

## Things That We Can't Save by Olive B.

My gaze passes over small, uneven hills of beach pebbles while I help look for my best friend, Slaine's lost earring. We had been walking on the beach together when she commented on her ear feeling 'empty'. The earthy tones blend together, creating a sea of unfocused grey splotches. As I walk, eyes on the blurry ground, a flash of vibrant turquoise grabs my attention. I blink, and the miniscule shape of her earring comes into view.

'Slaine! I found your earring!' I shout in the direction where she was standing last I saw her. While I stow the earring safely in my pocket, I listen for her footsteps, or her familiar voice shouting '*Aislin, where are you?*' while she looks for me. However, only the sound of the waves can be heard, gently crashing against the caramel colored shore.

Most likely, she didn't hear me, so I call to her again. "Slainey, come back, I found your earring." I have to scream over the ocean, which has become more violent in the minutes passed.

I sit back from my crouching position, straining to hear the quick-paced footfalls that I've been hoping to hear. Only the screaming gulls can be heard over the roughly churning water. In the midst of my intent listening, I realize that something is wrong.

I look out into the glassy, crystalline water. The sun says calm, but the waves say storm, loud and clear. Underneath the choppy sea, golden brown sand is swiftly scooped up by the movement, clouding the bottom of the otherwise picture-perfect view. A glimmer of darkness shifts rapidly in the corner of my vision. Slaine.

I run to her as I watch the rolling waves hold her down, forcing her underwater without the slightest trace of relenting. She struggles towards shore, but her waterlogged sweater slows her down majorly. She slips under for a moment, then pops up a few feet from where she was before. A breaker crashes over her, and she turns with the motion. Her eyes land on me and she screams out to me.

"Aisli-" Slaine goes under again. I'm finally close enough to her so I can swim out to get her. The water is an icy shock, even with the cool September weather. I thrash against the unwelcoming ocean and slowly but surely make my way to her. Thankfully, she doesn't move very far from where she is. I'm so close, I'm gonna save her. Everything will be okay.

I'm about an arm's length from Slaine, reaching out to grab her sweater. The soggy fabric bunches up in my fist, and I pull her above the frigid water. She clings to me, breathless. I start to swim back to the beach. "What happened?" I ask.

"I thought I saw my earring wash out in the waves, those are super important. They were my grandma's. I can't lose them." I reach into my pocket and hold it firmly. I grab her wrist and tuck the earring in her hand. She gasps and holds my arm tighter.

About 10 feet from the sand, a huge wave approaches. I scream loudly, causing Slaine to look behind her. She sees the massive wall of water and panics. I feel her arms slip off me.

She looks at me, obviously panicked. Everything seems to move in slow motion. The looming shadow of the wave falls over us. Then I hear her voice.

“Aislin!” She screams my name, arms reaching out to me. I notice that she still has one hand balled in a fist, she's still holding the earring. I open my mouth to respond, but the wave crashes over us.

The force of the unforgiving sea pushes me under and knocks the wind out of me. My body is thrown forward, water pushes past me and fills my lungs. I feel like I'll never breathe again. Smaller waves rush against me and drag me along the sand. How far under am I? I can feel fragments of shells and seaweed slip past me. I've stopped trying to swim up, I'm going to die anyway.

Just when I feel my last ounce of hope in survival leave my body, cold air hits my face. I'm on the beach, I'm okay. I pull myself fully out of the water and look for Slaine.

As I scan the beach, I realize that she might not have made it out of the water. I turn towards the crashing waves and spot a dark shape under the whitecaps. She pops up from the vicious movement, then goes back under.

I wait for what seems like hours for her to resurface, but she doesn't. In the distance, I hear the 4:00 alarm go off on my phone. It really has been hours I guess. We got here at 11:00 and I saw her in the water around 1:00. My heart sinks, she's really gone. Her voice echoes in my head, calling my name. My name was the last thing she said. Her last words, how crazy.

Slaine had a motto, it was ‘There are some things that we can't save, and that's okay.’ and now it won't leave my thoughts. I could've saved her, I didn't try hard enough. It isn't okay and it never will be. Because of me, a mother, father, sister, and friends will be hurting, I've caused all this pain. Slaine will never be okay, I just hope she forgives me, even if I never see her again.