

JOSEPH OOI BOON HAN

SJK (C) HUA LIAN 3
MALAYSIA

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THE DAY WAS PERFECT FOR A SWIM...

The day was perfect for a swim. It had been six months since we stopped visiting Miami Beach of Penang Island when the family moved to Alor Setar of Kedah. The idea of revisiting our family's favourite getaway was received with shrieks of joy and I could hardly contain my adrenalin rush of excitements. Within an hour, we started our journey.

Miami Beach...here we come!

Long stretch of white sandy beach and rows of tall coconut trees welcomed our arrival. Upon reaching our destination, I noticed that there were many tourists sun bathing on the beautiful beach. Wasting no time, Peter and Mary darted into the warm, blue sea. Within minutes, they were riding high on the waves, surfing and giggling in delight.

The warmth of the sun and the caressing breeze might have cast a spell on me and soon I dozed off. I was suddenly awakened by a hollow feeling. Anxiety and fear enveloped me, making me freeze to the ground. For a moment, which seemed like eternity, children's laughter and roaring of speedboat engine was inaudible. Have I suddenly lost my hearing? Why can't I hear them?

I was overwhelmed with fright... the surrounding seemed unchanged, the children were playing, running about, Peter and Mary were riding on the waves, mom was chatting to dad, but...something was NOT right! The coconut palms rooted still, the leaves did not rustle, and there was no whiff of wind, as if the air had STOPPED! The surrounding was dead silent, a frightening terror sending chills down my spine. As the sudden sword-like lighting ripped open the sky, ignited a deafening explosion which broke the silence, I let out a desperate howl...almost at the same

time, a rumbling sound thundered the dark sky. What I saw next was unbelievable? Huge waves rose and then retreated into the big, dark sea. Everyone was transfixed at what they saw. Off in the distance, fishermen were struggling to stay afloat on their red and blue 'sampan' until their tiny vessels finally collapsed, swallowed by the swell. Before I could make sense out of all the happenings, the waves roar their demonic heads, snapping off about eight meter high before crashing into us. All the people ran helter-skelter for their dear lives.

I could hear screams of horror everywhere...these were the cries of hopelessness, the cries of fear and terror, the calling of Death!

The giant waves retreated, carrying into the sea many people with it. Then, I heard more screams coming from my left. Another monstrous wave towering above came crashing down while snapping everything with it. Like a hungry demon, it devoured lives mercilessly, from human to homes, to chairs, to roofs, to everything it came to sight. Next thing I knew, I was clinging on a tree bark with all my might, my claws sunk deep into the wood. Desperately, I fought for my life...

The roaring waves was finally tamed, satisfied and contented after consuming the sacrifice. I found myself being washed back and forth as the water rose and subsided. Wreckage and debris covered the water's surface, I could feel tall bushes and sea grasses around my hind legs. Mom, dad, Peter and Mary were nowhere to be seen.

On that fateful day, December 26th 2004, a day which was perfect for a swim, I lost everything I had. Deadly waves claimed 52 lives in Penang Island, including 23 at Miami Beach. The streets are now my shelter, the dump, my haven. Cold and hungry, destitute and dejected, I have become a homeless stray.