

Private Lives

by Diane Daniel

from the *St. Petersburg Times*

1 *Life seems a little less* *when you can depend on a special place to
always be there for you.*

There is a tiny slice of the **Gulf of Mexico** that belongs to me. Looking across the water, or down the shoreline, I see the past
5 20 years play over and over,² like an old **Super 8 movie**.

I'm 16, writing poetry while sitting on a at sunset. I'm
 the salty sea on my yellow raft. I'm sitting at the water's
edge, gathering a rainbow of shells. I'm in college, burgundy hair
glistening.³ I'm a working woman, thinking about my career, paying
10 the bills. I'm heavy, I'm thin. My hair is long, short, long again. I'm
happy, sad. Growing older, growing up.

My parents and I moved from **North Carolina** to St. Petersburg,
Florida, when I was just about to start my senior year of high school.
It was a difficult time to be ; I had lived in North Carolina
15 all my life. But I loved the water, so Florida seemed an okay place to
live. I can't remember how I first chose my special beach at the end of
Eighth Avenue. But once I chose my spot, I never switched beaches.

Almost daily, I swam and sunned there. I watched the sun set. I thought
about life. On weekend nights in college, I hung out⁴ at the beach with
20 friends, playing music or just listening to the waves. My bedroom at my
parents' house holds no memories for me. My memories of Florida are all
a mile away, at Eighth Avenue beach.

I live in Boston now and visit my parents in Florida twice a year.
Whenever I visit, I spend many hours at my beach, usually under a hot
25 sun, but sometimes at night, when the sand is cool and the sea seems to
offer answers it won't share during the day. I go to my beach not only to
relax and think, but also to the sea.⁵ The waves are , the
water . But more important to me is the sea's permanence and
sheer force.⁶ I want to be strong like that.



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Culture and
Language Notes

 **LIVEWORKSHEETS**