



Gift from the Sea, by Anne Morrow Lindberg

The beach is not the place to work; to read, write, or think. I should have remembered that from other years. Too warm, too damp, too soft for any real mental discipline or sharp flights of spirit. One never learns. Hopefully, one carries down that faded straw bag, lumpy with books, clean paper, long over-due unanswered letters, freshly sharpened pencils, lists, and good intentions. The books remain unread, the pencils break their points, and the pads rest smooth and unblemished as the cloudless sky. No reading, no writing, no thoughts even â€" at least, not at first.

At first, the tired body takes over completely. As on shipboard, one descends into a deck-chair apathy. One is forced against oneâ€™s mind, against all tidy resolutions, back into the primeval rhythms of the sea-shore. Rollers on the beach, wind in the pines, the slow flapping of herons across sand dunes, drown out the hectic rhythms of city and suburb, time tables and schedules. One falls under their spell, relaxes, stretches out prone. One becomes, in fact, like the element on which one lies, flattened by the sea; bare, open, empty as the beach, erased by todayâ€™s tides of all yesterdayâ€™s scribblings.

And then, some morning in the second week, the mind wakes, comes to life again. Not in a city sense â€" noâ€"but beach-wise. It begins to drift, to play, to turn over in gentle careless rolls like those lazy waves on the beach. One never knows what chance treasures these easy unconscious rollers may toss up, on the smooth white sand of the conscious mind; what perfectly rounded stone, what rare shell from the ocean floor. Perhaps a channeled whelk, a moon shell, or even an argonaut.

But it must not be sought for or â€" heaven forbid! â€" dug for. No, no dredging of the sea-bottom here. That would defeat oneâ€™s purpose.

The sea does not reward those who are too anxious, too greedy, or too impatient. To dig for treasures shows not only impatience and greed, but lack of faith. Patience, patience, patience, is what the sea teaches. Patience and faith. One should lie empty, open, choiceless as a beach â€" waiting for a gift from the sea.

-- Anne Morrow Lindberg from "Gift from the Sea"

