

The Boys of Summer

A story by Tygon Panthera

Inspired by the song "The Boys Of Summer" by Don Henley

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No furry on the road, no furry on the beach. The more it changes the more it stays the same, as the old saying goes. Seems like it was true. Things had changed but in a way they were still the same.

Chris leaned back into the driver's seat as he drove down Ocean Avenue, the Cruise Road as they used to call it. The warm wind was pulling and tugging at his headfur, making his long hair fly and whip around his head. The salty fragrance of the sea was tickling the grey canine's nose, bringing back memories from events that had passed by long ago, memories of the carefree days of his youth.

The convertible slowed down and pulled over onto the curb and a moment later the door opened. Chris climbed out of the car, his long, thick-furred tail swaying slowly in the wind. Leaning back against the old car he looked around, taking in the familiar and yet strange surroundings. There was Old Fur Frank's ice cream stand. It had been a prime location, close to the beach and easy to reach. Good prices and great ice cream did the rest. Every fur who spent a day on the beach visited Old Fur Frank at least once per day. Now the small building stood dirty in a field of un-mown grass, most likely abandoned.

Chris shook his head and got back into his car, driving on for a while before finding more sights of his lost youth. The canine's way led him away from the beach into a small residential area in the southern part of town. The change of scenery did nothing to improve his mind though for it looked just like the rest of his former home.

Empty sea, empty streets. Before Chris really knew he was already there. The small house looked almost like he remembered it, except for the white paint, which had started to peel off at the corners. Just like on Cruise Road, the lawn was not carefully mowed but standing tall and untidy. The canine stopped his convertible and stared at the house. Even from here he could see the name on the mailbox and it was not the one he remembered.

Turning away he leaned against the steering wheel, sighing. Deep inside he had known that it was impossible that she still lived here but that hadn't stopped him. He could still see her, her tan fur shining in the sun, her mane combed back and a smile on her muzzle. Never would he forget those nights. Never could he forget how she made him crazy and how he made her call his name...

Chris' fingers tightened around the wheel as he leaned back and turned the car around. Memories filled his mind as his paws automatically steered the convertible back to the beach, stopping it at exactly the same place that he had already done so mere minutes ago. The canine got out of the car and walked down one of the ways that led through the meadows to the empty beach. Before his inner eye he saw how the place had been years ago, full of life and joy. Back then, when he and his friends went here almost every day to enjoy the warm sun and cool water.

Not for the first time Chris wondered what happened. They had been so happy. Why had it all faded away? Back then, Chris and his friends were a tightly-knit group known as the Boys of Summer. The canine could not remember how they met, but there was one unifying thing about them: They were all hybrids. There was Tygon, half tiger, half lion. A tall guy who looked very imposing but wouldn't hurt a fly. Jack, a black furred tiger with purple stripes and a great athlete to boot. Chris had never met anyfurry who could draw as well as Buster. Charly was a rabbit who had gotten some fox parts in him, resulting in a long tail much like Chris' own, courtesy of his grandfather, the fox in a family of wolves.

Together they had been a typical group of boys who loved to hang out together on the beach, swimming, playing volleyball, and watching the pretty girls. However, for Chris there had always been just one girl to watch: Tygal. She was Tygon's sister and Chris had known her just as long as him, which was practically his whole life. But it wasn't until a bright summer day when he saw her in her new bikini that he realized what a striking lady the young girl had turned into. From that day on he was in love with her and spent as much time with her as possible. It was something that would last forever, Chris was sure of it.

But what happened? Chris' father got a new job in another city and they moved. From one day to the other Chris' world had turned upside down. He would have done everything to stay with Tygal but he had been too young to stay in town on his own. They had made the best of their last remaining days but that did not ease the pain. Chris had watched her as long as he could from his parent's car and she had watched them drive away. That was the last time that he had seen her.

Chris sighed as he walked over the beach, feeling the sand underneath his feet. He closed his eyes and thought back how he and his friends had rested under the summer sun after a long swim. Chris was staring up into the perfect blue sky as a shadow fell over him. He lifted his paw to his eyes to shield his eyes from the sun and see who was there. Never ever would he forget what he saw. Long legs, covered with soft tan fur led to graciously formed hips, clad in a dark blue thong bikini that made one dream of what it

hid. Her narrow waist and flat tummy, where the tan faded into a soft cream, paved the way to her chest where she had blossomed into the curves that could make a male drool. A top in the same blue of the thong provided decency. Black stripes adorned her fur. She knelt down, putting a gentle paw on Chris's chest. There was a smile on the muzzle and for a moment Chris was speechless. He had known her face for years but never had he looked at her like this. Tygal was so beautiful, with the sun making her fur shine. Her face was framed by her dark-red mane, which she had tied into a simple ponytail.

Cool water licked at Chris' feet. Turning his head he looked over the ocean. From that moment on, all those years ago, he had been in love with Tygal. A love that lasted still, long after the Boys of Summer had gone.

Life hadn't been bad for Chris. In fact, looking around his hometown the way it was now, he had to agree that it was a good idea to move away from here. Still, he could not help thinking back. All his friends, his new friends, kept telling him to stop living in the past. *Don't look back*, they used to say. *The future is ahead of you*. But Chris had been so darn happy here. For far too long he had listened to the furs around him and remained in the place he had built for himself in the world, the place where he belonged. But not the place where he wanted to be.

With another sigh Chris moved a few feet away from the shoreline and dropped down into the warm sand. Breathing deeply he took in the fresh, salty air while his thoughts again went back to the time of his youth. It almost seemed like a dream now. They would all meet at Town Square after school and then drive to the beach in Jack's truck. Man, those were good times. They would spend all day at the beach, not wasting a single thought to worries about what tomorrow might bring. The water had been warm just like the sun. The more Chris thought about it the clearer everything became. Short but very refreshing swims in the ocean, followed by long periods of doing nothing while the sun dried their fur. Now and then they would have a game of volleyball or laugh at Tygon's attempts to learn how to surf. And she had been there, always at Chris' side. Always kind, always smiling, always willing to share a kiss. If he concentrated hard enough he could still hear her whisper his name.

"Chris?"

The canine hybrid blinked. That was no memory... or was it? It sounded so real. Slowly, very slowly as if any fast movement would destroy all his hopes, he turned. Blue. The same blue she had always liked to wear. It matched her eyes, she used to say. Wide, comfortable pants. A long-sleeved shirt. Tan fur. Black stripes. A black-tufted tail. Red, braided hair, longer than he remembered it. Differences. They were there, subtle but there. However, her eyes, those wonderful blue eyes, were still the same. Eyes that he could never get tired of looking into.

"Tygal..." Chris whispered, his right paw slowly rising, meeting her own extended one. A shiver went through him, almost like a small, electrical shock. She was real. No dream, no result of his loneliness and depression. Tygal was really there. His jaws moved but no further words came out. A smile formed on Tygal's muzzle as she slowly sank

down in the sand, kneeling at his side.

“I missed you,” she whispered, a soft purr making her voice vibrate gently as she rubbed her muzzle against his.

“I love you,” the words suddenly spilled out of Chris as if he was afraid she would disappear before he could say things that he never got to say to her. “I always have loved you and I always will.”

“Shhhh,” the feline replied, pressing her lips to his, silencing him with a gentle kiss. “I know,” she whispered back. “I loved you too. I never stopped loving you.”

With a soft murr Chris wrapped his arms around her, trapping her in a gentle embrace, which Tygal eagerly returned. Their tails entwined like a sign of the two lives that had finally found one another again.

The sound of the waves echoed gently over the beach, drowning out the soft purrs and murr of Tygal and Chris for everyone but themselves as they got reacquainted with each other, rekindling the love that had been glowing within them for so long. They did not know what the future would bring, but did know that they would be together. That was more than enough.

The end