

## Evan Hates the Beach

Evan hates the beach. He only ever goes cause his friends make him. He only ever goes anywhere cause his friends make him, or his family makes him. Its not worth it. The hassle of walking around his scratchy, salt-burnt boardshorts and having to put up with sand and the noise and chance he might scratch his phone screen again because it always gets sand all over it and when you try to clean the sand off you always make little scratches on the phone screen. It's a new phone. The newest version of the phone. He should've bought the case when he bought the phone. This doesn't seem worth the hassle.

Its so hot out today. Evan should take off his shirt, he's at the beach after all. But then he would have to be topless. Then he'd have to remind everyone what he looks like. He's sitting up on his new towel, feeling the sting and occasional bite of wind-whipped sand across his calves getting all over his new towel. Its an expensive beach towel from an expensive brand it doesn't seem right to bring it to just another beach. Evan crosses his arms over his lap, fiddling the soft, sandy hem of his t-shirt through his fingers, mulling over the manoeuvre of slowly wrenching his garb from underneath his potbelly, over his head and bundling it into his bag. His nice bag – the nice bag he got for his birthday that he promised himself he was only going to use for university but now he's brought it to the beach for yet another beach trip with his surfy friends who probably have a better time without him anyway.

One of Evan's friends asks if he's alright. Evan stops biting his lip to unclench his jaw long enough to respond with an affirmative. The friend, irritatingly, pushes the question again.

He's fine, Evan reassures pointedly. Evan is just taking a moment to acclimatise. The friend asks if Evan is gonna go for a swim, pointing out that the waters kinda warm today and the winds down so it won't be too cold out of the water. Evan freezes for a moment. He hadn't considered the prospect of actually swimming. He'd definitely have to take of his shirt for

that and the water does look nice but it also looks cold and then when he's out of the water the wind, which he knows is there, is going to make him colder and then he'll be even sandier once he gets back to his towel. The blaring sun wraps tightly around Evan's neck. It's hot out today. Evan tears off his shirt and rolls over to his stomach, telling his friend that he doesn't feel like swimming and that he doesn't feel well. Which isn't a lie, Evan figures. He *doesn't* feel well and he doesn't want to be here but his friends forced him to under the guise of wanting him there. The shrill, icy chatter of the other beachgoers feels like it's getting louder and the sunlight is surely getting harsher and his expensive towel and bag are getting sandier. Evan's arms are already pulsing with the early stages of burn and he knows the burn is coming and he always gets burnt when he's at the beach. Evan should probably apply his sunscreen now. His friend to his other side who he just now noticed got a haircut (but shouldn't have because he always thought she looked better with long hair) just threw him the sunscreen bottle but he doesn't want to draw attention to his skin being out and about. This doesn't feel fair to Evan. His eyes drift from the wavy, satiny peaks of the sand stretching out in front of him to the red-brick toilet block, off the sand at the back of the beach nestled in a thicket of lush, shadowy palm fronds. Evan bites down a little too hard on his lip. Evan's mouth feels cottony. He shouldn't have dry swallowed that paracetamol tablet before but he needed the pain relief as soon as he senses any kind of headache comes on otherwise he gets a full migraine and this headache came on quick (he missed his second coffee) and that meant he probably wasn't going to feel well for the rest of the but he went to the beach anyway. Evan starts nibbling on the nail of his pointer. A tiny grain of sand grates between his incisors. His friends are talking about - how their other friend isn't hanging out with the group as much - over the top of Evan's back. He feels a brush of sand on his calf skin as his friend rolls and tosses over trying to get comfortable. They each announce they're going to swim. Evan isn't going to swim. He's gonna hang back here. It's too noisy near the water, it

always is and the group of footy boys who were laughing at the old man getting changed near the showers are now passing a bottle of something and heading towards the water – it doesn't seem worth the hassle of walking around in wet boardshorts. Maybe Evan shouldn't have come to the beach. He's already been here half an hour and it's not fun for Evan. The bathroom block isn't that far away. Evan could dash there without anyone knowing and change back into his real clothes. His soft shirt. The black cargos without the stretch elastic waist. His towel keeps gathering sand through its fibres. But Evan doesn't want to go home again. He's always alone at home but his friends want to be here at the beach. Evan's always alone at home and he doesn't mean to be it's just easier for everyone involved. It's not worth it. The bathrooms aren't that far away. His friends have darted off towards the waves. Evan nervously packs his towel and his bag and his shirt and his empty, sandy water bottle and stands up. He doesn't care about the sand anymore. He's getting choked up. He's definitely not crying. He's definitely not crying as he walks away from his friends as they ask where he's going. Evan is definitely not crying. Evan hates the beach. It's just not for him.