

## **A View from Chapel Point**

Beach walking can be a trial. The soft, replenished off-shore sand keeps the dune-scape active as a sea barrier. Stick to the strand when the tide is out and you can walk comfortably between the beach-side cafes. Of course, there should be more places to eat and they should stay open for longer. Can you imagine sitting on the beach-edge of an evening, watching the light fade, sipping coffee or wine and listening to some acoustic music or poetry? Along these stretches, catching up with friends is leisurely. Random conversation is interspersed with shell-hunting, stone-skipping and gazing at the horizon. The wind turbines in the distance frame the view, reflecting the intermittent sunlight and cloud-skimming.

Many creatures from distant waters would visit these shores because the water was clean and food abundant. An enormous arctic walrus once lay on the sand slowly digesting its entire weight in fish. When the tide came up it managed to heave its great bulk back into the water and presumably it ate its way home again.

(BEAT)

There she goes. The girl with the green ribbon in her hair; the breeze blowing it about. Her steps tip-toeing. A ballerina on the sand: skip, hop, tip-toe. Now, she's not here. She's gone to school, to learn about the oceans, the sea-shells, and the names of the storms. Hurricanes.

Sands change as she meets her lovers within the dunes. She learns when to embrace and when to let go. Her 'Kiss me Quick' hat and sunglasses won't cover her sins. She is working, relentless, keeping up the pace. Learning money-lessons and life-lessons. On a rainy day such as this, should she squander or save?

Age widens her mouth. Sand is slipping too fast. Sand follows sand. There she goes again. The girl with the green ribbon in her hair.

(BEAT)

The gentle curve of the horizon slips around the earth like a silver thread. The East Coast looks much the same as it did in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century apart from the wind turbines standing in the sea and the proliferation of caravans.

A few days ago, a violent storm hurtled across the Wash, causing widespread local flooding. It swept up debris and rubbish, depositing hundreds of plastic bottles, sweet wrappers, face masks and nappies across the land. Today, the weather is calmer and the distant sails of the wind farm reflect the dying rays of the sun. The horizon stretches around the earth like a knife-edge.

(BEAT)

A piece of flint, axe-shaped sits comfortably in her hand. Edges sharp enough to cut flesh, to slip through time. Razor clams pushed into hot ashes, oyster shells opening in the heat, their contents rich and succulent. A wildfowl from the marshes with Sea-buckthorn berries pushed inside is wrapped in wet leaves and baking on a hot flat stone. Burdock roots roasting. Children drawing in the sand. Mammoth and reindeer-hunters cracking open bones to suck out the marrow. This marrow at the heart of our language.

(BEAT)

‘Oh, I do like to be beside the seaside’, she cried. But now she’s not so sure. The mask she wore is battered. The ice cream is melting. The trickle down her arm is under the radar and it laps at her door. She dreams of the swings and the roundabouts rust in the deep as she clings to the roof of her house in the Wolds, now under the sea.

(BEAT)

In the 1980’s violent storms stripped off the sand down to the shingle and revealed preserved oak stumps in the muddy layers. This foreshore was once dry land. In my

time, there used to be timber groynes marching down the beach, to try to counter the long-shore drift where waves push the sand slowly south. Then the sea wall was dramatic with its wave-breaker and the ten steps down to the beach.

The frequent beach enrichments this century means the sand in many places is now level with the promenade. In the last ten years, grassy dunes have formed. This is a softer form of sea defence and works with the natural world. If we can focus our energies to extend this habitat, we start to take responsibility for the future.

This is an ever-changing scene. It's tidal.