

Caroline Pitone

Ms. Pahomov

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Silver

Burnt

In my life, the beach and I haven't had the most successful relationship. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that my family and I were always people who loved going to the beach while growing up. We would spend countless summers at the beach with my dad's side of the family. Year after year of sandy hair, sunburns, and ice cream bought on the shore, it was like paradise. It was the year 2009, and my grandmother planned a huge two week long family vacation at Long Beach Island located in New Jersey. My family and I were all so excited to get away from the city life and relax in the hot sun. I remember it being a hot day, taking about two hours to drive down to New Jersey from Philadelphia. It was my mom, dad, sister, and I. I anticipated for these two weeks all summer. But one way or another, I knew that everything would not be able to go as smoothly as I would have hoped.

We finally arrived at the beach house after what felt like endless hours and time filled with pit stops. We got to the house and looked around, it was amazing. I couldn't have pictured anything better. My family and I greeted my relatives that arrived, of course, sooner than we did. My family and I settled in and my sister and I knew that from the moment we arrived, we wanted to get down to the shore and swim. We got our swimsuits on, applied lotion, grabbed a few towels, and headed towards the hot sand that made you prance each step you took. We saw our cousins, aunts, and uncles there, and stayed with them. I remember being in the moment, never wanting to leave. The icy cold water splashing up against my ankles and the cool winds that brushed against my cheek every once in awhile. We spent a few hours there, and my sister, aunt, and some of my uncles decided to call it a day at the beach. I was so excited that I refused to

leave, and so did my cousin. We stayed on the beach until about 6 PM, with our uncle and aunt.

After realizing that the time flew, I realized I was starving, and finally decided to head back to the house. As I was walking, I felt really warm, and it wasn't too warm at this point of the day, so I was a bit confused, but didn't think much of it. I walked, and walked, and walked until we reached the dark blue house with the pebbles. I washed the sand off my feet and hung my towel outside. I walked into the house looking for something to drink, and everyone's jaw dropped. "You're as bright as a tomato!", my aunt exclaimed. I forgot to reapply sunscreen after not putting it on after 8 hours. I looked in the mirror and could not believe it. Freckles filled my entire face and it hurt to crack a smile.

The day went on, and slowly but surely, my body started to ache. I was itchy and uncomfortable. My mom ran out to get some aloe vera for sunburns, that is supposed to help cool it down. It worked, but not as much as I would have liked it to. Of course, I was like a walking pine cone. Barely able to move my back without feeling some sort of pain. The worst part was trying to fall asleep. The heat of my bed made me feel like a sun. The pillows felt like rocks against my skin.

Each morning, I woke up with the same look on my face of exhaustion from not being able to sleep. The only things that made me feel better were things like TV and captain crunch cereal. Luckily, I still had one and a half more weeks to go, which wouldn't be as miserable as the first few days. I spent my days inside watching my favorite show at the time, *The suite life of Zack and Cody*, and staying on the porch. When we did go to the beach, I would stay hidden under the umbrella that was dug into the ground. It didn't matter to me if everything didn't go as planned, as long as I got to spend quality time with my family, that was all that really mattered to me. I realized things could have been a lot worse, like me getting sun poisoning. It's safe to say that I didn't, and I am happy about that. When I approach the beach today, I make sure to stop myself and think, is delaying the fact that sunscreen reapplication is needed, really worth

it? Now I always carry SPF 50+ to the beach at all times. It's been apart of my life to take care of my skin in the sun ever since then.