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Exercise 2

Beach Bum

In my garage hangs a small pair of booties that once completed my tiny wetsuit. They hang above the TV surrounded by surfboards and posters. I look at those booties every time I step into the garage. My father hung them up in an effort to make the garage into his mancave. I was much older when I became acquainted with those booties again; on my garage wall. I had never seen something so adorably small. Who knew they made toddler wetsuits. My dad told about the glory days when he used to take me surfing with him. I had gone surfing in the ocean before I could ride a bike. I have always felt drawn to the ocean, and I believe much of that comes from these exciting adventures during my childhood. I have no idea where that wetsuit is today, and I have hardly any memory of the days when I wore it. But every time I see those little booties it reminds of my favorite place on earth and the feelings that come with being by the ocean.

Realization

Senior year of high school was the beginning of a new version of myself. I had just gotten out of a two-year relationship and I was struggling to be on my own. I began learning more and more about myself and who I was. I dug up old family photos and started to learn new stories of my childhood. I posted these photos all over my wall and brought many of them on my out-of-state college endeavor. My favorite photos were those of my father and I on the beach. There

weren't many of them but the few that I had filled me with a form of nostalgia that I only feel when I'm at the beach. There I was running towards the waves in black and white with my father chasing behind me board in hand. The wind wisped my hair as we breathed the ocean air.

Senior skip day was right around the corner and I had suggested we all go to the beach. We planned it on a Friday, so that we could camp on the beach, thus extending our skip day. I was deeply depressed my senior year, but this was the first day I had felt truly happy. Sitting there on the beach as the wind blew my hair all over the place and staring into the ocean, I felt at peace. All of the high school drama, all of the sadness, all of the anxiety seemed blow away in the wind. We set out to climb Cape Kiwanda to watch the sunset. Anyone who has been to Pacific City has seen this giant sand dune that makes up the Cape. It is the perfect spot for sunsets on the ocean, but a pain to climb. After nearly my entire class had finished climbing it, we sat in a row and watched the purples, pinks, and blues as the sun set on one of the happiest days of my life. I looked around my friends; Kylee, who taught me activism; Wendy, who taught me self-love; and Gabby, who taught me to always smile and then at my peers; Dylan, whom almost dropped out; Hunter and held back a tear. This was why I kept going each day and pushed through the hardest part of my life, so that I could be a part of this day. So, I could sit on this dune and take in the beauty of the Oregon coast.

My parents spent many days at the beach when they were in high school. They even got in trouble one day when they skipped class and their van broke down on the way home; exposing their plan to their parents. My dad loved surfing with his friends while my mom and her friends explored the coast. The way my parents talked about these days makes me sad that I didn't experience it more often. They loved these days and they loved each other. During my mother's senior year, she became pregnant with me and, as you would expect, my parents' world turned

upside down, but there was one constant: the beach. Throughout her pregnancy and my younger years, we frequented the beach; this time as a family. I can only imagine the joy I felt sitting in the sand or out on the ocean with my father sitting behind me as we rode the small waves into the shore. I wonder if the happiness I felt at the beach my senior year was something my parents experienced as well. It was one of the few very constants throughout the major changes the pregnancy brought on. It was one of these days that my favorite photo was taken. There I sit in a white long-sleeve tee and socks paired with floral pants on top of my father's shoulders. He has his black wetsuit pulled up to his waist and black sweatshirt cover his top half. My hands are resting on his head as he holds me with one hand and a white surfboard behind us with the other. There we are precariously balancing on a white sand beach with the beautiful green foliage that makes up Oregon's coast as the back drop. My one-year old smile is gleaming as my dad seems to chuckle. I look at this photo often and the few others of my dad and I at the beach. I can't help but smiling whenever I see them. I look at my parents on the beach as teenagers and their happiness and I can see that same happiness in me in the photos of senior skip day. That happiness is apparent in the photo of my father and me. The times spent at the beach are our happiest times. These times are where my favorite photos came from and I will spend the rest of my life chasing that feeling. The feeling of absolute peace as the waves crash on the shore and the sand crinkles between my toes.