

By The Shoreline

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The boisterous waves crashed against the sandy, treasure-encrusted shoreline. Collecting any shells or other goodies I could find, I noticed a frosted piece of glass smoothed by the crashing ocean. More peculiar though, it was a shade of ultramarine blue I never had in my collection. The subtle imprint of the letters “SELT” untouched by any natural factors. I constantly found myself on the expansive beaches surrounding our little town in central Florida. If I wasn't cleaning up garbage or saving sea turtles, I accumulated a sizable amount of treasures gifted by the ocean. Sea glass was my favorite.

Eroding the jagged edges of a shard of glass once used for an ulterior use, it transformed into a beautiful reminder of what the ocean can create with natural tumbling. I garnered an abundance of sea glass ranging in different shapes, sizes and colors. I also sold the shells to the local nature center for their art projects and research purposes. However, this glass slice piqued my interest. It was a mystery, for sure. I grabbed my bucket of oceanic treasures and hurried to my condo.

When I arrived in the bathroom, I layed down a towel and gently spread the shells out. Then began scrubbing away the dirt, caked-on sand and strips of slicked back seaweed.

A cheerful girl's curious question filled the space, “Hey Leah, what are you doing?” I recognized the voice immediately, my younger sister Stephanie.

“Cleaning some shells I found,” I replied, “Want to help?”

“Yes please!” She eagerly plopped down next to me and I taught her the gentle back-and-forth motion to remove the unwanted grime. With four hands working on the shells, we

finished the four gallon bucket in record time. Stephanie grabbed the piece of sea glass trapped at the bottom, “Woah! This is really cool!”

Her excitement cued me to peer over, “I found it on the beach and was interested in its unique color. A perfect addition to my collection. But, I wonder where it came from.”

“Me too,” she suddenly popped up, “I know who might know though!”

“Wait! Steph!” It wasn’t any use. The little girl was on a mission. She ran off to the sole place that may have an answer: our Grandpa Bentley’s office in the marine life center. Dragging the bucket overflowing with shells along, I finally arrived at the location about a block from our house. Luckily, I caught up with Steph before she burst into his office.

Reclaiming my breath, we calmly entered. Bentley noticed us and smiled, his attention focused on a phone call, “Alright, I’ll call you tomorrow.”

Hanging up his phone, my sister exclaimed, “Grandpa! Leah found this really cool piece of glass by the ocean and we were wondering where it came from. And I thought maybe you knew.”

He appeared slightly overwhelmed by the fast-paced explanation and chuckled, “It’s nice to see you too, Stephanie. You too Leah.” A subtle smile spread across my face as he spotted the white bucket I gripped, “Shells?”

“Cleaned and ready for anything as usual.”

“Nice. You can leave them with Daisy at the reception desk. As for this, let’s take a look,” he picks up the ultramarine-colored sea glass, “Where’d you find it?”

“It washed up on the shore of Brandi beach among the other shells.”

He furrowed his eyebrows while studying the piece, flipping it around in his hands and thumbing the smooth edges. This gave me enough time to greet Daisy and hand off the shells to

her. When Grandpa Bentley was finished, he glanced back up at us, “Well, I’ve solved your mystery, this glass is from a bottle of Sparkles Seltzer.”

“How do you know that?” Steph inquired, settling down on a comfortable chair placed in front of his desk.

“The color specifically,” he explained, “This blue is copyrighted by their company, which means they’re the only people who can put it on their products. It makes the bottles easily recognizable. I used to drink this all the time when I lived on Long Island. Reminds me of the good old days,” Before moving to Florida, he lived in the northeast where he got his marine biology degree. After an opportunity emerged for him to work at a center in Florida, he seized it. Now, the MacLemore family is stationed here.

“Well, if it means so much to you, keep it. I have plenty of sea glass and shells littering in my room.”

“Thanks Leah,” he propped it up on the photograph of Steph and I, “Now, one of my favorite drinks is displayed with two favorite grandchildren.”

“We’re your *only* grandchildren!” Steph noted, grinning.

“Oh right,” he responded, then being distracted by his ringing phone. Grandpa Bentley reads the name and before accepting the call says, “Okay, I need to take this. It was nice seeing you both and thank you for the sea glass. A little reminder of my past.”

“You’re welcome,” my sister and I returned in unison.

We left the marine center and began to head home. Steph rambled about what she wanted to do with the rest of the day. I listened along, zoning out at some points due to the sheer abundance of words that flew out of her mouth. “...now that it’s August, we should make the most out of the summer we have left. Leah, I made a list of all the things I’d like to do.”

Stephanie reminded me, the end of this miniature quest led to the monumental event as an aspiring marine biologist based in Florida: sea turtle hatching season. A new adventure was upon us. And the sea glass I'd find would make it all worth it.