

SAILOR'S ALMANAC, LONG-RANGE FORECAST, NORTH ATLANTIC CORRIDOR: Summer will be lovely with mild winds through August, heading into hurricane season.

The surfers called it The End for its killer waves. To everyone else it was the end of Long Island. Montauk. It's a town of beaches and bluffs on the tip of the south fork. My best friend, John Costello, and I landed summer jobs at a state park out there. My parents owned a flower shop, and one of their customers was a big deal in the parks department. I'd just finished junior year. The plan was to apply early decision to Yale as a forestry major. I dreamed of being a ranger in the Utah canyons or Alaska glaciers. I had to get out of the city. Everywhere I looked I saw Mr. Costello's ghost.

The name of the park was Heron Hills. I fixed boardwalks and lifeguard chairs and the dock struts rotting away in the saltwater

marsh. When the tide was out, the seaweed crackled beneath a sun hot enough to melt your mind. My head ached no matter how much Gatorade I drank. I loved it, being deep in the quiet, near the water. From the bluffs I saw the earth's curve.

After work on the hottest day in August I met up with John in the park's vehicle maintenance shop. He'd been working in gas stations since the day after his dad's funeral, when he grabbed a job filling tires. Iceman. That's what everybody called him. We hadn't been able to hang out as much since we started going to different schools freshman year. I took the test for Hudson, a selective public school in Manhattan. It was a forty-minute train ride and a world away from Woodhull, a working-class neighborhood that straddles the Brooklyn-Queens border. John and I grew up there, right on the borderline. The high school in Woodhull was pretty rough, but John didn't care. All he needed was a diploma for trade school. He had his heart set on being an electrician, like his dad. Not his heart, his mind. Electrical work was sensible, steady.

The vehicle maintenance shop was stifling. John hoisted an engine out of a Land Rover with two other guys. They were sweating so much they looked like they'd gone swimming. John worked just as hard, but he was dry until one of the trucks backfired. I flinched too.

We hit the beach and swam out past where the waves broke and the water turned silky. We came in clear-eyed and hungry and stopped to say hi to a man who fished from knee-deep water. He

gave us a pair of blues. I smothered them with butter and hand-mashed lemon and pan-cooked them in the fire pit behind the trailer where we bunked.

After dinner the harmonicas came out. Mr. Costello had taught us how to play, and John was good. The stars curved out of the dusk into the night. We never said much. We were good at being alone together. But that night it was on my mind. “You don’t talk about it ever,” I said. “About him.”

John tended the fire with a broken slat he’d pulled from the dune fence. “Not until you make me anyway,” he said. He checked his beat-up Timex and headed for the trailer. “The bugs are getting bad. Don’t fall asleep out here again.”

I buried the fire with sand. The waves caught the moonlight. One rose higher than the others, rolled toward me, and faded into the shore. The mosquitoes chased me into the trailer. I cracked my laptop to study for a little while before bed. I was taking a certified first responder course with the lifeguards. I wanted to know how to bring somebody back to life. I was learning what I already knew: Most times you can’t. Anyway, it would look good on my Yale application.