

Every July. Every July for twelve years. Every July for twelve years we went to the same small town on holiday. Every July for twelve years we went to the same beach. Every July for twelve years my parents rented the same small house in the same small town near the same beach, so every morning of every July for twelve years I woke up and walked down to the same beach and sat under the same umbrella or on the same towel in front of the same sea.

There was a small café on the beach where we sat every day, and every day Mr Morelli in the café said 'Good morning!' to my parents, and then always patted me on the head like a dog. Every day we walked down to our red and white umbrella. Every day my father sat on his deckchair and read the newspaper then went to sleep. Every day my mother went for a swim in the sea and then went to sleep. Every lunchtime we ate the same cheese sandwiches which my mother made, and then every afternoon we went up to the café and ate an ice cream while my parents talked to Mr Morelli about the weather. Every summer for twelve years I sat there and read books and sometimes played volleyball with some of the other boys and girls who were there, but I never made any friends.

It was so boring.

Every July for twelve years the same family sat next to us. They were called the Hamiltons. We had a red and white umbrella, they had a green one. Every morning my parents said 'Good morning!' to Mr and Mrs Hamilton, and Mr and Mrs Hamilton said 'Good morning!' to my parents. Sometimes they talked about the weather.

Mr and Mrs Hamilton had two sons. Richard was the same age as me, and his brother Philip was two years older than me. Richard and Philip were both taller than me. Richard and Philip were very friendly and both very handsome. They were much friendlier and more handsome than me. They made friends with everyone and organised the games of volleyball on the beach or swimming races in the sea with the other children. They always won the games of volleyball and the swimming races. My parents liked Richard and Philip a lot. 'Why can't you be more like Richard and Philip?' they said to me. 'Look at them! They make friends with everyone! They are polite, good boys! You just sit here reading books and doing nothing!'

I, of course, hated them.