

Beach Trip (and Fall and Quite Possibly Drown)

by Sophie Katz

(Episode opens with the sounds of a beach: waves, seagulls, possibly the chatter of other beachgoers)

ASH: Whoa, look, a volleyball court! Dibs on next game!

LEAH: Right. Have fun waiting. With the giants and the minotaurs around, nobody else is going to be able to use that court for hours.

ASH: Come on, the game can't last that long. Those giants are huge. They could use the *minotaurs* as the ball, easily.

CAILIN: Giants are just as susceptible to goring as any other corporeal creature.

ISAAC: I was under the impression that volleyball was a non-contact sport...?

LEAH: Only if you make it a rule that you have to stay on your team's side of the net. Which, let's be honest, is the boring way to play.

ISAAC: Oh...

ASH: Okay, now, *this* is gonna be fun to watch.

ISAAC: Just to update whoever is listening to this podcast after we finally post it— The university student activities board decided that we should have a post-midterms field trip, and it got approved by the faculty, so, here we are! We are at the beach! It's my first time ever going to the beach, and Ash's too, thanks to the whole never-let-us-leave-the-house part of the homeschool plan our parents had for us—

ASH: So it's about fucking time! Man, I've wanted to go to a beach my whole life! Build some sand castles, swim in the ocean...

ISAAC: Can you actually swim, though?

ASH: Isaac. I have been dreaming about this day since my dad first read me the chapter of "How the Straight White Male Protagonist Saved the Town" when the Protagonist's family goes to the beach. Don't ruin this for me!

ISAAC: But I think it'd be, you know, kind of important for the two of us to actually know how to swim before we—

ASH: What did I just say?

ISAAC: Fine! Fine... It's just the four of us right now, but I think we're meeting up with some other people later. Uh, Cailin? Did you get in touch with Kaity?

CAILIN: I did. She said she didn't want to go through the hassle of getting on the buses, though, so she's taking the Valhallamobile. She'll catch up.

ISAAC: Well I don't blame her wanting to skip the bus. It looked like half the campus showed up to stand in line. I lost track of Pat pretty quickly in the crowd, thankfully he didn't have any of my money with him when he disappeared...

ASH: You think we'll run into the little guy?

LEAH: Nah, Andrew didn't get on the bus. I saw him sulking outside the library this morning, grumbling about how these school trips only exist so that the freakishly tall have an excuse to flaunt their height mutations.

ASH: Looking at the volleyball game, I think his complaint might just have a *smidge* of logic to it.

ISAAC: Of course, just like everything else in the world outside our houses, there's probably something incredibly dangerous here just waiting for someone like me or Ash who doesn't know about it to stumble in...

CAILIN: Don't worry, Isaac. The beach is a great place!

ISAAC: Not to mention that we can't even swim.

ASH: Again with the day-ruining...

LEAH: You don't have to know how to swim to like the beach! There's sand to roll around in, and seagulls to chase, and it's really fun to get all covered in salt water and then run up to someone and shake all the water off on them!

ISAAC: That's fun?

ASH: Just when I've almost forgotten that your roommate's a dog...

CAILIN: The point is, the beach is totally safe. Just pay attention to the flag on the lifeguard stand and you'll be fine.

ISAAC: Oh? What's the flag for?

CAILIN: It gives you warnings about ocean conditions. Each color means something different.

ISAAC: So how do we know which color means what?

CAILIN: Well my parents told me a rhyme about it when I was little.

ASH: A rhyme?

CAILIN: Like a poem. You know, to help you remember what the colors mean.

LEAH: Yeah, I already know this stuff, so I'm just gonna skip the lecture and hit the water. Later!

(dog barking fades away as Leah runs off to the water)

ASH: The Straight White Male Protagonist was right: there's really no happier place for a dog than the beach...

ISAAC: So tell us this rhyme.

CAILIN: Okay, it starts like this: "Green is calm, yellow's rough, if the flag's red then the water's too tough."

ASH: Sounds simple enough.

ISAAC: Yeah, that should be easy to remember.

CAILIN: "Silver and gold means unusually cold, color of rot means the water's too hot."

ASH: Slightly more complicated.

ISAAC: I don't think I want to know what the color of rot is.

ASH: It's the current color of those snacks you left under your couch the first week of school.

ISAAC: Now hang on, you put those there!

ASH: Your apartment, your responsibility to clean up.

CAILIN: "Green and purple rings, beware of jellyfish stings."

ASH: Okay, I'm pretty sure you made that one up.

CAILIN: I really didn't. "Gray as a louse, Poseidon's in the house."

ASH: That's a definite get-out-of-the-water, then. Assuming he's anything like his brother.

ISAAC: Just how many of these flags are there?

CAILIN: Hang in there, almost done. "If the flag's black-en, run from the kraken."

ASH: Lovely!

CAILIN: And finally, "Mysterious hieroglyphs, look out for nymphs."

ISAAC: Okay that one didn't even rhyme.

CAILIN: Hey, it worked well enough for a three-year-old. I couldn't forget this stuff now if I tried.

ASH: You could forget it if you got caught by a librarian. Speaking of which, you still owe me a birthday cake—

CAILIN: (*obviously eager to change the subject*) Oh look at that, the minotaurs are really giving the giants a run for their money over there, aren't they?

ISAAC: Wow, yeah, quite literally running... You'd think it'd be harder to run on sand with those hooved feet.

CAILIN: Never underestimate an angry bull. I should go ask someone about the score...

ISAAC: Okay, right, you do that, and I'll stay over here where there are no angry bulls.

ASH: Holy shit! Isaac, come over here!

ISAAC: What? What is it?

ASH: Look at that! On the ground over there!

ISAAC: Where?

ASH: Seriously? This thing. Right here.

ISAAC: Is that... It's a gray beach towel.

ASH: No way. Look here. It has a head! With a nose and whiskers and everything!

ISAAC: Oh my god...

ASH: It's a seal! Except minus all the inside stuff. It's the outside of a seal. Oh, this is so cool!

ISAAC: I think that's the opposite of cool, Ash. Someone just skinned a seal and left its skin here? Isn't that illegal or something?

ASH: Oh man, it feels so gross. Here, Isaac, you gotta see how disgusting this feels.

ISAAC: I really don't want to.

ASH: Touch it!

ISAAC: No!

ASH: Take the skin!

ISAAC: I don't want it!

ASH: Take it!

ISAAC: Oh god, it's all damp and rubbery.

ASH: I know, right?

ISAAC: And it's heavier than I thought it'd be... This is so weird.

CAILIN: What're you looking at, guys?

ASH: Someone gutted a seal!

ISAAC: Does that happen a lot here?

CAILIN: Oh, shit.

ISAAC: I mean if this is some kind of illegal poaching thing, shouldn't we report it?

CAILIN: It's not poaching. You guys should put that back exactly where you found it.

ASH: It was just lying around. Finders keepers, I'd say.

CAILIN: No, seriously, Isaac, you should put that down before—

SOPHIE: Hey!

CAILIN: Before, that.

SOPHIE: Get your grubby paws off my skin!

ISAAC: OW!

ASH: The fuck?

SOPHIE: Give me that!

ISAAC: Ow! Jeez! You bit me!

ASH: Sudden angry naked woman?

CAILIN: Yeah, that's—

ISAAC: She bit me!

SOPHIE: And there's more where that came from! —no no no, wait, don't take that in a sexual way, do *not* take that in a sexual way, I am *not* interested, so you'd better stop following that train of thought right now because if you don't, the next thing I bite will be your jugular!

ISAAC: Okay, okay, I'm sorry, I didn't now, god that really hurt...

SOPHIE: Do you have any idea how frustrating it is that every time I just want to take a pleasant walk along the beach, and maybe get a tan or play some volleyball, some misogynistic asshole decides it'd be really funny to take my skin and make me their sex slave? Guess what, pal. Just because I don't wear any clothing doesn't mean I'm interested!

ASH: I'd just like to say that I had absolutely nothing to do with this guy trying to steal your sealskin. I was just, standing here.

ISAAC: Ash!

SOPHIE: Oh yeah, I know how this goes. Next you say to me, "If you don't want people to steal your skin and force you to have sex with them, then why did you leave your skin here? Don't you think you were kind of asking for it?" And to that I reply, on the one hand, you know, it's entirely possible that I maybe just didn't want to drag a big blubbery coat around with me on the hottest day we've had in a month! And on the other hand, fuck you, it's not my fault if an entire generation of land-dwellers has been brought up to think that the universe revolves around their sex drive!

ISAAC: (*whispers*) Cailin what do we do?

ASH: (*whispers*) Yeah, like, when Isaac's in trouble it's funny, but how do we make her go away before she starts shouting at me, too?

CAILIN: (*whispers*) Don't worry. Selkies may be fierce, but they're easily distracted.

SOPHIE: I hope that bite gets infected and the apothecary decides to cut your hand off. Then maybe you'll think twice before picking up something incredibly precious that doesn't belong to you. Do you have any idea how screwed I'd be if I didn't get this back? I wouldn't be able to go home ever again. I'd be doomed to remain out here with you dickheads. Honestly, people, I can't even swim properly when I'm in human form. What would my baby sister think if I didn't come home tonight?

ISAAC: Well I'm sure she'd—

SOPHIE: Don't interrupt me! She'd be terrified. She'd be all alone in the deep, dark ocean with no one to take care of her, and she's just a pup...

ASH: (*whispers*) I thought you said they were easily distracted! Wait, Cailin! Cailin where are you going?!

ISAAC: (*whispers*) Don't leave us alone with her! Cailin!

SOPHIE: And this after her parents were tragically murdered by fishermen who mistook them for ordinary seals. Are you listening to me? Fishermen murdered our parents! And fishermen are the only thing I hate more than misogynistic idiots like you—

CAILIN: (*calling from a distance*) Incoming distraction!

(*bouncing/soft thudding sound effect – a beach ball*)

SOPHIE: ...is that...? Ohmygod.

ISAAC: Uh...

SOPHIE: Sweet Poseidon. Is that...a beach ball?

CAILIN: (*nearby once more*) Indeed it is. A nice, big, beach ball. It's a little flat, but it should bounce just fine.

SOPHIE: Is it yours?

CAILIN: Nah, I just picked it up from the pile of broken beach toys near the trash cans. You know, with how rough people play around here, stuff gets thrown out all the time.

SOPHIE: So I can— Can I have it? Can I?

CAILIN: Sure, go ahead.

SOPHIE: OHMYGOD THANK YOU KIND LAND-DWELLER I LOVE BEACH BALLS! I'm gonna bounce it, and bounce it, and keep it in the air, and— oh man, this would be *so* much more fun if I were a seal— I'm gonna go play with it right now! Bye you guys! (*fading into the distance*) BEST. DAY. EVER.

(*beat*)

ASH: What. Was that.

CAILIN: That was a selkie.

ISAAC: Are they always so, well—

ASH: Militantly feminist?

ISAAC: I was going to say terrifying, but sure let's go with that.

CAILIN: Not all the time. Seals are basically the dogs of the ocean, so when selkies aren't freaking out over someone touching their skin and trying to kidnap and rape them, they're a lot like Leah.

ASH: Unlike Leah, they seem to have an aversion to clothing—

CAILIN: (*interjecting*) Speaking of Leah, I should probably go find her before she upends a picnic table or steals someone's swim trunks, or something. If you see Kaity, let me know, okay?

ASH: Okay, while you do that, I'm gonna go hit the water. I'm here for the full beach experience. You coming, Isaac?

ISAAC: Uh, yeah. Sure. Just, let's not go too far out, okay?

(*waves, maybe some splashing as Isaac and Ash wade around*)

ISAAC: Ash... Ash, you're going too far out.

ASH: You really don't get the idea of "full beach experience," do you?

ISAAC: We can't swim.

ASH: *You* can't swim. But for all I know, swimming is one of my godly powers.

ISAAC: Uh-huh, and if it isn't—

ASH: Relax, Isaac. The water's barely up to our waists. And the waves are teeny-tiny. Nothing is going to happen to us.

ISAAC: I guess... The water does feel pretty good.

ASH: There you go. At this rate you might even start enjoying yourself.

ISAAC: Except for the bite on my hand, which is stinging a little.

ASH: Or, not.

ISAAC: I feel like the water should be a lot deeper out here than it is. We are— Wow, we really are pretty far from shore. Why's the water so shallow?

ASH: I believe this is what one calls a "sand bar". And we have it all to ourselves to enjoy.

ISAAC: There doesn't seem to be anybody else in the water right now, is there. They're all just, standing on the shore. That faraway shore... I guess they're not going for the "full beach experience", huh.

ASH: Their loss. Unless the volleyball game's over and they're all going to see who survived the minotaur gorefest. In which case, our loss.

ISAAC: I think I'll stick with the water.

ASH: It really can't be that hard to learn how to swim.

ISAAC: So you admit that you don't know how to swim.

ASH: I didn't say that.

ISAAC: But it's pretty much implied by what you did say.

ASH: When did you change your major to Twisting Words, Mr. Lawyer?

ISAAC: First off, I'm not sure that that's an option at our school, and second—

ASH: You have a distinct lack of evidence regarding whether or not the defendant is capable of the ability to swim, and in any case might I remind you that in this court of law, lack of evidence for something's presence or lack thereof cannot be used as proof of its opposite.

ISAAC: That's... I lost track of that sentence somewhere along the way.

ASH: Shouldn't have changed your major then. You'll make a shitty lawyer.

ISAAC: I didn't change my major, I... *(beat)* Hey Ash, does the crowd on the shore look a bit agitated to you?

ASH: Eh, they look fine to me from here. Everyone's just standing around.

ISAAC: That's what I mean, they're not doing anything, they're just watching the water... Hey, isn't that Kaity?

ASH: Where?

ISAAC: Way over there, standing on the shore. Right there. She's waving her arms. I think she's waving her arms at us.

ASH: Hey, I think you're right.

ISAAC: Is she shouting something? It looks like she's shouting. I can't hear her, though...

ASH: Well, if it's something important, she can come out here and tell us.

ISAAC: Now she's running towards the lifeguard stand. Hang on. It looks like there's a...black flag on it? What did the black flag stand for again?

ASH: *(nonchalantly)* Excellent question.

ISAAC: I think it was... Ugh, there were too many colors to remember in that rhyme! It was something like...

ASH: "When the flag is black, relax and kick back"?

ISAAC: No, I don't think so, it did something weird with the word "black".

ASH: "When the flag's black-ing, it's a good time for slacking?"

ISAAC: No, I definitely don't remember her saying that.

ASH: Then why don't you try! If you were paying so much attention.

ISAAC: I did pay attention! At the moment. And then I got my hand bitten. Pain is kind of distracting.

ASH: As distracting to a nervous Isaac as a beach ball is to a pissed-off selkie.

ISAAC: So... Do you think we should get out of the water, and go ask everyone what the fuss is about?

ASH: Isaac, that kind of decision would require a certain level of common sense that I'm afraid neither of us are in possession of.

ISAAC: But... I just had the idea. So how could I not have that kind of common sense?

ASH: Evidence: you're still in the water.

ISAAC: You're still in the water, too!

ASH: Exactly. Because I am enjoying my day at the beach, and am very relaxed, and consequently very confident in my ability to use my godly powers to keep me out of trouble.

(a splash as Isaac jumps)

ISAAC: What was that?!

ASH: What?

ISAAC: Something touched my leg!

ASH: Really? Cool. Was it a fish?

ISAAC: I'm getting out of the water!

ASH: Isaac, panic is not an appropriate response to this situation. Now, where's that fish?

(suddenly, lots of splashing and roaring—a kraken has come up from the deep, grabbing Isaac and Ash in its tentacles. The boys scream as they're pulled into the air)

ISAAC: Oh no, oh god—

ASH: It's got my feet!

ISAAC: Is panic an appropriate response yet?!

ASH: We're being held hostage by something made entirely of tentacles! What do you think?!

(kraken roars; the boys scream as they're shaken about)

ASH: Oh shit, oh shit!

ISAAC: Don't just hang there Ash! Teleport us!

ASH: I can't!

ISAAC: Why not?!

ASH: I just can't! You try to teleport when you're this freaked out!

ISAAC: I'm not a god, Ash! I'm just an elf! I'm only half of an elf! I can't even teleport when I'm not freaked ouuuuu—

(both scream as the kraken drops them; screams cut off by a splash. Splashing, coughing, gasping from both boys)

ISAAC: It— It dropped us! What—

ASH: Here, climb up!

(the kraken roars)

ISAAC: We're dead, we're dead, we are so dead!

ASH: Just, whatever you do, do not let go of the rock.

ISAAC: Trust me that never once crossed my mind!

(kraken roars)

ASH: Okay. There're a lot of rocks around here. Maybe we can climb along them and get back to shore.

ISAAC: That would involve letting go of this rock!

ASH: But we would get to hold on to other rocks. We would have passing relations with many rocks. And might just escape the kraken.

ISAAC: Key word: might!

(kraken roars, louder)

ISAAC: Oh god, it's coming back towards us!

ASH: Oh shit.

(Isaac and Ash scream some more. Then, a seal starts barking)

ISAAC: What now?

ASH: I dunno, but the kraken isn't looking at us anymore, so let's get out of here.

ISAAC: It's a... It's a seal? Jumping around in the water near the kraken?

ASH: Good! Maybe it'll eat that and not us!

ISAAC: Wait, is... Is it leading the kraken away from us? Like, on purpose?

ASH: That's something we can wonder about when we are as far away from the water as possible! Now get off your butt and climb already!

(both boys are panting for breath after climbing up the rocks)

ISAAC: Do... Do you think... this cave is up high enough?

ASH: It better be.

(a few more beats of catching their breath. Then—)

ISAAC: What was that?!

ASH: What was what?

ISAAC: It sounds like something... squishing? Or, scraping? On the rocks outside our cave. Can... Can kraken climb rocks?

ASH: Isaac, that thing was huge. It wouldn't even need to climb the rocks to get to us. It would just reach a giant tentacle into our little cave, grab us, and drag us back outside again while we scream our lungs out and cry like infants.

ISAAC: Okay that is not making me feel any better about whatever it is that's climbing up towards our cave!

ASH: Well what do you expect me to say? Something encouraging? Would you like me to quote a fucking inspirational greeting card? Would that make you feel better?

ISAAC: Shh! It's coming!

(soft scuffling sound as a seal climbs into the cave)

ISAAC: It's...

ASH: ...a seal.

(seal barks)

ASH: Ha, and you thought it was going to be something dangerous.

ISAAC: Well to be fair we did just see one fight off a kraken, so we know seals are incredibly gutsy, and—

(stretchy, rubbery sounds)

ISAAC: —and now we're seeing one peel off its own skin with... human fingers?

ASH: Okay. That's definitely the most disgusting thing I've seen all day. And today I've seen minotaurs' armpits, a giant tentacle monster, and Isaac without a shirt on.

SOPHIE: (*sarcastic*) Charming. Is that how you respond every time a girl gets uncovered in front of you?

ASH: Well, now that you mention it, if it's a girl then probably yes, but if it's a guy I'm more likely to—

SOPHIE: Never mind, don't finish that sentence, forget I asked.

ASH: Too late!

SOPHIE: What the hell were you two thinking, playing on the sand bar at kraken tide? I swear, you're either the bravest land-dwellers I've ever seen, or the stupidest.

ISAAC: Believe me, it's probably the latter.

SOPHIE: I'll say. You're lucky you weren't eaten. Or drowned. Or drowned, and then eaten.

ASH: I wonder, can a god even drown?

ISAAC: I don't think luck had anything to do with it.

ASH: (*carrying on his own alternate conversation*) I mean, I'm only half god, but I'm pretty sure I'm supposed to be immortal...

SOPHIE: (*evasive*) You think so, huh?

ASH: Just how conditional is this immortality?

ISAAC: Well, yeah...you were the seal leading the kraken away back there, weren't you?

ASH: Now that I think about it, Prometheus is affiliated with fire. So maybe water is my weakness.

SOPHIE: So what if I was?

ISAAC: Nothing! Uh, I mean, not nothing, but...

ASH: If water is my weakness, am I dampening my powers every time I take a shower?

ISAAC: I mean, thank you. First of all. For saving our lives. And second of all... Why?

ASH: Haha, dampening my powers. That's funny. You know, dampening? With water? Dampening my... Whatever.

SOPHIE: Would you rather I hadn't?

ISAAC: No, of course not! I am very, very glad and grateful that you saved us from that kraken. But... just a bit ago you were all like, "I hope that bite never heals and you catch gangrene and die," so... why save us?

SOPHIE: It's... This was different.

ISAAC: How so?

SOPHIE: Well. Defending myself from the violent misogyny of land-dwellers, that's one thing. But letting someone get dragged under by a kraken, I... I couldn't... It's my sister. She's just a pup, and she doesn't have anyone to look up to but me, no one else to learn from, and... I don't want to teach her to let other people die when she could do something about it. Even stupid land-dwellers. I mean, at least you're not fishermen.

ISAAC: Yes, we are very much not fishermen.

SOPHIE: Fishermen on the whole know how to avoid krakens. And how to swim.

ISAAC: We're a bit lacking in that department.

SOPHIE: I'll say. You're college students, aren't you?

ISAAC: Yeah, we go to Jupiter University.

SOPHIE: I thought so. You should enjoy it. College is the best way to get out of the ocean. *(beat)* I mean. Metaphorically speaking. That was definitely just a metaphor.

ISAAC: I'll take your word for it.

SOPHIE: ...if you go deeper into this cave, it turns into a tunnel that goes back to the mainland. It's pretty easy to get to the beach from there, I use it all the time. You won't have to swim at all, if you go that way.

ISAAC: Oh! Great! Thanks!

SOPHIE: Sure. ...I should get home to my sister. And try to find the beach ball. Hopefully the kraken didn't eat it.

ISAAC: Wait. What's your name?

SOPHIE: ...it's Sophie.

ISAAC: I'm Isaac. And this is Ash.

SOPHIE: Alright.

ISAAC: It was nice to meet you.

SOPHIE: ...yeah, I guess it kind of was. Huh. How about that.

(a splash is heard as Sophie leaves)

ASH: Do my eyes and ears deceive me?

ISAAC: What?

ASH: I can't believe this.

ISAAC: Well, yeah, against all odds and despite inability to swim or remember a rhyme about flags, we're alive. It's pretty unbelievable.

ASH: Not *that*. The selkie girl!

ISAAC: What about her?

ASH: Well, she was just standing there.

ISAAC: Yeah...

ASH: And she was talking to you.

ISAAC: Yeah.

ASH: And you were talking back.

ISAAC: Once again, yeah.

ASH: And she was... How do I put this tactfully? *Completely butt naked*.

ISAAC: So— So what if she was?

ASH: So what? Isaac, I don't know whether to be proud or to go into denial! You just held a conversation with a naked woman without revealing yourself to be a complete idiot!

ISAAC: Wait, hold on a sec—

ASH: You got words out and were forming complete sentences and everything! It was incredible!

ISAAC: Is that a compliment?

ASH: You might not be a hopeless case after all! Holy shit, this is more mind-blowing than finding out that I was the son of a god and the world as we knew it was a lie!

ISAAC: Okay, that's a bit—

ASH: I'm having a really hard time wrapping my mind around this. This is huge.

ISAAC: Can we stop talking about this and just go back to the beach and let our friends know that we aren't dead?

ASH: No way. We gotta talk this out. Seriously, Isaac—

ISAAC: I'm not listening, I'm not listening, I'm just gonna start walking and turn off the—oh, crap, the microphone! It got soaked!

ASH: You need to sort out your priorities. Now help me out here—

ISAAC: Wait, Ash, hold on. My microphone isn't dead— It's still recording! It got totally doused in the ocean, but it's still recording. What is this thing even made of?

ASH: Isaac. That is easily the least interesting mystery in the entire universe. Now help me out here, I need to commit this to memory. She was standing over there, and you were sitting over here, and she was naked—

ISAAC: Would you just stop?!

(END)