

Mara by the Sea Faith Talbot

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Since her divorce, Mara has been moldering. Or at least that's what her best friend tells her when she drags Mara to Cancun for a pick-me-up.

Mara finds more than a pick-me-up. On the beach, she meets two beautiful men who, though they're obviously into each other, are very much into Mara, too. And when they invite her into their unique world, it's an experience unlike anything she could ever imagine.

Chapter One

"Do you know what your problem is? You don't know how to have fun. Plain and simple. You are funless."

Mara gaped at her friend Cor, offended. "I am not funless. I'm... funful. I have lots of fun."

"No, you don't." With a slight flip of her shoulder length chestnut hair, Cor looked pointedly at Mara's Diet Coke. Cor herself was drinking a margarita. "Seriously, when was the last time you had fun?"

"I went to the movies last weekend," Mara shot back, defensive.

"Wow." Cor's voice was deadpan. "Really daring."

Mara sank back in the booth, annoyed and chagrined at the same time. "Well, what would you suggest, Miss Ultimate Fun?"

Cor looked smug. "That actually is my name, you know." She drew something out of her purse, holding it hidden under the edge of the table. "So of course I have ideas."

"Of course you do." Mara stared at the edge of the table as if she might suddenly develop X-ray vision and be able to see what her friend was hiding. "So what are these ideas? Should I be scared?"

"Of course you should be scared. I'm going to push you right out of your comfort zone."

"I like my comfort zone. It's comfortable. That's why it's called a comfort zone."

Cor leaned over the table, a conspiratorial gleam in her eyes. "You know what else is comfortable? Hot guys fucking you senseless" -- she revealed the envelope she held -- "on the beach at Cancun."

Mara stared, then reached out to take the envelope. "You didn't." She opened it hesitantly, as if a poisonous snake might leap out and bite her. Inside the envelope were two tickets to Cancun, one for her and one for Cor. Mara sighed. "I hope my passport's up to date."

"It is. I checked." She grinned brightly and snatched the tickets back. "You've been moping around for eight months, ever since the divorce was finalized. This will do you some good. Trust me."

Mara looked mournfully at her Diet Coke, then Cor's margarita. "I guess I'll have to."

Cor's grin turned to a smirk. "Damn straight."

* * *

The sand between her toes and the mojito in her hand helped a bit, but Mara still felt out of sorts. This just wasn't the kind of thing she did. It wasn't a Mara thing.

That's the point, her little voice said. Doing Mara things isn't going to get you anywhere. Mara things are boring.

She took another sip of the mojito, enjoying the tang of mint and citrus. Maybe that little voice was just the rum talking. Maybe she should quit worrying so damn much about it and just enjoy herself. She might not break down and have a crazy sexual fling, as Cor insisted she should, but at the very least she could relax for the weekend. God knew she could use some relaxation.

She took another sip of her mojito, then leaned back in the beach chair and closed her eyes. The sun was warm, the breeze off the ocean vaguely cool, and the rum was working its way into her system, leaving her nicely limp and relaxed.

Somebody giggled.

Mara wasn't sure why that particular sound, out of all the sounds around her, caught her attention. She wasn't alone on the beach, after all. There were couples all around, lotioning each other, running up and down the beach, smooching, doing God only knew what under beach blankets, kids tossing beach balls and squeaking like kids do -- but that giggle rose above everything else and set something off in her brain.

Maybe because of the incongruity. It wasn't a woman giggling, or a kid. It was a man, the sound of the giggle strange when paired with the deepness of his voice.

The sound came again, this time a bit more toward the laugh end of the spectrum than the giggle end. Mara turned her head and zeroed in on the source.

Two young men were sprawled over a blanket not far away. The giggling seemed even more incongruous now; the giggler was a big, lanky man, easily six feet three. And young. He'd be lucky, Mara thought, if he'd seen his twenty-fifth birthday yet. The other man looked to be a few years older and a few inches shorter. He sat bent forward a bit, a wry smile on his face, while the younger man slathered suntan lotion over his wide, muscular back. The younger man's hands were huge, engulfing the older man's broad shoulders. As Mara watched, he leaned forward to kiss the hollow of his friend's shoulder, then laughed again. The sound was deep and melodious, and made Mara strangely warm. *Friend, hell. Lover, more like.* The older man reached up to cup his friend's face, smiling, and Mara gulped down more mojito.

They were just so... pretty. Unselfconscious, relaxed, obviously enjoying each other's company. She remembered feeling that way once on a beach with David, curled up into his wide body on a beach blanket while he combed his fingers through her wet hair --

She pushed that thought back. No sense thinking about that right now. She was here to have fun, to forget about the divorce and everything having to do with David.

The men moved closer together, the taller one draping his arms over his friend's chest. They looked happy to her.

And hot. She sipped at her drink again, but at this point she was pretty sure the heat building in her body had nothing to do with the rum. It had much more to do with the way the young men touched each other, fingers tangled in front of the smaller man's chest, the larger man's arm draped over his shoulder. Cozy. Intimate. Not quite sexual, but so tacitly indicative of a sexual relationship. A picture flared in Mara's mind of the smaller man bent in half under the larger, back arched as his lover fucked into

him in deep, slow strokes, kissing his face, one hand tracing the curve of his cheekbone...

The younger man looked at her. Straight at her, as if he'd known she was watching him. Dark brown eyes framed by overgrown, sun-bleached bangs took her in. Mara felt her face go hot, but for a moment that seemed like an eternity she couldn't look away. And as his eyes held hers, he smiled. His mouth curled up at the corners, a warmth rising in his eyes. Had he not been idly playing with his lover's chest hair, Mara would have taken the look as a come-on.

She jerked her gaze away, stuffing the straw from her drink back into her mouth and sucking frantically. *Just a friendly smile. Nothing else.* And when she carefully looked back up, he was bent back into the other man's body, lipping the back of his ear.

God. This was insane. She felt like she was going to fly into a zillion pieces right there. They were just so beautiful together, and the pictures racing through her mind didn't help. She never should have let Cor make her watch that gay porn tape. All she could think about was what these two would look like fucking each other, mouths exploring, hard, thick cock sliding in and out of open, willing ass. She hadn't thought much about men having sex with each other; now she could think of nothing else.

The sun had shifted a bit, giving her chosen spot on the beach some shade. She moved a little toward it, draping her cover-up over her lap. She was on fire, melting between her legs. All the talk of sex the last few days -- not to mention the porn -- had sent her into a tailspin. She thought she'd been doing okay with celibacy since David had walked out, but her body ached now, the empty space between her legs begging to be filled. Her entire body pleaded to be fucked.

With her cover-up draped over her lap, she could touch herself without being seen. She was pretty sure she could, anyway. In any case, her hand under the lightweight cotton kimono moved toward the crotch of her swimsuit. Her fingers brushed over it; her cunt felt hot and swollen through the thin material. Experimentally, she brushed her fingers over her mound, feeling the ridge of swollen lips against the

pads of her fingers. She moved her thigh a little to disguise what she was doing and surreptitiously looked back toward the boys.

They seemed occupied with each other again, talking quietly while the older man nestled back into the taller one's lanky embrace. She heard a mumbling of names — Aaron, Chris. They seemed mismatched in a way, and yet not. They looked like completely different types, yet they fit against each other so well.

Mara couldn't help where her thoughts went. Or her fingers, as one slid under the edge of her bikini bottoms, touching wet labia. She didn't think she'd ever been this aroused. It seemed safe again to watch -- the men were occupied with each other, with no apparent interest in anything around them.

What would it be like, Mara wondered, to have them focused on her instead of each other? Both of them touching her at the same time, hands stroking over her body, mouths leaving hot, wet trails over her back and breasts. They could take her at the same time, like the other porn movie Cor had made her watch --

She came. Suddenly, with almost no warning. Her finger stroked the length of her pussy and she just -- broke. Her thighs shook, and her hips jerked under the camouflaging cover-up. Her fingers had slid inside her cunt to the first knuckle; she could feel the slick heat of her climax weep over her skin. Her body shivered, and she clenched her teeth to keep from crying out. Nobody on this beach needed to know she was masturbating in her lounge chair. She couldn't even believe she'd done it.

Slowly, staring down at her own lap for fear of attracting attention, she drew her hand free of her bikini bottom. Surreptitiously, she dried damp fingers on the cotton cover-up, then straightened it a little, trying to pretend nothing had happened. But even as she carefully maintained her composure, her body pulsed with aftershocks that jolted down her thighs, up into her belly. The orgasm had been powerful, liquid, filling up her whole body. Tears still lingered on her lashes.

Her hand still shook a little as she picked up the mojito and drank what remained in the glass. The melting ice had diluted it, but the remaining rum still settled into her system like sunshine.

"Time for a swim," she muttered. She had to cool off somehow. Her body was out of control with need. Even after the mind-numbing orgasm she'd just had, she still ached everywhere with sheer lust. Still trying to act nonchalant, she readjusted her cover-up again. Time to hit the water. Maybe that would cool her down.

There was a trailer not far from where she'd set up camp where beachcombers could rent snorkeling equipment. She acquired a snorkel, fins and a life jacket, as well as a bag of frozen peas to feed to the fish. It sounded like fun.

Back on her lounge chair, she adjusted the life jacket and tested the snorkel. Everything seemed to be functioning properly, as far as she could tell. She wished Cor would come back, but she supposed her friend was occupied elsewhere. After all, she knew how to have fun. Too bad, though, that she couldn't be bothered to stick around and help Mara learn how to have fun.

Well, no point being bitter. She gathered her rented equipment and headed toward the water.

Next to the edge of the water, where the ocean foam lapped up to kiss her feet, she flopped down in the sand to pull on her fins. Unfortunately, she hadn't checked them, and one of the buckles seemed to be stuck. She needed to get it loose to adjust it; as it was, the strap was too tight on her foot. She picked and pulled at it, but it didn't seem to want to cooperate.

"Shit," she muttered, and at the same moment a voice said, "Need some help with that?"

Mara jumped, then looked up. And up. Standing next to her, a friendly look on his face, was the tall young man -- Aaron -- she'd been ogling earlier. His friend -- lover -- stood next to him, his attention more for the pulsing ocean.

Mara swallowed. She'd underestimated Aaron's height. He was well over six feet. Six-four or six-six easily. She felt miniscule next to him.

His friend turned to give her a smile. He was probably six-one, but Aaron dwarfed him. "They can be stubborn." His voice was pleasant, as well, with a tang of

accent -- Southern, maybe. It was vague, and hard to pin down. But his liquid green eyes caught hers, his full, sensuous mouth curved into a smile.

"Yeah, it's, um... it's a little too tight and... the buckle's stuck." She pushed awkwardly to her feet, feeling a bit less overwhelmed at her full height, but not much.

The younger man smiled. "I'm Aaron," he said, holding out a hand. She took it, watching her pale fingers disappear among his huge, sun-browned ones. "This is Chris." The other man nodded. Those big green eyes hadn't shifted from Mara's, but somehow she felt like he'd undressed her with them.

"Mara," she said. Her body had gone all a-tingle again. She fought back an urge to bring Aaron's hand to her mouth, to kiss the big, rough knuckles.

"Nice to meet you," he said. His smile was friendly, but there was just something about it... For two men who'd seemed to be so into each other, they exuded a strangely compelling sexuality that seemed to want to drag her into its murky depths.

Aaron let go of her hand and reached for the fin she still held in her other hand.

Mara let him take it.

"So what brings you here?" Chris asked. Mara dragged her gaze away from Aaron's busy fingers to focus on him.

"Vacation," she answered. "A girlfriend dragged me here. She said I needed a break."

Chris nodded. "A break from what?"

She shrugged. "Life, I guess." She knew she should be careful, not give too much away, and she didn't know these men at all. But her mouth opened and words came out. "I just got divorced. About eight months ago. She said I was... moldering, I think was the word."

Aaron chuckled. "Moldering can't be good." He handed the fin back, buckle undone now.

Chris smiled. "Sometimes it's good to molder. Figure out who you are, what you want, before you move on to that next phase."

Mara squinted at him, surprised at the sudden philosophical bent of the conversation. "Yeah. That makes sense. Thanks."

Chris grinned, teeth flashing. The expression lit up his face and, once again, lit up Mara's body. What was it about these two that made her respond like a horny teenager?

"Well, we're going to hit the water," Aaron said. "Good luck, and maybe we'll see you again."

"That'd be nice." The words came out before Mara could consider them. Maybe that had been the wrong thing to say, but it was too late now. Chris' grin widened, though, and Aaron smiled again and nodded as they continued into the water. No harm done, she thought. They seemed like nice enough young men.

She watched them head out into the surf, Aaron grabbing Chris' shoulders, again so unselfconscious about touching each other, happy to be close.

Smiling, Mara strapped on her fins, adjusted her snorkel, and braved the surf, herself.

Chapter Two

Mara had never snorkeled before. The water was clear, warm and relatively still, and she quickly became enraptured with the spectacle of the fish.

They were beautiful, brightly colored and graceful, though bigger than she'd expected. She'd seen puffer fish and clown fish in salt-water aquariums, but there they were tiny. Here they were several times larger, and they swam straight at her, begging for the frozen peas like puppies after biscuits.

There were lobsters, too, and bright fish she couldn't identify.

And, abruptly, a pair of long, lanky legs.

Mara brought herself up short, but not quite short enough. Perspective under the water was distorted, and she hadn't realized how close the legs were until it was too late to keep from bumping into their owner. They had seemed to appear out of nowhere.

She tried desperately to move backward, to keep from slamming right into what she was suddenly certain was Aaron, but the water carried her straight into him. She came up sputtering, off-balance, and trying awkwardly to apologize through her snorkel. The result wasn't even close to intelligible. To make things worse, the movement of the water took her balance as she came up, toppling her right into him.

Luckily it actually was Aaron, and not some long-legged non-acquaintance. His big hands clasped her arms, steadying her. He bent a little, looking into her face. "Mara?"

"Yeah. I'm sorry... Just lost my balance."

"It's okay." He held onto her arms, as if he wanted to be sure she was steady again before he let her go.

Behind him, Chris popped up out of the water. He spit his snorkel out and peered at her through his mask. "Hey, you okay?"

She nodded. "I'm fine."

"Then pop down here. You gotta see this." He shoved the snorkel back into his mouth and submerged again.

"Um... okay?" Mara ventured, looking at Aaron. With a wry grin, Aaron shrugged, mouthed his own snorkel, and began to slide down into the water. Hurriedly, Mara followed suit.

Underwater, her perspective was thrown off again, and it took a moment for her to orient herself. Then she made out Chris' silhouette, and the craggy rocks he was waving at.

Barely visible in the shadows, she made out the wedge-shaped silhouette of an eel. A moray, if she wasn't mistaken. Dangerous if disturbed, she knew. She wanted to ask if that was, indeed, what it was, but with her mouth full of snorkel, all she could do was look wide-eyed at Chris, who grinned around his own snorkel and gave her a thumbs up.

Then, strangely, his smile faded, and he looked at Aaron. Aaron met his gaze a moment, then looked at Mara, then back at Chris, and finally nodded.

Puzzled, Mara moved back a little in the water. Fear touched her briefly, a bit of her logical mind wondering if she might be in danger from these two men. But her gut, her heart, pieces of her she suddenly felt were more trustworthy than her brain, said otherwise.

Aaron reached for her as she moved back, his hand catching hers and squeezing it reassuringly. He moved a little toward her, giving Chris some space.

What's he doing? The question ran through her head simply because she wanted so much to ask it. But she couldn't speak. She could only wait and see.

Chris lowered his head, then slowly removed the snorkel from his mouth. His cheeks puffed out, and Mara saw bubbles rise from his nose. He handed the snorkel to Aaron, who took it. Then he slid the mask off his face and handed that over, too.

Mara's eyes widened. What was he doing? He seemed comfortable, unconcerned, as he moved farther down into the water, eyes open, mouth relaxed, with no indication he was straining to hold his breath. He moved closer to the eel and held out his hand.

Mara tensed, all too aware of the danger of approaching the eel, but Aaron's hand tightened on hers, holding her where she was. He seemed tense, as well, but expectant rather than concerned.

Chris moved a little closer to the niche in the rock, reaching out, wiggling his fingers. The eel moved a little, a bit out of the niche, then back in, then out, mouth opening and closing. Its strange, primeval face seemed puzzled, or considering.

Chris hunched down, his compact, muscular body becoming more compact as he folded in on himself, bending down, reaching toward the hesitant eel. His mouth moved and a soft sound drifted through the water. That, too, seemed primal to Mara, a deep, quiet sound that shivered through the water, then vibrated over her skin until her hand wanted to stray again between her legs, to let her fingers slide under the thin material of her bikini.

Aaron drew her closer, one hand clasping her waist, pulling her against him. Mara caught her breath, the sound echoing in the tube of the snorkel. The touch was neutral, not at all blatant or beyond proper limits, but somehow it was completely, entirely sexual.

"Watch," she heard him say, though he couldn't have actually spoken around the snorkel.

Chris lowered himself almost to his knees on the ocean floor; the water wasn't as deep here. He bent forward, his solid body floating easily in the water, and his fingers touched the eel's chin.

Mara held her breath. Between the strange acoustics of being underwater and the echoing properties of the snorkel, everything sounded as suspended and unreal as it felt. She found herself laying a hand on top of Aaron's, fingers weaving between his, squeezing. He glanced at her, smiled, drew her a little closer.

"Watch." She heard the word again, in his voice, as clear as if he'd actually spoken it. It should have frightened her, or freaked her out at the very least. It didn't.

Chris tickled the eel's chin with careful fingers. Mara wondered what those fingers would feel like touching her. He had big hands -- not as big as Aaron's, but big -- with square palms and blunt fingers. He coaxed the eel forward until its length slipped across his palm. His hand curled around it, the eel moving against him like a dog asking to be scratched. Its mouth opened, and if an eel could smile its satisfaction, that was exactly what this one did.

Chris' chuckle drifted through the water to her ears. She switched her attention from the eel in his hand to his face. He'd been without his snorkel for longer than anyone possibly could be, and yet he seemed unconcerned. Something beyond strange was happening here, something inexplicable, something beyond anything she'd ever experienced or imagined. And it didn't frighten her. It made her feel in a strange way more whole than she had felt in a long time.

Chris looked at her with a wide grin as the eel rubbed languidly along his hand, then swam back to its niche in the rocks. It was a beautiful creature, she thought, and she never would have thought of an eel as beautiful before. But it was, because it was itself, a perfect creature, an entity, a primal thing of some strange power.

Chris straightened. As he did, Aaron pulled her against him in an unexpected embrace. His cheek pressed against her forehead, and she thought he would have kissed her there had it not been for his snorkel and her mask. Then he reached a hand out to Chris, returning the other man's snorkel. Chris took it and repositioned it, as well as the mask. It seemed almost strange now for him to wear them. Mara knew he didn't need them -- though she had no idea why or how -- and it seemed almost a violation for him to use them, as it would have been if the eel had suddenly required a breathing apparatus. He turned to Mara and their eyes met, even through the water, even through the masks, and she knew something profound had happened here. Chris nodded once, then moved his hands downward, pushing himself up through the surface of the water. Aaron moved, as well, and Mara didn't so much follow him as move at the same time.

Chris surfaced seconds before Mara and Aaron did, and had his snorkel and mask nearly off when they broke the surface. Mara struggled at her own, jerking them off as quickly as she could. She wanted to look at him without the filter of the mask. Wanted him to look at her.

Aaron pulled mask and snorkel off, as well, holding them in one big hand while the other moved to cup Mara's waist as it had before, fingers splaying up against her ribs, down onto the top of her hip.

"Chris..." Her voice was breathy, strained, with the inability to put words to what she had seen. Part of her wanted to ask him how he had done it, what it all meant. But what she said was, "Thank you. That was beautiful."

Chris smiled, a slow, knowing smile, and exchanged a look with Aaron. "Told you."

Aaron only chuckled. He drew Mara a little closer, bent over her as he had beneath the water, and this time did kiss her softly on the temple.

"It didn't scare you." His voice was soft, warm against Mara's skin.

"No. It was... it was wonderful." She turned to face him, her hands coming up to lie against his shoulders. "It was wonderful."

"Darlin', he didn't do a damn thing." Chris' voice broke through her sudden, spontaneous rapport with Aaron. But he was smiling as he moved toward them.

"I can, though," Aaron said, a bit defensively.

"I know you can," Chris said, and cupped the back of Aaron's neck. He pulled him down and kissed him firmly on the mouth.

Mara froze, staring at them, at Chris' sensuous lips moving against Aaron's. She should back away, move out of their private moment. But before she could gather herself enough to make a move, Chris drew back from Aaron and bent to her.

His mouth was warm and cold at the same time -- his lips cold from the sea water, the inside of his mouth warm from his own body heat, but also she imagined from the kiss he'd just shared with Aaron. Her body lit up at the contact, trembling with

need as his mouth played over hers, pressing it open, as his tongue slipped inside to touch hers.

It seemed a long time before he drew back and smiled down at her, the look of contentment on his face almost a smirk. The kiss had been so unexpected, and so involving, that Mara hadn't even had a chance to worry about who else might be watching, or what it might mean, or how she should be responding. It had taken her into the moment and kept her there.

Looking into those wide, green eyes, though, she couldn't help but wonder. "I thought you... and Aaron...?" She turned. Aaron was still holding her.

"Yes," he said. "But when we find someone like you..."

"Like me?"

There was a moment of silence, not strained enough to be awkward, but strangely suspended.

"Someone who understands," Chris finally said. "Someone who can accept what we are."

Mara swallowed, that sense of danger, of fear, rising again. But it was coming from her head, not from her heart. "What are you?"

"You saw what we are." Aaron's voice came soft and gentle. He was still touching her, his hands careful as they caressed her, almost absently, yet in a way that kept her strange arousal moving, heading for a peak of need she wouldn't be able to refuse.

"We're of the water," Chris put in, as if sensing Aaron's simple response to be less than satisfactory. "I'm not sure how else to explain it."

"You mean... you're like mermen?"

This garnered a smile from Aaron, but Chris' brow furrowed as he considered it more seriously. "Not exactly. But I'm not sure there's a concept, much less a word, that would explain it much better."

"Water sprites?" Aaron offered.

Chris shook his head. "Not quite that, either."

Mara's eyes widened, gaping at them, the thinking brain part of her asea -- so to speak -- in the surreal quality of the conversation. "Maybe it doesn't matter," she said, as the heart part of her once again asserted itself.

"Not really." Chris' furrowed brow smoothed, his warm, inviting smile replacing the soberness. "All that really matters is that we found you."

"Found me? How... how did you find me?"

"We sensed you. It's hard to explain." Aaron looked at Chris, as if asking him to pick up the thread.

"We know sometimes." Chris had gone sober again. "We can tell when there's someone nearby who's able to accept us. When we do, we come to shore. We don't always find the person we're looking for."

"This time we did," Aaron said quietly.

Something in his voice made tears spring to Mara's eyes. She fought back the unexpected surge of emotion. There was just something about these two, the way they looked at her, the way they touched her.

"So... if you find them, what do you do?"

"We make our acquaintances and then see what happens."

She turned to look up into Aaron's limpid dark eyes. "And what happens?"

"Sometimes nothing." His hand tightened on her as the water lapped her body, doing nothing to cool the inferno raging within her. "Sometimes... sometimes everything."

Chapter Three

She stayed with them the rest of the afternoon. They took her places in the small cove she was certain none of the other tourists knew existed. Places she knew the others couldn't go. Chris held one hand, Aaron held the other, and they went into the deeper water, and wherever they went the waters calmed and the fish came to greet them, romping and smiling as well as fish could. The men abandoned the pretense of mask and snorkel, swimming like dolphins next to and around her, keeping her safe.

As the sun began to settle toward the horizon, they captured her between their bodies, floating on the quiet water. Chris' lips touched the back of her ear.

"If we hold you," he said, "you can go under, too."

She stilled in their joint embrace. "Without the snorkel, you mean?" Chris was behind her so she looked up at Aaron for her answer. He nodded.

Mara said nothing for a few seconds, then, slowly, she nodded. She took the snorkel out of her mouth and reached for the mask, but the two men had both already taken hold of it, sliding it gently from her face.

"Just relax," said Aaron. Chris' arms came around her from behind, embracing her. His body pressed against hers, and she could feel his erection pressing against the small of her back as he held her. She shivered a little in his arms. He wanted her. She wanted him, too.

She couldn't see him, but his lips touched the back of her neck. "Soon," she heard, though his mouth didn't move.

The men exchanged a look over her shoulder, then Aaron moved closer to her, as well. "Are you ready?"

Mara nodded. He held his hips a little away from her, making her wonder if he were deliberately hiding his arousal. If he was, she was grateful for it. With Chris' cock pressed against her back, she was finding it hard to follow Aaron's advice to relax.

They held her in their joined embrace, their arms overlapping. Slowly, the three of them slid down into the water.

The ocean was warm and... soft. The texture, the temperature -- everything about it seemed strangely different when she experienced it within the circle of these men's arms. As the surface closed over her head, panic trilled through her. She wouldn't be able to breathe --

"Shhh." The soft, reassuring noise came clearly to her ears, though neither of the men was speaking. Hands caressed her gently, and the fear dissipated. She was fine. Somehow, she was fine. She wasn't exactly breathing, not in the way she understood as normal, but her body lacked nothing it needed. She felt at ease, balanced and protected. Awed, she smiled up at Aaron. He smiled back and nodded.

They went farther out, beyond the buoy markers. No one seemed to notice — certainly no one called them back. The fish here seemed brighter, larger, wilder. No puppy-like begging — these creatures maintained a sort of noble haughtiness, an aura of danger. Mara took it in, amazed at the beauty. Clownfish, puffers, a barracuda, and in the not-so-far distance, she was certain she saw a shark. It turned, seeming to look directly at them with its small, prehistoric eyes, then turned back. Its sleek, deadly profile slid away into the sun-dappled water.

Suddenly Mara felt overwhelmed, far too aware of where she was, what she was doing, who she was with. She was floating between two strange men in the open ocean, far away from the approved swimming areas, without snorkel, without mask, not breathing --

Panic jolted up her throat. She was underwater. How could she breathe -- how could she be here -- she was dying, drowning, trapped --

Big hands tightened on her and the three of them surged upward, breaking the surface of the water just as the panic clenched in her chest enough to make her take a reflexive breath.

"Oh, God. Oh, God." She began to shake as her face broke the surface, her lungs dragging in air they'd had no need for until she'd let herself become too aware of what was happening to her.

"Shh... shh..." Hands on her face, on her body. Comforting, supporting. "Shh... it's all right."

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Her own hands groped toward Aaron, clasping his shoulders to steady herself. Now that the panic was beginning to settle, all she could think was that something beautiful had happened, and she had ruined it.

"No. No, it's okay." Chris' voice. He turned her in their shared embrace, and she found herself looking into his clear green eyes. "It's okay."

"No. I ruined it."

He smiled. "You were perfect." He leaned forward and kissed her.

Again, there seemed to be a reason to breathe but no need. Chris' mouth was soft and warm on hers, pressing her lips apart, his warm tongue tangling with hers. He tasted like the ocean.

She responded to the kiss, left with no other choice, with no other need. His legs wrapped around hers, yet somehow they stayed afloat. Behind her, she felt Aaron press closer, his long body molding against hers. His arousal was blatant now, his hard cock pressing in a long ridge against her back. His arms slipped around her, rough but easy. His big hands cupped her breasts.

Mara gasped. Part of her had known it had all been leading to this. That eventually they would take this step, make this move. But another part of her had been certain they wouldn't, that they would find her wanting. After all, David had. Why would these two young men have any interest in her, any need for her? She was too old for them, damaged goods, she had nothing they could want, and they had each other --

"You're part of us." The voice was Aaron's, but she wasn't sure if he'd spoken aloud or if the words had come to her in that strange, disembodied way they'd seemed to speak to her before. Aaron's hands shifted, pressing against her breasts. His thumbs found her nipples, rising high and hard against the tight material of her swimsuit. "You don't have to," he whispered then. This time she could feel the movement of his lips and the soft breath of his voice against the back of her ear. "We'll stop if you want, take you back."

Chris drew back as Aaron spoke, his lips separating from Mara's with a sound that seemed to her like weeping. She stared at him, unable for a moment to understand why he wasn't kissing her. His eyes on hers were gentle, waiting. She took his face in both her hands and drew him back down.

She kissed him for hours, ages, an eternity. Their three bodies moved easily in the water, impossibly suspended. Aaron's big hands moved away from her breasts, sliding down her stomach until his fingers slid under the edge of her swimsuit.

Long fingers slid down the soft curve of her belly, lower, finding the secret heat between her legs. Her cunt clenched as his fingertips found the rising pebble of her clit. She moved to let him in, and his fingers slid deep inside her.

Chris' mouth still moved on hers, his tongue and hers engaging in a soft, sweet, primal dance. Her hand pushed through his sun-bleached hair, and he laughed into her mouth.

"What?" she managed, afraid she'd done something wrong.

He pulled back to look at her, his eyes warm and content. "Nothing. You're just... so perfect."

Tears sprang to her eyes, gathering on her lids, then she arched back as Aaron's fingers speared inside her. A wordless sound tore from her throat, of need, of pleasure, of wanting. Chris' smiling eyes held her a moment longer, then he lowered his body in the water, his mouth latching to her breast as he pushed her bikini top up out of the way.

It was impossible, beautiful; it was perfect. They hung suspended in the warm water, buoyed and still as the waves moved around them. The warm sun sparkled off the ripples in bright lines and spangles, and Mara moaned out her need as four eager hands, two eager mouths, moved over her, filling her with heat and need like she'd never experienced before. Whatever magic they spun, it called to her body on every level, as if each cell were responding to their firm, practiced touch.

Chris' mouth moved down her body, tasting every millimeter of her skin, until he moved beneath the water. His hands clasped her thighs, fingers pressing into her flesh. Her bikini bottoms had ties on the sides; he unfastened them so the cloth floated away, but he caught it, wrapping it around his wrist before it could go out to sea.

He focused again on her thighs, moving them apart to open her to his questing tongue. It slid over her clit, circled it, then pushed inside her. She spread her legs wide as he tongue-fucked her, Aaron's solid body behind her holding her steady, holding her above the waves. But she was no longer afraid of the water. Cradled by these two men, she knew she could sink into its warm embrace without fear.

Chris' tongue pressed hard into her pussy, stroking inside her, finding every secret place that made her burn and shudder with desire. Aaron's arm came around her, cradling and supporting her, his hand pressing and caressing her breast. His other hand slid down the small of her back, over her buttocks, then between them.

When his long finger probed gently against her ass, she flinched at first, then tensed, unprepared. David had never touched her that way; his lovemaking had been as staid and unimaginative as it had been infrequent. How had she allowed herself to be satisfied with that? There was so much more, so much she could have had.

Aaron's finger rimmed her gently, then the tip slid inside, past the taut ring of muscle, and her mind jerked back to the present. The sun skipping over the surface of the ocean glowed like fire, like the flames lapping and burning inside her own body. Aaron's finger slid deeper, slickened by the wetness Chris' tongue and fingers brought out of her body. Suddenly it struck Mara what would come next, what they were preparing her for. An involuntary gasp came from her and just the thought of it made

her body wrench around Chris' invading tongue, Aaron's invading finger. She pulsed hard, the orgasm ripping through her unexpectedly. Aaron's arm tightened around her, and he kissed the back of her neck. His hand rose from her breast to touch her lips, touching the soft line as she whispered their names.

Aaron's finger slid deeper inside her as she came, his invasion a deep, burning ache inside her. She wanted more, didn't think she could possibly get enough. Then Chris' tongue withdrew from her body and he began to rise in the water, and she knew there was more to come. Could she do this? Could she let them take her?

Chris' hands on her shoulders turned her around again, until she faced Aaron. The taller man kissed her deeply, his tongue stroking inside her mouth. Chris clasped her hips then, positioning her, and she felt his thick, blunt cock press against her ass, where Aaron had primed and opened her with his fingers.

Mara let herself relax, let herself become as one with the water. She was ready.

Slowly, he eased into her, a bit at a time, pausing to let her relax before moving farther. At the same time, Aaron's long fingers played her clit, her wet, swollen labia, drawing out the heat, the need. She reached for him, found the thick, hot length of his cock, and stroked it. It was already steely hard, long and thick in her hand. Feeling its size, she understood why they'd switched places. It would be easier for her to take Aaron's greater length and girth in her pussy. He was impossibly hard beneath velvety skin, and she realized after a moment's exploration that he was uncut. His body shivered against her, and his kiss roughened, then gentled again as he regained control.

Chris gave one last, careful thrust, and Mara made a soft, needy noise. He was fully inside her now. She ached and burned with the deep penetration. It hurt, but felt impossibly good at the same time, on that knife-edge between pain and pleasure. She wanted more. Wanted so much. Wanted Aaron deep inside her, as well, wanted them both to fuck her senseless.

"Now." The single word came softly from Aaron's lips. It wasn't a question, but Mara nodded, anyway. He reached down, his fingers opening the lips of her pussy. His hips shifted toward her, and he slid inside.

He took her slowly, as slowly as Chris had, though she felt there was no need for his caution. Mara tipped her hips forward, welcoming Aaron in as best she could without dislodging Chris, who held still behind her, steadying her hips with his hands as his partner slowly slid his full length home.

For a long, suspended moment, the three of them were still. Mara held tight to Aaron's shoulders, while he held her body and Chris clasped her hips. They were both embedded in her as deeply as they could go, their full, hard cocks twin brands inside her needy, welcoming body. She held onto the sweet intensity of the sensation, let it fill her, consume her, burn her to ashes.

Then, slowly, they began to move.

They shifted in synch, slowly sliding out, then back in. Only a little at first, then more, their cocks in perfect rhythm, deeper, faster, harder, until they both fucked her in deep, certain strokes. Their rhythm broke then, on purpose, shifting into a counterpoint that brought the intensity even higher. Her entire body was on fire, the incredible sensations rushing through her, then pooling low in her belly, her groin, the small of her back. The men slid back into synchronization, fucked her hard and deep, and suddenly everything inside her exploded.

She screamed with the sensation, a ragged, animal sound that she couldn't hold back. Her body clenched and shook and shuddered in throes of ecstasy. Aaron's fingers pinched her nipple, a sharp pinprick of sensation in the vast flood that had taken her over. Nothing she'd ever experienced in her life had prepared her for this. She wasn't sure her body could take it. She felt as if she'd been transformed, her solid human flesh changed to primal fire by the sheer force of the orgasm.

It held her forever, for an eternity, for a handful of moments that ended far too soon. As she began to ease down from the torrid heights, she felt Chris buck against her, then felt his cock pulse inside her as his own release came. A moment later, Aaron's cock pressed an impossible length deeper inside her, and he, too, came with a ragged shout.

Mara's eyes were hot. Tears, she realized, as they broke free from her lashes and slid down her face. Nothing had ever been like this before. Nothing would ever be like this again. She fell forward into Aaron's embrace, then felt herself turned so both of them could hold her, touch her, stroke her hair.

They stayed like that for a long time.

Chapter Four

The sunlight on the water turned darker gold, and the water itself seeming to turn cooler. Limp and satiated in the men's strong arms, Mara only smiled and nodded when they suggested they go back.

Much of the crowd on the beach had dispersed, undoubtedly heading off for dinner or dancing or sightseeing now that the sun was going down. Mara went to retrieve her things from her locker. Her cell phone showed five missed phone calls. They proved to all be from Cor, increasingly concerned when Mara continued to not answer.

"I need to make a call."

Aaron nodded and wrapped his arms around her from behind. He kissed the top of her head while she dialed.

"Oh, thank God," Cor answered without preamble. "Where have you been? I've been worried sick."

"I'm sorry, hon." She genuinely was. "I just ran into some people at the beach."

There was a pause. "What kind of people? Boy people?"

Aaron's hand lay on Mara's chest; she covered it with her own. "Well, actually, yes."

"Oh. My. God!" Cor's tone had gone from worried to mock-scandalized. "You finally loosened up."

"Yeah, you could say that." Her fingers stroked the spaces between Aaron's knuckles. "Anyway, I'm okay, so don't worry. And I'm sorry I didn't call."

"Honey, don't worry about it. You just keep on having fun."

Mara chuckled. "I will."

She clicked off the phone, smiling contentedly. "Let's go," she said.

* * *

She was glad Cor had convinced her to get her own room. Once they'd closed the door behind them, she fell into both men's arms again, kissing, caressing. The salt had dried on their skin, though, and after a moment she drew back, laughing.

"Shower," she suggested.

They ran the water hot, used the pulsing setting on the showerhead to scour off the salt. Soon enough, Mara found herself on her knees in front of Aaron, taking his cock into her mouth, deep into her throat. Chris knelt behind him, doing she didn't know what, but she could imagine. His fingers touched her chin from time to time as he fondled Aaron's balls while Mara sucked and laved his cock. Chris was tongue-fucking him too, she was certain, though she couldn't see it. She heard it, though -- the soft sucking sounds of Chris' mouth, Aaron's involuntary moans. The thought of it, the earthy sounds, the musky smell of Aaron's body, all combined to bring her to a state of arousal as intense as what she'd experienced with them in the water. She wouldn't have thought it possible to want them both so intensely this soon, but she did.

Aaron's hips pulsed forward, and he made a hissing sound through his teeth. His cock pushed farther down Mara's throat than she was quite ready to manage. She opened her mouth wider to accommodate him, at the same time tipping her head back to keep from choking. Her teeth scraped him inadvertently. He jerked, gasped, and came down her throat.

She swallowed hurriedly, her own desire soaring at his sudden, unexpected climax. She caressed his flank as he finished, tilting her head for a better angle, letting the head of his cock settle at the back of her throat.

"I'm sorry..." His voice was breathy and broken, still strangled by the intensity of orgasm. She stroked him again, then slowly slid off, kissing the head of his cock as it left her mouth.

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"No," she said. "I'm sorry."
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[&]quot;Don't be."

"Then don't you be, either." She looked up at him, her gaze meeting his across the long expanse of his body. His hands came down to catch her elbows, drawing her to her feet. Behind him, Chris, too, stood, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Water's getting cold," he said.

It wasn't exactly cold yet, but it was definitely not as hot as it had been. Impulsively, Mara drew Aaron's head down to kiss him, then reached past both the men to turn off the water.

They found towels and dried off, the venture quickly becoming another tangle of limbs, licks, and tongues. It wasn't long before they all fell to the bed, still damp. Wordlessly, they moved together, bodies finding room between other bodies. Chris stretched himself along her, hips wedging between her thighs. She opened to him, arched under him as he sank inside her.

Next to them, Aaron stroked a hand down Chris' back. Chris turned his head and Aaron kissed him. Mara couldn't take her eyes away, yet felt like she should. The kiss was as deep and intimate as any full-fledged sex act, as they tasted and explored each other's mouths. Then Chris drew back and looked down at Mara. His hips tilted against her, and he began to thrust.

She tipped her head back, arched her back, let him take her. He wasn't as big as Aaron but he was easily as thick, and having him inside her felt like heaven.

Aaron slid between them, kissing her, mouthing her breasts, never enough to interfere with what Chris was doing. Then he moved behind Chris, stroking his back, his ass, touching him. Chris jerked against her, and she realized Aaron had slid his fingers inside, fucking him as Chris continued to fuck her.

It was overwhelming. The intensity, the intimacy. Though not quite the same as having them both inside her at once, it was still powerful, beautiful. She wished it could go on forever.

And suddenly, with complete certainty, knew it couldn't.

Her breath hitched, caught in her throat. She wouldn't cry, not now, not with Chris still inside her. But he seemed to know what she was thinking, and leaned in to kiss her gently. As his tongue tangled with hers, he came, and she went with him, her body tightening and releasing on his as he spilled himself deep inside her.

He eased down over her, and Aaron moved down with them, until they lay in a hot, tangled, damp pile, smelling of soap and salt and sex. Aaron's hand stroked her hair.

"If you need us again," he said gently, then trailed off.

Chris spoke. "Just come to the sea. We'll find you."

They stroked her gently, comfortingly, and after a long time, she fell asleep.

* * *

She woke alone. She had fallen asleep on top of the blankets; now she lay under them, tucked in neatly. The curtain was partly open, and the bright morning light slanted in.

There was no note. Their smell lingered vaguely in the room, but other than that, they had left no sign they had been there at all.

Mara went to the window and pushed the curtain open the rest of the way. Still naked, she opened the balcony door and stepped out.

Far below, the ocean rolled up in white foam against the rocks, its sound a neverending lullaby. She could almost hear their voices in it, and knew they'd be there waiting when she came back down and put her bare toes in the surf. Tonight. She would go tonight.

She smiled, then went back inside. She washed, and dressed, and went downstairs to meet Cor for breakfast.

Faith Talbot

Faith Talbot has been a demon hunter, vampire slayer, ghost whisperer, international spy and secret agent to the stars. In her spare time, she likes to knit and grow chili peppers. You can contact her at talbotfaith@gmail.com, or visit her website at faithtalbot.com.