

## Venice Beach

Cody loved Venice Beach. She was so lucky to live here, ten miles from Los Angeles, with the skaters, the surfers and the beautiful street singers. Every day she would walk along the Boardwalk, drinking in the sights and the sounds of this wonderful, world famous, place.

Cody was twelve and she attended Venice High School, where they filmed Grease. Cody liked Grease; she hoped one day she'd meet a boy like Danny Zuko. Until then she contented herself by watching the boarders rattle around the curves and crevices of the skatepark, twisting high and hollering boasts to their friends. Cody recognised one of them from the tenth grade. She thought he was called Toby; he had a tattoo that snaked from his ankle to his knee. He was hot.

Cody carried on, past the weightlifters and street-wrestlers. She thought they spent more time admiring themselves than actually exerting themselves. One of them had a long curled moustache; he reminded Cody of a seal.

Cody didn't have to be home until five; her Mom had already texted her to let her know it was pizza night which was great because who didn't love pizza?!

The beach was busy; it was packed with people who had finished work and school for the day. They were sat close together, chattering and laughing. Everybody smiled on Venice Beach.

The sea was a deep turquoise blue and still like glass. There were swimmers splashing around: some playing games and some coursing through the water like dolphins. Cody let her eyes drift to the horizon, turned up the music coming through her headphones, and relaxed.

There was something in the water that didn't seem quite right, Cody thought. It was a splash of strange colour: a green amidst the blue. Cody was still daydreaming so she just carried on looking, trying to work out what it was. Her eyes lost it for a moment and then found it again: a bobbing emerald object, moving with the swell.

Then it lazily spun and revealed a spot of yellow. Cody jerked out of her haze and pulled her earphones out. It was a kid dressed in the green of the Broadway elementary school. There was a kid in the water! Cody yelled straight away to the four guys who were playing with a volleyball not far from her: 'Hey, hey, there's a kid in the water and they're not moving!' One of the guys spun quickly.

'Where, where are you looking?' His friends did the same. Cody rushed forward.

'There, there. Look, follow my finger.' There was silence then one of them, the one with longer hair and jet black skin, swore and shouted out.

'Damn, the girl's right. There's a kid in the water.' He didn't even pause to take off his t-shirt. He just plunged straight into the sea and started to swim powerfully towards the shape. It wasn't close to shore; it was maybe four hundred metres out. He seemed a strong swimmer though.

One of the other men raced up the beach, loudly calling for the lifeguards. People sat up from their towels and put down their bats and balls, turning their heads to the sea as they realised what was going on.

Within a minute, there were three lifeguards on the scene. One was on his walkie talkie; he was demanding a boat. Cody could see the swimmer; he was about half way there. But the body in the water wasn't moving. How long had it been floating?

The lifeguards yelled at people to get out of the water. Their boat roared up and sped towards the shape and the brave swimmer. Cody's legs were shaking; what if the kid was dead. A woman nearby was crying; she had her hands to her face and her eyes fixed on the placid sea.

The swimmer had reached the shape and was on his back, paddling back. There were no clouds in the sky; the afternoon sun still shone brightly. Everybody on the beach was silent and watching. Somebody was standing beside Cody. It was Toby. 'Don't look, kid,' he said. 'I don't think it's good news.'

The boat had reached the swimmer and the lifeguards pulled the man into the boat and lifted the shape, now recognisable as a little girl, hair all over her face, out of the water. They surrounded her straight away, pushing down on her chest, as the boat circled and raced back to shore.

The three lifeguards and the swimmer leapt out of the boat, carrying the body of the little girl between them. They rushed past Cody and she saw the dreadfully pale face of the girl. Her lips were frost blue and her eyes were closed.

Cody stood stock still, almost not daring to move, as the lifeguards were joined by one of the roaming medical staff that were always on duty on the beach. He pressed the chest of the little girl again and again, again and again. 'Come on kid, breathe damn it,' muttered Toby beside her.

And then she moved, convulsed and coughed; Cody thought it sounded like she was barking. Water erupted from her mouth as she writhed and jerked. The doctor stood back and pressed his hands together. The little girl spluttered and then spewed out more water, more of the hungry sea that had held her and swallowed her up.

Within five minutes the little girl was sitting up. Cody realised that she hadn't moved a muscle. Then she saw the swimmer pointing at her; he was surrounded by people slapping him on the back and he was saying, 'It was her; we didn't see the kid. She did. That girl saw her; that girl saved her.' Toby was grinning beside her and he took her hand.

'Come on,' he said. 'You're a hero!' The beach news team were already on sight and there were cameras flashing. Toby urged Cody forward and into the crowd of people who were smiling at her and congratulating her. The little girl was standing up now and she looked at Cody through eyes that were red from the salt and the coughing and the tears. But she was alive and she was so nearly dead.

Cody's cellphone was ringing; it was her Mom. Cody could only blurt out some of the details and it didn't sound like her Mom really understood. Toby took the phone and tried to make more sense: 'She's saved a life; she's brilliant!' He said. 'You can watch it on the news tonight!'

Toby walked her home after the doctors and the lifeguards had taken her details and the news team had asked her to tell them what she did. Cody tried to remember the chain of events but it was all so quick; she thought she got it right.

Cody and her Mom watched the news that night and then the phone started ringing. All of their family and friends wanted to speak to Cody. Cody's friend, Jemma, thought it was 'the coolest thing ever!'

That night, before she went to bed, her Mom stopped her on the stairs. She looked deep into her eyes and she said, 'Cody, I am so proud of you today. Without you, a little girl would have died. I love you.' Cody hugged her hard and later, as she lay in bed, she was so happy that there hadn't been a death on Venice Beach today. She wondered if she would see Toby tomorrow....