

**Brett Baldwin**

Age: 18, Grade: 12

School Name: Cypress Bay High School, Weston, FL

Educator: Shawntee` Herring

Category: Poetry

---

## **Mile Marker 100**

A place to escape for when you're in pain

Where the ocean doesn't rub salt into the wound but heals it, giving you a better treatment than the Fountain of Youth ever could.

Where waves and currents steer you onto the right path, just friendly nudges to bring you in the right direction.

Where the breeze is your best friend, letting you know when a storm is coming and whispering encouragement into your ears on a hard day.

Nobody seems to mind the subtle differences in the way people speak or act. You're not judged by the size of your boat but by how much fun you have when you're on it.

The water is our stomping ground and everybody seems to be fine sharing it, because the ocean has more than enough room for all of us and is the most gracious of hosts.

My favorite place is the brushstroke of islands on a breathtaking canvas, just far enough South to equate to a perfect climate.

Where the sun lets you know you've spent too much time outside and the dolphins play in the waves almost the same way you do.

The only barrier between these little dots of paradise and the vast blue of the sea is a small forcefield of sand, carefully placed so the tourists can't lounge on the 'beach' and have to brave the waves to get true enjoyment from this little oasis in a big blue desert

That teems with life, because fish are friends and the ocean is family, all of us building each other up like the coral that is the foundation of our little playground.

The Keys are a second home to me, and those tiny islands have unlocked my heart a hundred times over, giving me new experiences and the knowledge that seas can get rough, and when the going gets tough

You just need to rely on the tools the ocean has given you to persevere, like the palm trees that have lined the streets, the survivors of a hundred hurricanes.

I'm one of those palm trees, standing strong in the harsh winds and swaying back and forth, refusing to buckle under the pressure.

I can hear the sea calling no matter how far I stand from its shores.