



“Washed Up” by Luca Warde
2nd Place, Short Story 10-12

2nd

SS-630/10-12

Washed Up 1

“Ok, I think that's the last one,” says Mom.

“I thought those boxes would be the end of me,” I laugh.

We both sigh loudly and sit down. My name is Cedric. I am in sixth grade. I just moved to a small beach town called Sebastian's Grove. So far, I don't have a very good opinion of it. I moved here a week ago and I haven't enjoyed anything.

It's summer in this jolly seaside town and things are quite dull. I think I look very weird just walking around on my own. I feel the sweltering heat on my back, and my brow feels like a water tray. There are only two reasons why I go outside. The first is because my mom says that I have to, even though it is hotter than an oven. The second is that I love the beach. I think that the ocean is the only thing that is sparing us from death by overheating. Also, I'd never been to a beach before until I got here.

Our school has one month of summer break and I arrived just after it ended. That doesn't bother me, though, because I kind of like school. I enjoy watching everyone caught up in their worlds not caring about anything else but themselves. I like imagining what they are thinking when they look at their notebooks but aren't paying attention to them. My mom said it should be easy for me to make new friends but I'm not convinced. People are already so tightly woven into their friend groups that I think it would be physically painful to let an outsider join.

Each day I go to school it is the same thing over and over again. The teacher will get onto me over nothing, people will recoil when I walk by without even knowing it, and I will burst out of the doors as soon as the bell rings to go down to the beach. There I can let my emotions be drowned out and be pulled by the tide into the ocean.

Today is different though. I walk down onto the sand and see my spot is already taken by a CRAB! I walk over to it and look at its beady little black eyes. It scuffles a bit and looks right back into mine. Then it scuttles over to me, pinches my toe, and shuffles back into the water.

“Stupid crab,” I mutter angrily as I half hop, half wobble back home.

“Cedric, what happened to your foot?” my mom worries.

“A freaking crab pinched it,” I tell her.

“Guess what we're getting tomorrow?”

“What?” I ask.

“A better air conditioning unit!”

I jump in the air a few times, very happy to be rid of that stupid junky one we've had since we moved here.

Another day of school. It's boring yet entertaining. I feel the day dragging on. I just want to get to the beach- not to wash away all of my troubles, but to instead check on the crabs. I am suddenly so obsessed with them. I watch them scuttering about for a little bit and then draw a couple pictures of them.

On my way out the door, Mom told me she was signing me up for this “Wildlife Lover's Club.” I am a little frustrated at her for signing me up without my knowledge. She was probably out with her new neighbor friends and saw me gazing at the crabs.

“So has anyone seen any cool animals or animal behavior recently?” Anna, the leader of the club, asks.

“Yeah, my cat had an overdose of catnip and we found bones in his throw up,” some kid I recognize from my school says.

I wrinkle my nose but everybody else just smiles.

Somebody says, "It makes me think it wasn't the catnip."

Nobody else speaks up so I mutter, "I found some crabs on the beach."

"That sounds cool. What was their behavior like?" Anna asks.

"Well, this mischievous one pinched my toe the first time I saw them, but they are fine with me now."

Well, I'm glad that nightmare is over. I barely survived that. All those unfamiliar faces looking at me when I talked were quite jarring. Mom asks how it was and I say ok, just because I don't want to upset her.

I keep going to the wildlife club every day. I keep visiting the crabs every day. The one thing that snaps me out of my spell is when I get my report card.

"Oh no, I got three Bs!" I exclaim in shock.

"You really should pay more attention in class," Mom scolds. I know, I know, I sound like a nerd. But this is insanely bad compared to my last report card, which was all As. I promise her I will focus more in class.

Today in our wildlife club we finally did something awesome. We went down to the beach and we started on a shelter for the crabs. I have to admit, our foundations already look awesome. We are going to call it Fort Crustacian.

Recently, we have been blessed with cloudy weather making it A LOT more fun to go outside. So when I walk onto the beach I am thoroughly confused why everyone is so downcast.

"Why is everyone so sad?" I ask.

"Well, it's because there's gonna be a big storm soon and none of us are sure if any of the crabs will survive," Anna says.

I suddenly feel a little frantic. These crabs have been my saviors of sorts and I want to preserve their lives as long as I can. “What can we do? We need to get them to safety!” I stutter.

“I don’t know. The storm should be here any minute and there are a lot of crabs on this beach,” some kid says. I don’t think I’ve ever seen Anna angry but that is definitely what she is now.

“Hey! Everybody listen up! We are a club literally devoted to animals. We should try our best to save these poor creatures!” she exclaims. A bunch of kids run and go get some buckets to get the crabs inside somewhere safe. We start gently scooping up crabs and grouping them together. Once the kids get back we fill the buckets with sand and then put the crabs at the top. The storm is almost on top of us now so I call Mom and ask if I can help with the crabs. She seems reluctant but she agrees. Some kid lets us use his shed in his backyard to store the buckets. I quickly go inside my house and see my mom watching the TV.

The shiny-toothed news guy says, “That’s right folks. This storm’s sure to be a big one! Luckily, we won’t have a hurricane.” I rush back out and watch as big waves pummel the beach. Almost everyone is off the coast but some people are rounding up the last of the crabs. I run out to the beach and tell everyone to get inside. Some crabs won’t survive but I’m just glad we got a lot of them.

...

It’s been two days since that big storm passed and we finally are back on the beach.

We all shout “Three, Two, One!” and dump the buckets onto the sand. We all smile as the crabs peek out and finally take some tentative steps onto the beach. Some of the parents are there, including my mom, so I go over to her.

“You know what, Mom?” I say.

“What?”

“You are right again. I did make a lot of friends,” I tell her.

“I’m glad you like everyone in the wildlife club,” she says, sounding a little relieved. Everyone there was really nice, and I’m glad she’s not worried about me anymore. But really, the true best friends were the crabs. Even though they can’t talk or can’t feel complex human emotions, their sparkling intelligent eyes are much more understanding and smart than a lot of people realize.