

The Beach

By Eoin Ruxton

Chapter 1: Soggy Tuna Casserole

“A beach holiday?” yelled Dad practically spitting out his food. ‘How will we afford that?’. ‘It’s in Wexford’, said Mum grinning, ‘it’s only an hours drive and we’re just going for a day trip’. ‘But I’ll miss my football match’, said Terry. It was dinner time and the Jefferson family were sitting at the kitchen table having soggy tuna casserole. Tuna casserole is one of those dinners that tastes horrible no matter how you make it. Noah and his older brother Terry would secretly scrape most of it into the plant pot in the corner. Sadly the plant had now withered out and died.

It was their Mum’s idea to go on a trip to the beach. Terry was really fed up about the idea of missing his football match. ‘But Mum’, he would say, ‘it’s the finals and I can’t miss it’. But Mum wouldn’t budge. ‘It’s time we went on holiday’, said Mum. ‘The summer will be over before you know it. Don’t be *too* fed up Terry.’ Noah was overjoyed. They never ever went on holidays or even trips to the beach. Noah didn’t have many friends at school or out of school really. When the summer holidays came to an end and he was back at school the teachers would ask everyone to tell the class what they did over the summer. Noah would listen to everyone telling the class about their amazing time in Disneyland ,or on top of the Eiffel tower eating croissants for breakfast. But when it was Noah’s turn he didn’t know what to say. All he had done during the summer was laze about on the sofa watching the same Anime episodes over and over. So he would make up stories about venturing into the woods or surfing over massive waves in Western Australia. The whole class would be amazed at these thrilling adventures. Noah’s stories were like extracts from action movies, and the best part was he was the main character.

Chapter 2: Ballymoney Beach

The car trip was terrible. Terry kept poking Noah in the ribs, and when he flinched or pushed Terry away, Terry would laugh uncontrollably. Terry had a truly hideous laugh. He snorted when he laughed and the sound was almost identical to a pigs. ‘Be more mature, Terry’ said Dad sternly. ‘Fine’, mumbled Terry, before wiping another bogie in Noah’s hair. Noah groaned. This was going to be a *long* ride.

The Jefferson’s small brown car pulled up on the edge of Ballymoney beach. Mum was right, it had been an hours ride, an hour of torture in Noah’s case. Noah got out. The beach was quite busy, but he had no time to think about that. ‘Come on, Noah,’ said his Dad’s voice from behind him, ‘help carry the bags’. Noah turned round and Dad handed him the bag. Then the Jeffersons headed off to find their beach spot.

Chapter 3: A Football covered in Gravy

Terry had plonked himself down on the mat and sulked from the minute they had found their beach spot. He was scowling at the ground, not saying a word. 'It's not fair', he would say, under his breath. 'If it'll cheer you up, I'll give you money to buy a football', said Mum sighing. It seemed to cheer Terry up and he raced off with the ten euro note. He came back grinning with the football in his hand. 'Come on, little brother', he said to Noah, 'let's play'. Noah had never been good at football, he wasn't a sporty type but he sighed and went along with it.

The two boys sprinted across the beach, leaving a cloud of sand behind them. Noah kicked the ball into the air and Terry hit the ball with his head. The ball flew through the air landing on an old lady's dinner. The old lady's face spun round in fury. Noah looked over to Terry but he had disappeared. He groaned. The old lady marched over to Noah and thrust the ball into his arms which was now sticky with gravy. Mum had seen the whole scene unfold and she felt a little sorry for Noah. So when he came to her she said 'why don't we go and get some ice cream?'. Both boys cheered and they all went off to the ice cream shop.

Chapter 4: A Story to Tell

The shopkeeper was obviously having a bad day. 'What do you want?' he grumbled. 'Um, well', stuttered Mum. 'I'll have vanilla, the two boys will have chocolate and my husband will have strawberry pl-'. 'Vanilla, two chocolates and a strawberry, you could have just said that', he barked, scowling at Mum. He shoved the ice cream into Mum's hand and she almost dropped them but just managed to steady herself. 'Have a nice day', Noah said as they left, immediately regretting it. How could someone so grumpy have a nice day?

The ice cream was delicious and laughing at Dad's sunburn helped Noah almost forget about the encounter with the old lady, but it all came flooding back to him when the old lady stomped past his family beach spot frowning at him. He decided it was a good idea to go for a swim in the sea. He had just got his swimming trunks on when the wind picked up and the rain started to pour. The Jeffersons hurried back to the car as it started to get worse. As the little brown car rumbled away from Ballymoney beach Noah knew one thing for certain, he had an exciting story to tell his class when summer was over.