

## Honorable Mention Fiction ~ Age 10-13

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### “Miles to the Beach”

A bird’s persistent chirping roused me from my sleep, and the sun nearly blinded me, so it was obvious I couldn’t go back to sleep. I yawned and licked my tabby paw-yes, paw- What? You didn’t know I am a cat and I live with the Lowe family? Well, now you do. So, anyway, I licked my paws and trotted down the stairs. I ducked in the crack in the door to Mr. Lowe’s office, where he was sitting, reading the news on the Internet. I meowed and rubbed against his legs, purring. He looked down from the article he was reading to pet me. I meowed and sauntered over to the door. He sighed, getting the point and rose from his chair, and I led him to the door. He opened it, and I shot out. I was free! I had big plans for today. Today, I was going to the beach.

See, the Lowes live near the beach, so I can walk there. I never have, and I hadn’t even heard of the beach until Suzy-Q, the cat that lives on the same street as I do, told me about it. I decided that the next day I would go there, so I could share my beach stories with my other cat friends, Pepper and Mittens.

So, I walked down the sidewalk, past houses and empty lots, admiring the strange sites of Lewes, which is very different from the street I live on. I stopped every now and then to chase a bird or take a sip of water, and in about twenty minutes I arrived at the beach. There were so many new smells! I smelled salt, fresh air, and sunscreen. I was completely overwhelmed! What should I do? There was so much water to lick, sand to play in, lots of noisy, gray-and-white birds to chase, and so many people to rub against and get skritches from! I decided I would do thus: I would play in the sand, then go over to the people to get petted, and after that I would get all hot after chasing birds, so I would take a little dip, before heading home to dry off in the warm sunlight while telling my beach story to my cat friends.

As soon as I set my paws on the sand, I realized it was hot, hot, hot! Still, I rolled around and pawed at the ground, finding rocks and shells. It was a pity I couldn’t carry some back. Mittens and Pepper would have loved some to take back to their homes. After playing in the sand, my coat was all itchy because of the sand that got in it. When I tried to lick my paw to wipe my face, my tongue hit a nasty burr that I had to bite out of the fur in between the pads on my paws. Pleh!

After trying in vain to remove all the sand from my coat, I trotted to the people and wove in and around towels and umbrellas, stopping every once in awhile to let people pet me. Several times I had to dodge squealing little human kids trying to catch me. After the last person petted my head and scratched under my chin, I shot after the odd, large, noisy birds that covered the beach, snatching French fries and chips the messy human kids dropped. The obnoxious birds were too quick for me to catch, and they seemed to taunt me, their calls sounding like “you’re too slow, you’re too slow”. After an infuriating half-hour, I sauntered over to the water.

When I tried to take a sip of water, I was surprised! It was salty, a little like the salt on my food. I decided that if I drank any more I’d get sick, so I just splashed my paws in the shallows, and every few seconds a small wave would splash on my paws. That was one odd thing about me. Suzy-Q, Mittens and Pepper all said it was weird that I liked water so much. I

liked to lick at the dripping faucets at home, but, mind you, I didn't like getting my whole body wet, and I learned that when I fell in the bathtub. I still shudder at the memory.

Anyway, after a particularly large wave soaked me, I decided it was time to go home. Following another not-so-exciting trip home, I trotted over to Suzy-Q's house and meowed at her door three times, our signal to come out. She slipped out her cat door (she's so lucky to have one!), swiftly licked my ear in greeting, before following me to Mittens' and Pepper's. We all settled down on the edge of the birdbath in Suzy-Q's yard, our favorite meeting spot. As I told my tale, Mittens and Pepper hung on my every word, while Suzy-Q listened with half-interest, claiming her beach adventures were better and more exciting. Even still, I could tell she was impressed. After Mittens, Pepper and Suzy-Q left, I walked back to my house and stood up on my back paws, mewing pitifully (it's the best way to get my family to let me in). Mr. Lowe let me in and crouched down to pet me. He ran his hand along my back before looking at his hand, which was covered with sea water and sand. "Where are on Earth have you been?" he asked, perplexed.

I walked away, leaving him to ponder my whereabouts today. I ate some of my tuna-flavored kibble, before taking a sip of clean, no-salty water. When the dog I live with came in for a sip of water, I meowed a greeting to him before leaping onto the padded shelf Mr. Lowe had installed for me, next to the window. I soon fell asleep and dreamed about the beach, rolling in the sand, listening to the long calls of the seagulls, and I woke up, with the taste of salt still lingering on my whiskers.