doing my own nails," he replies with a wink in my direction, making me laugh.

"You know, maybe next time you visit Mia, we could all go to the mall together!" suggests Paige. Oh that's sweet; now that her favorite gay friend is here, she likes me all of a sudden. Love you too, sister dear.

"Sounds great. You know they have a new DDR station in the middle of the mall?" And just like that, they have an entire conversation about a dancing game that I have the inability to play.

"Yeah, and then maybe you three can all get your make-up done. You know Blake, he's such a beauty queen," I say, stifling a laugh.

"Guurlll," says Blake, cracking everyone up.

Then Paige ruins it. "What do you mean us three? You need it *way* more than we do." Dear lord! I want to strangle her. Is every girl this vile when they're thirteen? I'm almost six years older than her! I'm legally an adult! What in the world makes her think she has the right to be so stuck-up and rude? This is one of the many times where I wonder how we could possibly be born from the same parents.

"Well yeah," says Blake quickly. "Because we all know that my beauty dominates everyone else's." Gradually, he brings their conversation to a nice stopping point, and they excuse themselves from my room, giggling and talking like the best friends that they are.

"She didn't mean that," said Blake, when they're gone.

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"She clearly did," I say, thoroughly miffed.

"She's too young to know what the hell she's saying. She's thirteen. When has she even had the time to really see people for who they really are? Especially since she lives in this town. She hasn't had the opportunity to be the better person."

"That," I say, turning on him, "is the dumbest thing I have ever heard. When you're young, you say rude things because they're true, and when you get older, you control that honesty. Maybe she'll regret seeing people like this one day, but she knew exactly what she was saying."

"Now *that* is the dumbest thing I've ever heard." Blake smiles.

Still put off by my ever-obnoxious sister, I cross my arms and lean into the back of the bed. I feel the dying urge to go sleep, all of a sudden, weary from the overwhelming amount of sugar I consumed earlier this morning. Oh dear, I'm possibly the most lazy, gluttonous, inactive person on the face of this miserable earth.

I ask myself why an innocent person such as myself was cursed with the ability to eat until the end of time, when vicious teenagers like Molly are content with a few meager bites of food. Paige can also eat as much as I do, but for some reason she is a little twig at ninety pounds, and I am an absolute bucket of lard at a hundred and forty. Life is not fair.

Blake interrupts my drowsily unhappy thoughts by asking "So you're thinking about coming with me?"

I yawn. "You wouldn't want your friends to be miserable because I'm thereâ!"

"You're my friend too."

"I hate oceans."

"Mia, you *know* you want to come. You'll have so much fun if you do. I'd be *really* happy if you came. Don't you want to have a great new experience, with wonderful people such as myselfâ!"

My eyelids are drooping. "Go away. I need a nap."

Blake's eyes light up. Shit. I didn't answer his question. He knows he's won me over. "Does that mean your coming?" He just can't stop smiling.

I look at him sulkily through glazed eyes. "Do I even have a choice?"

Chapter 3

"Honey, are you sure this is a good idea?" I stare down at the mahogany table, trying to avert my eyes away from my aunt. I notice a stain. Absentmindedly, I get up, get a wipe, and clean it up. I wish Blake hadn't left. He's good at convincing people. Far better at it than I am.

I still don't look at her. "Well, I would like to go." Honestly, this is kind of embarrassing. I'm eighteen and a half and I still need permission from my aunt to do something. I mean, I don't technically need it, but she does have her ways.

Aunt Kay is without a doubt the most controlling person I've ever had the misfortune of knowing. I know I have OCD, but I think she does too. If she doesn't have control of something, she just goes crazy. She was like this ever since I could remember. Even before I came to live with her.

I mean, I don't think she's truly an awful person, because she could have just said "no" to taking in Paige and I.

When I was eight and Paige was two, our parents died in a bus incident. Social workers were going crazy trying to find a place for us, and just when they were about to put us in a foster home, Aunt Kay came to the rescue, and opened up her house. Uncle Mike is Dad's brother, so I'd say he opened his house, but we all know who's the boss of the house. Poor, quiet, gentle Uncle does whatever his demanding wife tells him to. Anyway, we've been living with her for about ten years now, and they've been decent for Paige, and miserable for me.

Aunt Kay was expecting us to grieve for a bit, and then come back to being cute little kids. Well. That obviously didn't happen. I cried every single day until I was eleven. I had to see an expensive therapist who lived about two hours away. There were constantly calls from school about me getting harassed and not defending myself. Whenever she invited one of her friends over and introduced me, I didn't know how to talk to them. I couldn't do anything. And I don't even want to start on my teen years.

I suppose I can sort of see from her point of view, as no one would ever want to live with someone who rearranges their entire kitchen and goes crazy with one thing out of place and has to have ten chicken nuggets every Thursday, no exceptions.

I'm not saying that I'm a easy person to live with, because clearly I'm not. But Auntie isn't doing anything to make it better.

"Why would you like to? This seems very out of character for you," she muses, wondering what conspiracy theory will be plotted against her.

"Well, Blake offered, and it seems like an opportunity that doesn't come around often. Especially for people like me," I say, trying to make it seem like I have a valid argument.

"Well is prom, but you didn't go to that."

Crap, she's still pissed about me not going to prom. Hmmâwhat can I say to that? "Butâprom is expensive! This won't cost you anything." My aunt may be well off, but she's still a penny-pincher.

"What if you see a shark? I'll have to pay for therapy for the rest of *my* life."

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I am now officially paranoid about seeing a shark. I gulp. I wonder if she heard the conversation with me and Blake. Could she have heard what we said and now be doing this on purpose?

"I won't see a shark. They don't come out to shallow waters, and I won't be going beyond there. It's a scientific fact." Ha. Deal with that. Not even she can question my vast knowledge of science. Hopefully she won't be able to tell that I just made that "scientific fact" up on the spot. I take care not to meet her eyes, which narrow as she studies what I have said.

"Alright fine. You don't see a shark. But you hate vacations! Whenever we take one, you're miserable. You're dissatisfied with 5-star hotels, and honey, I can guarantee you will not be spending any time at those."

I don't know what to say. "I'll do better," I respond meekly. Then I sit up a little straighter. There's no room for timid-ness when arguing with Aunt Kay. You have to match her ridiculous stubbornness.

"I don't ask to go a lot of places compared to other kids. Paige goes out all the time, and she's thirteen. I'm eighteen and I'm asking to go one place, because I have never done anything like this before. And I don't want another regret," I add, quoting Blake.

She throws her hands up. "Fine! Take it up with Dr. Farrow." She begins to stalk away, but then she abruptly halts.

I tilt my head. "Yes?"

"Will this affect your studies for Harvard?" Of course she'd ask this. I mean, she's not too crazy about me, but I, in a sense have an effect on her reputation, which she loves more than anything. When people looked at my odd behavior in the past, she'd just be ashamed, but now, she tells them "hey, she doesn't have much personality, but she's going to Harvard!" Oh, my loving aunt.

"You know me," I say simply, which is enough to appease her. She knows me too well. Or so she thinks.

I head for my room, eager to escape my aunt's critical stare. This time I call Blake. "Hey!"

"Hey. What's up?"

"I have permission to go get eaten by a shark," I say glumly.

"Great! Trust me, you'll have a great time. Emma likes you, so don't worry about the people."

"Oh yeah. Speaking of people. Who is coming? Just you me and Emma?"

"There's going to be five people. Me, you, Emma, Bryan Griffet, andâ" he hesitates.

"And who?" I prompt, feeling uneasy.

A muffled, incoherent sound comes through the phone. "Hello?" Silence. "Blake you'd better tell me, or I'm hanging up!"

"Don't hang up! It'sâ Ethan Davis." My eyes widen and my phone slips from my grasp and crashes to the floor with a force so alarming that I'm surprised it doesn't break. I hastily bend over and pick it up, after recovering from my little spasm

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"If you say 'please' five-hundred times, I'll go." Ha! Blake's terrible with numbers of any kind. He hates numbers more than he loves singing. In case you've missed anything, that's a lot of hatred.

Blake feeds my smug feeling by muttering, "Five-hundredâ!"

"Oh, all right. Well I'll cut you some slack. You already said it thirty-one times, so you only need to say it four-hundred and sixty-nine more times." Oh, I am good.

"You're crazy!"

"And I'm not going. Nice knowing you, Blake." Again, just as I'm about to click the 'end' button, I hear him say in a rather small-sounding voice, "Please?"

~

As I'm walking the hallways in the building where the office of my therapist, Dr. Farrow lies, I shake my head in disbelief. He actually did it. He counted out five-hundred times. I feel like an idiot. I was so sure he wouldn't do it. Why is he so desperate for me to make a fool of myself?

I open the door and face the smell of vanilla air freshener and the kind voice saying "Hi Mia!"

"Hello," I respond, with as much enthusiasm as I can muster. I always speak in what I think is a normal tone of voice, but most people seem to mistake it for gloominess, so I always have to try extra hard. Also, my current mood is not helping me at all whatsoever.

Being completely used to my personality she just says, "So what's up?"

I waste no time launching in about the trip, and everything that comes with it. My words spill out of my mouth like water from a pitcher.

After I'm done, I take a deep breath, amazed at the amount that I could talk without realizing it. I wait for Dr. Farrow to lecture me about making promises I can't keep (referring to the bargain I made with Blake), but to my disgruntlement, she says, "Hmm, sounds like fun."

Thrown off, I say, "Yeah, maybe to some people."

"So are you going?"

I pause to think for a moment. "Well, I promised Blake I would, but if you disapprove, I can say I have a clinical reason that I shouldn't go."

"So you came here for disapproval?" Ah! Seriously, why can't she just get to the point?

"Yes. Do I have it?"

She takes off her glasses and smiles. "You're not going to like me for this, but I think it's a great idea."

I open my mouth to interrupt her, but she continues. "You're going off to college. You *hate* change and transition. So you could think of this trip as a practice transition. Plus circumstances will allow you to come out of your shell. It'll be a beneficial experience."

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Hmph. I doubt it. "But I'm so scared," I say in a pathetic, small voice.

Her green eyes meet my brown ones. "That's why you should go."

~

I get back home thoroughly annoyed. The world isn't on my side today. I just seem to repel all the goodness in the world.

I go into the kitchen and make myself an entire *box* of macaroni and cheese, and sit down in front of the TV.

As I'm watching some mindless crap on tv that I don't even know the name of, I contemplate this whole situation. If I could just be simple-minded, I would see it as a fun time. But I *can't*. I take an enormous spoonful of mac and cheese. Why am I always so scared?

What if I wasn't the scared one? Maybe everything is actually scary and everyone else is just too stupid to be scared. Oh, how I'd love for that to be the case. If it was, I bet I could take over the world or something. I am living proof that wishful thinking will get you nowhere.

My deep thoughts are interrupted by the front door swinging open. I only jump slightly, since I'm feeling so drowsy. To think: it's only about four in the afternoon.

My favorite person in the world, who goes by the name of Paige is standing at the doorway. Joy.

Love is a Beach

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