

Island For Three

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(Mff, inc, slow)

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Chapter 1

Disaster

Lance Lyons stared out at the tranquil blue waters of the ocean, happy to be living his dreams. He relaxed on the deck of his yacht, the *Siren's Song*, doing absolutely nothing and loving it. Lance craved excitement, but he craved tranquillity just as much.

At twenty-five, he had already squeezed in a lifetime of adventures. Every summer it was something new. He had climbed Everest, flown over the Atlantic in a plane he had built himself, gone on safari in Africa, and bicycled from Los Angeles to New York. He was an experienced mountain climber, skydiver, sailor, and pilot.

This adventure had a much more relaxed atmosphere than many of his others. While he had a planned route, for the most part he just went where the wind took him. He loved to watch the taut curves of the billowing sails, feel the gentle rolling of the yacht on the small swell, and the smell of salt in the air.

His sister Cammy, ten years his junior, emerged from below, then came and sat down by him with a grin on her face. He enjoyed seeing her smile; there had been a time when he had wondered if he would ever see it again. With her sandy brown hair now at shoulder length, a trim figure, and a good color to her face, one would never suspect that a year ago she had been going through chemotherapy for cancer.

Those had been rough times. There were two brothers in their family between Lance and Cammy, one starting graduate school and the other about to go off to college. But perhaps because she was the baby of the family, and perhaps because she was his only sister, he felt a special closeness to her, a kind of protectiveness that broke his heart when he found out he might lose her. When they first discovered she had cancer, he had canceled his plans to swim the English Channel and come home immediately. Although he could do nothing for her, he wanted to spend as much time with her as possible, in case she didn't make it through the ordeal.

To give her something to hope for, he had promised to take her sailing around the world with him when she got better. It was partly a joke; such a trip could take a couple of years, and she had just barely started high school. When he saw her eyes light up with excitement at the idea, though, he decided to follow through with it. That trip would have to wait until after she graduated, but to give her something to look forward to, he agreed to take her on a shorter trip just for the summer. Every time he visited her in the hospital, he brought charts to plot their route, as well as books on sailing. He had taught her as much as he could without a hands-on approach, because although the yacht could be sailed single-handed, it was always good to have an extra hand to help out. As she had learned about operating the boat and they had discussed the plans, he could see the delight in her face. He liked to think that that positive mental state helped to speed the recovery.

The treatment worked, and she was taken off chemotherapy last August. Her doctor insisted that she wait at least six months before taking the trip, just to be sure that the cancer didn't come back. She had to be home-

schooled for the first semester of the new year because she was still too weak to stay out of the house all day, and then in January she returned to public school. Lance promised her they would go sailing the day after school ended, and he kept his word. They began their trip in early June, and were now two months out. They had already visited several islands off the beaten track that he had read about as underrated vacation destinations, and had had a lot of fun there. They spent most of their time on the yacht though, just lazily wandering around the Pacific.

Cammy had turned out to be an invaluable asset. Her book-learning had helped her to pick up on the yacht's operation quite rapidly, and with her natural affinity to sailing she was on her way to becoming at the very least a decent deck hand. At first she had to be coached a little when he gave her an order (while he wouldn't normally have been able to bring himself to order her around, he was an experienced enough sailor to know that orders need be given clearly and followed to the letter). However quite quickly she had been following his commands without needing an explanation, and she sometimes even took the initiative when she saw something that needed to be done.

As he gazed at Cammy, he realized just how beautiful his little sister was, especially when she smiled. She hadn't stopped smiling ever since they left port that first day, and it made Lance feel good to know that he was the cause of it.

"You're in a good mood today," he told her.

"I'm in a good mood every day. I love this. Thank you so much for taking me on this trip."

"It's worth it just to see your smile," he teased.

Cammy knew how to tease right back. "Are you flirting with me?" she asked with a grin.

"No, I save my flirting for your friend Autumn," he replied. Suddenly, he froze as he saw another shape in the doorway leading below. A girl stood there, her eyes wide and a frightened look on her face. She opened her mouth as if to say something, then suddenly turned around and bolted down the stairs.

"Oops," Cammy said for him.

That pretty much told it all. Autumn Kent was Cammy's best friend. Cammy had begged Lance to let her come along on this trip too, and he immediately agreed, partly to thank the girl for her loyalty to his sister through the terrible ordeal. Although Autumn was a year younger than Cammy, his sister had befriended the shy brunette out of pity because she didn't have any other friends. It wasn't that there was anything physically or mentally wrong with her; she was rather attractive and did well in school in fact. She just had no self-confidence around people.

The friendship had turned out to be a good thing for Cammy. Maybe because Autumn had no other friends and would otherwise feel lonely, she visited Cammy in the hospital every day after school. Lance had seen just how much this helped Cammy's morale, and ever since then he had a soft spot in his heart for the girl. That was why he had agreed to let her come along on the trip.

It was only afterward that he had learned that she had a crush on him. If he had known before, he wouldn't have agreed to take her along, considering how awkward it would be with just the three of them on the yacht. But Lance couldn't just dash her hopes after saying she could come along, so he was stuck with her.

It wasn't that he didn't like her company. Sure, she was a little hard to talk with because she tended to blush every time he said hi to her. But on those rare occasions when she actually came out of her shell, she was sweet and kind and fun to be around.

Especially after Cammy had told him about Autumn's crush, Lance tried to be especially nice to her. He never teased her like he did his sister; if he ever did, Autumn would probably pass out. But he tried to be cheerful and friendly, hoping to give her at least a little self-confidence. It wasn't to give her any false hopes; any kind of relationship between them was obviously impossible. He just wanted her to learn to be comfortable talking with the opposite sex, especially those she had a romantic interest in. It would help her later when she found a nice young man her own age to get involved with. It was working, albeit slowly. The first day of the trip she couldn't even look him in the eyes, but yesterday she had even said hi to him first.

This trip was just what she needed. Not only would she start to gain a broader view of the world, but her peers at school would no doubt ask her about it when she got back to school in the fall, which would probably help to tear down some of those barriers she had erected between everyone else and herself. At least, he hoped it would work out that way.

Of course, Lance would be with her the whole trip so that she didn't have to worry about culture shock so much. He had been all over the world after all, so there weren't too many places on the globe where he didn't feel comfortable. Autumn and Cammy would get to experience a variety of different cultures without having to worry about anything. He would take care of them.

"Maybe I should go apologize to Autumn," Lance told Cammy.

"Maybe you shouldn't," Cammy replied. "You're just going to end up embarrassing her even more."

"Yeah, you're probably right," he shrugged. "Why don't you go apologize for me later?"

"I will. Thanks for being so sweet, Lance," she smiled at him. She leaned in and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "Anyway, could you help me with my homework?"

That was part of the agreement that she had made with their parents to get their permission to come on this trip. She had to study every day, to catch up from the months she had missed at school. Lance was no professor, but he had graduated from college, so at least he was educated enough to help her now and then. Cammy was a bright girl, and more often than not if she didn't know the answer to the questions on her homework, he didn't know it either. They always managed to figure it out in the end, though.

Because of the calm weather Lance was able to set the auto-steering for extended periods, enabling him to concentrate on Cammy when he needed to. As they sat and worked on Cammy's homework, Lance let himself enjoy the afternoon. While this wasn't exactly his idea of a fun activity, he had learned not to take his

time with his little sister for granted. He loved to just sit here and talk with her, just to see her alive and well and most importantly, happy.

Autumn joined them an hour later, after spending probably the whole time working up the courage to return topside. Lance wanted to apologize to her, but decided it was probably better just to pretend it never happened.

"Hi Autumn," he said cheerfully.

"Hi Lance," she replied, staring at the floor.

"Have you come to join our little study group? You don't have to if you don't want to; I know teenagers hate to spend their summers in school."

"No, that's all right," she said. "I don't mind studying with Cammy."

She sat down next to her friend, and together the three of them worked through the sample questions in the book. Lance and Cammy both made a special effort to ask Autumn questions directly, because if they didn't she had a tendency to just sit there in silence. There was nothing wrong with silence; in Lance's opinion, most people could do with a little more quiet reflection in their lives. In Autumn's case though, anything to get her talking was a good thing.

She really was a pretty girl. She had long, straight brown hair that she liked to wear tied back in a ponytail. Her skin, normally a little pale, had taken on a healthy tan in the months at sea, giving her an almost Polynesian appearance, though as far as he knew she had no Polynesian ancestry at all. On the islands where they had stopped, she could have passed for one of the natives. Her most striking features, though, were her eyes. It was too bad she rarely looked at him, because she had the most beautiful brown-green eyes, a little on the large side with long lashes. With a slender figure to match her pretty face, there was really no need at all for her to be so shy. Probably half the boys at her school would jump at the chance to go out with her.

It was really too bad she had a thing for a guy eleven years older than her. More than once Lance had caught himself wishing he were her age. He was no pedophile, but he could certainly recognize the beauty of such a girl.

He knew what it was that she saw in him. It wasn't the first time a girl had fallen for the dashing, young, adventurous type. He led an exciting life, there was no question of that. He wondered, though, why excitement and romance often seemed like they should go together. In his case, they seemed to push each other apart; his time was usually so filled up with adventures that he really didn't have time for a serious relationship with a woman. It was too bad that now that he had time to just relax and enjoy himself, there were only two women around, one of whom was related to him and both of whom were too young for him.

He wasn't going to let that bother him. He was certainly not going to start up a romantic relationship with Autumn. That didn't mean he couldn't enjoy her beauty or her company though.

He glanced up and peered into the distance ahead of them. Dark clouds on the horizon meant that they were likely in for a spell of bad weather. A little wind and rain didn't worry him; he actually found the sound of rain pattering on the roof, or in this case the deck, tranquil and soothing. On the other hand, it meant that the seas would probably be choppy all night. He would make sure to warn the girls to take some Dramamine before going to bed.

After another hour of homework, they decided to call it quits for the day. The girls disappeared below deck to do whatever it was that girls did, while Lance set to work shortening the sails. He probably had time to do it after dinner before the storm hit, but he didn't want to cut it close. He had no idea how strong of a storm they were in for, and he didn't relish the thought of trying to take down the sails in the middle of it. They were in no real hurry, so a couple of extra hours under short sails wouldn't make a difference.

At dinner that night in the saloon, Cammy was her usual bubbly and cheerful self, but Autumn stared at the table and ate in silence. Meal times had been awkward from the very first day; Autumn rarely spoke, and although Cammy and Lance tried to engage her in the conversation, she usually just answered in single words, not even raising her eyes from her plate. Cammy had assured Lance that Autumn wasn't trying to be rude or didn't enjoy the company. The girl was just shy.

By the time they finished dinner, there was a noticeable change in the sea. The boat rolled smoothly but noticeably further in the swell than it had in the morning. They were likely in for a rough night. The weather was pretty favorable this time of the year but that didn't preclude an unseasonal storm. Lance was not overly concerned, however; this early in the year the storm was not likely to be a major system. It probably wouldn't even last more than a few hours.

He mentioned that to the girls, making it sound like just an off-hand comment. It wouldn't do to have them getting scared in the middle of the night, but he wanted them to know what they were in for at least some choppy seas. They all took a dose of seasickness medicine after dinner.

The girls decided to go to bed early that night. Last night the three of them had stayed up on deck watching the sun go down and the stars come out, and then remained there until the early hours of the morning. Out here in the middle of the Pacific with the full moon shining down on them and shooting stars streaking across the sky, it felt like a completely different world from the hustle and bustle of the city. There was a certain peace and tranquillity about knowing that they were probably hundreds of miles from any other human beings, alone with just the sea and the night sky.

Of course, they couldn't stay out every night watching the stars, so they had to make up for their lost sleep tonight, especially since there would be no stars or moon out to watch. It was Autumn's turn to wash the dishes, but she seemed particularly sleepy, so he didn't have the heart to make her stay up. He offered to trade watches, and she answered him with a one-word thanks, then the two girls headed off to bed.

He really had to do something about Autumn, he decided. He had thought that a few months at sea with her

would break her out of her shell, but she hadn't made much progress. He hated to see a nice girl like that feeling uncomfortable all the time.

He finished washing up the dishes, then headed down the passageway to the girls' cabin. The *Siren's Song* was on the small end of the scale for a around the world cruising yacht. It had two cabins for sleeping quarters. He took the cabin just aft of the companionway for ease of access topside. This left the larger cabin forward for the girls to bunk together. They didn't mind at all; in fact, they seemed to prefer it that way.

He knocked on the door. Cammy answered it. Both girls were in their pajamas, and Autumn lay on top of the covers of her bunk. There wasn't a lot of room in there, just enough for two bunks, a closet, and a desk. Still, he hadn't heard a word of complaint from the girls in their whole time at sea.

"Just checking to see if there's anything else you girls need before I take my watch," he said.

"We're fine," Cammy replied. "Thanks for checking on us, though."

"Autumn?" asked Lance.

"I'm okay," she mumbled.

"Okay. Good night." He began to close the door.

"Lance?" said Autumn. He immediately stopped and poked his head in the cabin again. The girl was actually looking him in the eyes, something she rarely did.

"Yes, Autumn?" he smiled.

She turned away. "Nothing," she said.

Cammy shrugged and gave him an apologetic look. Well, at least Autumn was trying. Maybe in another three months she would work up the courage to engage in a conversation with him. He closed the door and turned away.

"Come on, Autumn," he heard Cammy's exasperated voice saying from behind the door.

"I'm sorry," Autumn replied.

"Look, it's not like you're asking him to marry you. Just tell him you appreciate him taking you on this trip. Is that so hard?"

"I know. I just freeze up when I'm around him."

"Look, there's no need to be scared of him. Lance is the nicest guy in the whole world. And I'm not just saying that because he's my big brother."

"I'll tell him tomorrow."

"You've been saying that for three weeks now."

Lance smiled, amused at the exchange. It wasn't polite to eavesdrop though, so he left them there and made his way forward to the helm to await the storm.

Autumn really was a sweet girl; it was too bad she that lacked confidence. He wished there was something he could do to help her out of her shell. Unfortunately, anything he did would probably have just the opposite reaction. The best plan was to do nothing, and just let it happen naturally.

He gazed out into the growing darkness at the menacing clouds that rapidly approached. He knew he would be spending a rough night at the helm. Hopefully the storm would pass in a couple of hours, then he could get some sleep. With Cammy's inexperience, he wouldn't dare have her take a watch tonight.

The storm broke about an hour later. It was a little more severe than he had anticipated, with the sound of wind howling and rain lashing the deck. The boat pitched heavily, constantly threatening to unbalance him. For an experienced sailor, surprisingly Lance suffered from seasickness in a heavy sea. It was a good thing he had taken the Dramamine, because otherwise he would be too ill to work.

Lance wasn't too worried; he had been in storms like this before. The great swells surrounding them looked frightening, but the only effect they had on the yacht was to pitch the boat heavily along with rolls that were taking increasingly longer to recover from. No doubt the girls and he would spend all morning tomorrow straightening out clothes in the closets and pots and pans in the kitchen that were right now being thrown into disarray, but he didn't mind a little hard work. Despite spending some time in the late afternoon checking everything was secured, the violent movements of the boat was such that it was inevitable that some items would shake loose.

As the hours passed and the storm continued to gather in strength, he began to grow just a little concerned. It wasn't that he was afraid it might sink the boat; it was more that he wasn't getting any sleep. With no one to take over for him, slight sleep deprivation and exhaustion constantly battling the boat's movements began to have an effect. Now he cursed himself for not taking a nap earlier in the afternoon. Had the storm been a little less violent he could have called Cammy and have her brew him up a pot of strong coffee, but decided against it. As the boat started to wallow longer in the steep swells he thought of waking the girls but again decided against it. No sense waking them unless there was an emergency; they might not be able to get back to sleep.

When he glanced at the clock and saw that it was 0300 hours, he realized that this storm had already lasted far longer than he had anticipated, and his muscles started to scream from the constant tightening against his suddenly shifting weight.

A less experienced sailor might start to panic right about now, but Lance didn't let it bother him. Tomorrow he would check all the rigging and look for any damage to the *Siren's Song*, but it wasn't like there was a lot to hit out here in the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

As if to mock his overconfidence, at the very moment that he was thinking that, the entire boat shuddered violently. This time Lance was thrown off his feet. From below he heard a scream, followed by the sound of rushing water. Lance sat up dizzily, shocked to realize that the motion of the boat had stopped. Yet the boat still listed heavily to one side; it just didn't move.

He struggled to his feet and reached for the helm, but there was no response. His first thought was that the yacht had hit something.

But there are no islands around here! he thought. How could they have hit something?

Just then, he heard Cammy ascending the stairs from below. Her face appeared in the entryway, pale with fear.

"Lance," she said, trembling with fright. "There's... there's water..."

Water? That didn't sound good. Seeing he could do no good at the helm, he followed her down the companionway into the main passage.

There was indeed water in the passage collecting toward the bow where it was already a couple of feet deep. That alarmed him. Even if they were taking on water, they should not have been listing to port that badly nor settling at the bow so fast. Unless the damage was worse than he thought. Even as he waded through it toward the cabins, he could see it growing deeper by the second. To Lance's horror when he looked past Cammy to see the pooling water on the port side of the passage he could see the hull had been holed and water was gushing in at a rate he knew he had no chance of stemming even if he was not in the middle of a storm.

Now it was time to panic. If the *Siren's Song* was sinking, they needed to get off of it, and now!

"Where's Autumn?" he asked his sister.

"Still in our room. She's too scared even to get out of bed."

"I'll go get her," he told her. "You get to the liferaft."

"The liferaft?" asked Cammy. "In the middle of a storm?"

"Yes. According to my last position fix we're near a small group of islands, so we'll be fine." That was a lie, meant to help put her fears to rest. All he knew was that they had hit *something*, and he prayed that that meant they were near land.

"Put on your life jacket first," he continued, giving her no chance to think about what he had told her, "and make sure you secure yourself to the raft before releasing it or inflating it. Tie it off to the strongest point you can find, then launch it with you in it. Stay beside the boat and wait for us unless the boat starts to go under where the liferaft is. If that happens let it go and we'll swim to you. Just go quickly, while I get Autumn."

Go!"

Grabbing two lifejackets hung in the passage for just such emergencies, Lance thrust one in Cammy's hands then started to wade back toward the cabin Autumn was in. He had let Cammy go despite the risks of her launching a liferaft by herself without experience because he didn't think he had much chance of getting to Autumn and getting on deck before the companionway was underwater. The boat was sinking at an alarming rate and the list had made progress far more difficult. He just hoped Cammy would get free in time. It was better that his sister, at least, had some chance. He couldn't help but think that she had battled her cancer so bravely that to drown now would be so very unfair.

When Cammy hesitated he shoved her toward the companionway leading up to the deck, making sure she was on her way and had grabbed a lifejacket before turning to wade towards the girls' cabin.

There was no time for politeness, so he threw open the door. Autumn sat in her bunk, a look of terror on her face and her blankets clutched in her white knuckles. Lance hurried over to her and grabbed her hand. "We've got to get out of here," he told her firmly. "The yacht's sinking."

"Sinking?" she asked, staring at him with fear. "I..."

"No time to discuss it. Cammy's getting the liferaft ready for us. Here, put this on." He quickly helped Autumn into a lifejacket and leaving all modesty aside grabbed the strap between her legs and pulled hard to cinch the lifejacket down securely.

Another crash knocked him from his feet, and Autumn tumbled over, landing on top of him. For a moment, they both went under water, and Lance was surprised to find it already deep enough to submerge them. He hurriedly jumped to his feet, pulling Autumn up with him. The boat lurched further to the side, and this time he kept his balance only because his back thudded against the bulkhead of the cabin.

Autumn clung to him tightly, and he wrapped a reassuring arm around her. He was every bit as scared as she was, but he couldn't afford to panic. Instead, he grabbed her hand and pulled her into the passageway.

With the water already up to their knees and the severe listing of the boat they found their progress excruciatingly slow. It felt like it took them minutes to move even a couple of feet, all the time with the water rising. Lance realized in horror that although they were moving toward the shallower end, the rising of the water was outstripping their progress. At this rate, just as he had feared when he pushed Cammy away the companionway would be underwater by the time they reached it.

Already he could see streams of water flowing down into the passageway from topside, though in surges rather than constantly. That meant the boat was already partially submerged with waves sweeping over the deck. He hoped Cammy had made it safely to the raft. She knew how to inflate it (there wasn't much of a trick to it; just pull the cord), but there were still a thousand things that could go wrong. He hoped Cammy had followed his instructions and launched the liferaft. He worried that she would wait.

They were just about to the companionway when a wave broke over the hatch and a surging wall of foam

rushed toward them. Lance didn't even have time to react before it hit Autumn and him, knocking him from his feet. His head went under the surface and he felt himself being dragged back down the passageway away from their only chance of escape. He reached out to try to grab something, anything, to halt his progress, but his fingers merely scraped against the smooth bulkhead.

Then Autumn's hand closed around his, and he stopped moving. With strength that he didn't know she possessed, she pulled him up toward her. His head broke the surface again, and a moment later he managed to scramble to his feet. Autumn had managed to clutch the railing on the companionway with one of her hands to keep from being swept away like Lance nearly was.

"Thanks," he told her, then the two of them rushed up on deck between wave surges into the blinding wind and rain of the storm. As he suspected, the sea already covered part of the deck. Each wave poured more and more water down the companionway into the passageway that they had just escaped. By now the list of the boat was almost forty degrees. He stared around, trying to find Cammy, but she was nowhere to be found. Neither was the raft.

It was no less than he had expected. He had told her to launch the raft so that she could at least save herself. Though he had hoped she would stay beside the yacht, perhaps the storm and the waves had just been too strong for her, carrying her away against her wishes. Whatever the situation, Autumn and Lance were stuck here.

"Where is she?" Autumn asked with tears in her eyes. Lance glanced over at her with a look of pity. There was nothing he could say to comfort her, no hope he could give her. The two of them were fated to die here.

Ironically, the certainty of death had a kind of calming effect on both of them. The possibility of survival, no matter how remote, had a tendency to produce action through fear. But now, standing on the deck of the rapidly sinking boat they knew that nothing they could do would change their fate. The great motivating emotion of fear was no longer needed, so it fled from them both. Lance took Autumn in his arms and held her to him, both of them seeking the only comfort they could in the darkness.

When a twelve-foot wave crashed down on them and dragged them into the sea, it was almost a relief that it was finally over.

Chapter 2

Survival

Lance found it difficult to open his eyes, owing to the pounding of a massive headache in his brain. His own breathing caused enough motion to intensify the pain, and even the otherwise relaxing sound of the surf seemed to enhance it as well. When he finally dragged himself back to consciousness, he found himself lying on a beach, staring up at a starless night sky. He didn't know how long he had been asleep, but the storm had passed, though the sun had not yet risen and clouds still lingered overhead, blocking out any light from the moon or stars.

He was alive.

That was the first thought that went through his head, the most important realization after the events of the night. After the despair of the sinking yacht, the knowledge that somehow he had survived gave him enough hope and willpower to pull himself back from the darkness of oblivion.

The rough waters had torn all of his clothes from him, leaving him with just his lifejacket, the straps cutting badly into his skin. Even in his weakened state, his mind continued to think through the logistics of his situation. In the tropics, being without clothes meant weeks of painful sunburns before his skin acclimated to the exposure. He didn't relish that thought.

He turned his head and spotted a dark shape next to him on the beach. It was Autumn.

She lay on her side with her eyes closed. Clothing-wise, she was in just as bad a state as he was; worse, because she had also lost her lifejacket. On any other day he might have admired her nude body, but right now that was the furthest thing from his mind. He forced himself to rise to his hands and knees before unsnapping and struggling off the lifejacket. Tossing it aside, he then weakly crawled over to her. He put a hand on her shoulder and gently nudged her.

Her eyes opened, and she stared at him for a second. Tears began to fill in at the corners of her eyes. "Lance..." she croaked. "I..."

"It's okay. It's over now. We're safe," he soothed. Then he glanced around. "Where...?" he began.

Autumn began to sob. "I looked everywhere for her!" she blurted out. "You were unconscious, so I... I couldn't find her! I'm so sorry!"

Lance stared at the girl for a second, hearing the words but not comprehending them. It wasn't that he didn't know what they meant, just that they were so shocking that he couldn't possibly be expected to accept them. Cammy had been so brave through the cancer treatment. She had made it through alive and as healthy as

ever. Lance had really thought a higher power must be at work, to spare her from death like that. But now...

He felt the tears in his own eyes. No! It couldn't be! Right now he wished he could trade her places. Let him die, and her live. The thought that she was gone forever was too much for him, and he broke down into tears. He grabbed Autumn and held her tightly to him, and the two of them sobbed in each other's arms until the blessed veil of unconsciousness enveloped them once more.

Nightmares plagued his sleep that night, nightmares born of fear and despair. Most of them centered on the loss of his little sister. Countless times, she died in those dreams, either dragged down into the inky blackness of the sea, or eaten by sharks, or battered against the rocks. Sometimes those dreams were horrifying enough to wake him momentarily, which made it all the worse because he knew they were true. Only the presence of the girl in his arms kept him from going mad. The warmth and softness of her body had a soothing effect on him, pulling him back from the brink of insanity. He couldn't escape the reality of what happened, but having someone to share the burden with made it possible to bear.

He awoke in the morning with the sun shining down in his face. Clouds still lingered on the horizon, but the sky was now mostly blue. He watched for a few minutes as those clouds slowly twisted into new shapes, white actors on a blue stage. Despite the nightmares, he had slept long enough to chase away the fatigue, and he managed to sit up.

Autumn still lay next to him, slumbering soundly. He watched her for a few seconds, watched for the telltale sign of her breast rising and falling that indicated that she was still alive. He wondered if the same nightmares that haunted his dreams haunted hers, or if she had forgotten all of her fears in the peaceful world of sleep.

She really was a beautiful girl, and now that he had the chance to really look at her body, he found it very appealing. She was a tiny girl, with a slender frame and developing breasts. She lay on her back, with one knee thrown over the other and one of her hands lying next to her pretty little face. Lance reached out and brushed away a strand of her long, dark hair from out of her eyes, forgetting himself for a moment and just admiring her beauty. Not that he would ever do anything with her, of course. She was only fourteen after all.

He decided to let her rest a while longer. No need to wake her, to bring her back to the horror of the real world. It would happen soon enough on its own. Let her linger in the tranquillity of slumber and dreams. Lance had more important things to worry about, like searching for Cammy.

Cammy. Was it possible that she was alive? She had taken the liferaft, which meant that she had initially been better off than Lance and Autumn. Or had she? Had a wave swept her away like them? Had she never even had time to reach the raft?

Even if she had, she might never have reached the island. The visibility last night was almost nonexistent, so

she wouldn't have known which way to row. Left at the mercy of the storm, she might have been blown in the wrong direction, which could put her fifty miles away by now. Maybe she was doomed to slowly die of thirst out there on the unforgiving sea.

Despair threatened to overtake him as he thought of the thousands of things that could have gone wrong, that could have taken his little sister away from him. He couldn't afford to let himself dwell on it, or he would go mad. He pushed those thoughts aside and concentrated on what Autumn and he would need to do to survive. They needed water first, then food, then shelter.

He glanced around to get his bearings. The beach ran as far as he could see in both directions, a white strip of sand separating the blue ocean from what appeared to be a tropical jungle. Most of the trees were palms, including a good portion with immature or ripe coconuts. A damp haze lingered in the shade of the jungle, an early morning fog lurking in the cool shadows but not daring to wander out into the sunlight. He noted the position of the sun, and assuming that this was morning, it appeared that they were on the east side of the island. In the west he saw a hill peeking over the line of trees, possibly a mile or two away. That gave him a minimum estimate of the size of the land mass. About half a mile to the north, the beach ran out, and the jungle extended right to the sea. There was no sign of the yacht, but white breakers about half a mile out to sea indicated the presence of a submerged reef that might have been what the yacht struck. No doubt it had vanished completely into the depths of the ocean.

Immediately his eyes fell upon something just offshore about a hundred yards down the beach, something bright orange. Resting against a large rock poking out of the water was the liferaft! Barely daring to hope, Lance rose to his feet and lumbered down the beach toward the raft. Could it be possible? His pulse quickened in fear and anticipation as he approached it.

As he reached it, his strength gave out and he fell to his knees and wept. Cammy lay in the bottom of the raft, asleep but alive.

There was about an inch of water in the bottom, and she lay in the puddle, her clothes and hair soaked. She at least had managed to retain her night shirt that she had been wearing when the accident occurred although it was torn and frayed around the lifejacket straps. As he watched, she shivered from the cold. Lance managed to rise to his feet, then splashed into the water up to his knees, where he could grab the mooring line and drag the raft to the shore. He then knelt down, removed the constricting lifejacket and lifted Cammy into his arms. She stirred, then opened her eyes. As soon as she saw him, she managed a weak smile.

"Lance!" she exclaimed. "I thought..."

"We're all right," he said. "All three of us. I'm taking you to Autumn."

"So she's alive too?" asked Cammy in relief.

"Yes."

"Hold on a minute, Lance," she said. "You don't have to carry me; I can walk. You look exhausted."

"Thanks," he breathed, setting her on her feet. In truth, he was still tired after the ordeal last night. Cammy took his hand, and together they headed back up the beach to where they had left Autumn.

"So what happened to you two last night?" asked Cammy as they walked. "I tried to wait for you, but as soon as I had the liferaft inflated a wave caught me off guard and swept the raft and me off the yacht. I tried to row back to you, but the current was too strong. Fortunately it pulled me in to shore."

"Pretty much the same thing happened to us, minus the raft," Lance explained.

As soon as Autumn saw Cammy alive and well, she burst into tears and ran to meet them. Lance couldn't fault her for crying; he had done exactly the same thing. They all hugged each other, despite the fact that Autumn and Lance still wore not a stitch.

Now that the shock had been replaced by relief at finding each other alive, their state of undress suddenly seemed much more important. Autumn's eyes suddenly fastened onto his crotch, and she stared at him, growing red but unable to tear her gaze away. Considering how shy she was, it was likely that she had never seen a man nude before.

Cammy was the one to break the spell. She suddenly broke down laughing, not maliciously but just out of pure amusement at their predicament. Lance couldn't suppress a grin, and soon he began to laugh as well. Autumn stared at the two of them for a minute still red from embarrassment, but their laughter was contagious, and eventually she joined in. After the ordeal of the storm and not knowing who was still alive, it was the perfect way to begin their new adventure. At least they were in good spirits.

"Okay, this is a very interesting situation we have here," Cammy commented after about five minutes.

"Between the three of us, we have one night shirt, one bra, and one pair of panties."

"So what are we going to do about it?" asked Autumn, glancing over at Lance again.

"I know what I'm going to do," Cammy replied, then began to unbutton her shirt.

"What--?" Lance began.

"I'm not going to let you two have all the fun," she grinned. "Since you two are kind of forced to be nudists, I might as well be one myself."

"You're not serious!" Autumn exclaimed.

Cammy shrugged and slipped out of her shirt. A moment later she had her bra and panties off as well, and she stood there as naked as the other two. Lance wasn't really surprised by her actions; she was the least timid person he had ever met, ever since her illness. In that way, she was good for Autumn, always dragging her friend along whenever trying out new experiences.

"I can't believe you just did that!" Autumn told her. "Right in front of your brother even!"

Cammy laughed. "Maybe I'm just a nudist at heart. Besides, you don't mind, do you, Lance?"

He shrugged, trying to appear casual. He had to admit, she really had a gorgeous body. Any traces of her past illness had vanished completely, leaving her as beautiful as she had been before. She was a little on the skinny side, and her breasts were perhaps just slightly small, but then, she was still growing after all. At fifteen, she couldn't expect to have a mature figure yet.

Autumn was even smaller. Tiny even for her age, she was overdue for a growth spurt. She looked almost like a child, though with an obviously maturing body. Both girls were starting to fill out nicely, with shapely hips, flat stomachs, and beautiful thighs.

Lance had to turn away before that line of thought wrought an obvious physical effect upon him. With no clothes on, there would be no way to hide his arousal from the eyes of the girls. His sister, always full of good humor, would probably just laugh and maybe even tease him a little about it, but it might shock Autumn into never speaking to him again.

"Always the gentleman," Cammy commented, no doubt misinterpreting his actions. "But there's really not much you can do about it; you're going to have to look at us some time. We don't mind, do you, Autumn?"

"Well... I mean..." she stammered. "I guess it's all right."

Lance sighed. His sister was right; he couldn't go around with his eyes closed the whole time they were on the island. He turned back around, hoping that he could keep his body under control.

It didn't work. The sight of the girls' nude bodies in front of him took its toll, and his cock immediately began to swell.

"Oh!" Cammy exclaimed, but the smile remained on her lips. "I hadn't thought of that."

Autumn stared between his legs, a look of shock on her face. It was apparently as bad as he had expected. She opened her mouth as if to say something, but no sound emerged.

"Sorry," he mumbled, his face as red as hers.

Cammy came to his rescue. "Autumn," she told her friend. "Try to ignore it. You know that that's what happens to men sometimes. They just can't help it, especially around naked girls. Isn't that right, Lance?"

"Basically yes," he admitted. "I really don't have any control over it. Look, if it bothers you, I'll go take a quick dip in the nice, cold ocean. That should settle it down."

"Um... that's okay," Autumn said, managing to pull her eyes away. She stared at the ground instead, which was at least a slight improvement. "It just caught me off guard, that's all."

"Good," Cammy smiled. "So now that that's taken care of, what do we do now?"

Lance was grateful for the change of subject. Survival was familiar territory; though he had never been lost on a deserted island before, the same principals applied whether marooned at sea, on a safari in Africa, or at the top of Mount Everest.

"First priority," he said, "is fresh water. I can't really tell from here, but that hill there suggests that this island is at least several miles in diameter. That's not big enough for a major river, but it's bound to have one or two streams, even if it's just from morning dew. After the storm we just had, there's bound to be a lot more fresh water around, so we shouldn't have any problems finding it."

"There's always coconut milk," Cammy suggested.

"That's why I'm not too worried. There's no chance of us dehydrating; I would just prefer not to have to go scrounging around on the ground for coconuts every time we want a drink. Once we find a good, solid source of water, we'll look into building a shelter nearby."

"So we can have a place to sleep," she nodded.

"Partly," he said. "We're in the tropics; it doesn't get as cold at night here as it does back home. We could sleep out on the beach every night and be okay, other than being just a little chilly. But I was mainly talking about during the day. We're all going to get pretty sunburned, but if we have a place to get out of the sun, we can ease into it and spread it out over weeks. That will prevent any major burns."

"Weeks?" asked Autumn. "But... well..."

"We have to be realistic. First, we don't even know if this island is inhabited. If so, fine. The days are long gone when you have isolated tribes living on islands in the South Pacific; anyone we find will have some way to contact the outside world.

"If we're alone on this island though, we'll still probably be rescued within a couple of days. The EPIRB-- that's the distress beacon-- on the *Siren's Song* is activated by contact with water, so it should have turned on as soon as the boat went down. I don't know how long it was broadcasting, or even if it was working, but even if it was only on for a few minutes, that would be enough time for satellites to pick up our position. I hope. Obviously we haven't gone far from the yacht, so that means they should have rescue boats and planes here in no time, most likely this afternoon some time. On the other hand, there's a possibility that the distress call wasn't picked up. I have no idea what kind of interference a storm might cause to it. In that case, they won't know we're missing until we don't call in on the satellite phone, and even then they'll have a much wider search area."

"The whole Pacific Ocean," Cammy said gloomily.

"Not necessarily. They have our position from our last call on the satellite phone, and our intended route. We haven't strayed too far from it, so that narrows it down considerably. Still, it's going to take a while."

Autumn and Cammy nodded.

"Hey, don't worry," Lance smiled. "We're in a heavily traveled area of the Pacific. If worse comes to worst, we'll just have to wait for the next ship to come along. I just want us to be prepared for a long stay if it comes to that."

They made their plans for finding water. The extension of the jungle to the north could mean the presence of a stream, so they decided to head in that direction first. If that didn't work, Lance would climb a tree to scout for gullies, ravines, or other indications of water channels.

That turned out not to be necessary. The extension of the trees turned out to be just what they had hoped, a covering for a small stream that ran from the jungle across the beach into the ocean. Just past the first line of trees, a small waterfall down a rocky cliff face about twenty feet high produced a beautiful, blue-green lagoon dotted with colorful tropical fish. The sunlight on the bright colors produced an effect like jewels sparkling under the surface. A white sandy beach surrounded the lagoon, almost glowing in the sun. The jungle formed a natural wall around the area, running right up to the cliff face at one end but forming only a thin line of trees along the beach.

Lance was struck by how lovely the area was. Were it not for their predicament, he would find it a relaxing and tranquil spot, just perfect for a swim and a cool drink of water. Right now his mind was focused on other things though, survival mostly. The cliff would provide shade during the afternoon and evening, the warmest part of the day. The running water and fish would keep the mosquito population down; though not a big risk, in the tropics there was still the possibility of malaria.

There were plenty of coconuts growing nearby, and if he wasn't mistaken, a few breadfruit trees. That would satisfy their hunger for a while, though if they were here for a prolonged stay, they would eventually need a source of meat. Lance was experienced in setting traps and snares, but he needed to know more about the local fauna in order to determine the size and type. Starting a fire would not be a problem; he knew of at least three ways to do so without matches or a lighter. The recent storm would mean most of the wood would be damp, but a few hours under the hot sun would dry it out soon enough.

"This is beautiful," Autumn commented, staring at the waterfall.

"I like it too," Cammy agreed. "I think this is where we should build the shelter."

Lance nodded. He first set the girls to work looking for animal tracks in the sand, as well as game trails leading to the clearing. It wouldn't do to build their shelter right where they would be easy prey for large animals. The only spoor they found was a trail in the grass that couldn't have been made by anything larger than a rabbit or at most a small fox. Not finding anything to indicate a larger animal, he deemed it safe.

He motioned toward the cliff face. "With the cliff on the west, it will provide plenty of shade during the afternoon, so we just need to build something to keep us out of the heat in the morning. Let's start gathering palm fronds and any sturdy branches you can find, the longer the better."

Lance knew that to build a large, strong, sturdy shelter as a more-or-less permanent home would take days. That didn't bother him; if they were on the island for that long, it would give them something to occupy their

time. One of the most important considerations in any survival situation was morale, and having something to do kept a person from sitting and worrying about his fate. Today though, they would work on a smaller shelter, really just a small roof that they could prop up on sticks to give them a bit of shade.

As soon as they had the materials gathered, Lance laid out four long sticks in a square about ten feet on a side. He used some long grass to lash them together. He was about to start weaving other sticks and grass together onto the frame when he was interrupted by Autumn.

"Look!" she suddenly exclaimed, pointing southeast out to sea. The others stared out there, and Lance gasped. A dark shape indicated the presence of a large rock, just peering out from the surface of the water. Next to it he spied the white hull of the *Siren's Song*.

Chapter 3

Salvage

The vessel was capsized, and he could see a gash near the keel deep below the waterline. Staring at that maw of splintered wood, he could see now why it had sunk so quickly. The storm had dragged it across the sharp rocks, pretty much tearing out the bottom. He had never seen such extensive damage to a boat before. There was no chance of getting it seaworthy again, but that didn't mean it couldn't be useful. It lay heeled almost completely over, caught on the reef.

"The tide and the storm surge must have covered it earlier," Cammy remarked.

Lance pointed to some smaller objects floating nearby, pieces of wreckage or supplies from the yacht. "Let's go collect those," he said. "They might be useful. And I want to see if I can retrieve anything from the boat while the tide is low. Come on."

The three of them hurried down the beach to the liferaft. They climbed in, and Lance took the oars. Luckily, Cammy had not untied the securing lines for the oars in order to fit them into the rubber rings in an attempt to row, so the oars had remained secured to the liferaft.

It took a little effort to get out past the breakers, but soon they pulled up alongside the broken hull of the *Siren's Song*. Lance pointed to some large pieces of the sail floating nearby. "You two see if you can gather those up," he told them. "If we dry out that sail cloth, it will help to make a good shelter."

"Where are you going?" Autumn asked.

He grinned and pointed down to the submerged yacht.

"You're not serious?" she said, stunned. "But... what if you get trapped inside?"

"I'm a pretty fair free diver," he replied. "I can hold my breath for about five minutes. Besides, I'm not going to go exploring; I'm going after something in particular, and I know exactly where it is. I'll be down there two, maybe three minutes tops."

"You be careful," Cammy told him.

"I will," he nodded. "Don't worry; at the first sign of danger or if I decide I can't find my way without getting lost, I'll come right back out."

Autumn stared at him and looked like she was going to say something, but she kept her silence. It was obvious that she didn't like the idea of him going down there. Of course, he didn't like the idea either; free diving was always a little risky, especially without a direct path to the surface and someone there with you to

drag you out of the water if needed. Cammy knew CPR, but it would do him no good if he got trapped inside the wreck. No, he had to operate completely under his own power.

Lance took a few quick hyperventilating breaths, ignoring the slightly dizzying euphoria that came with them, then took one deep breath and slipped over the side of the raft into the water. He took only a couple of seconds to orient himself, then grasped the nearby gunwale of the yacht and used it to navigate toward the dark opening to the interior.

As he passed into the darkness, he wished he had his diving watch. Not only could he use it to tell him how long he had been under, but it also had a luminous face, making it easy to read and providing a little more light. But he had lost it either when his arm was bashed against the companionway railing last night, or later after being washed overboard.

He glanced back to make sure the opening was clearly visible. As long as he remained in the main passageway, he would be able to see his way to safety. He took note of the position; it was all too easy underwater to lose one's bearings and forget which side was up. It was important to orient oneself with a known sight.

The once-familiar confines of the boat took on a strange, alien atmosphere here under the water. Familiar sights juxtaposed with unfamiliar colors and orientation produced an uncanny effect that threatened to upset his confidence in finding his way to his goal, and he was tempted to admit defeat and return to the surface. Only the clear sight of the main hatch opening behind him gave him the courage to continue.

Fortunately, his was the aft cabin, which made his journey shorter. At the angle that the boat lay, the door would be below him. He soon found it, and pulled it open.

As he slipped down into the nearly pitch black room, he thought about how long he had been down here. Time seemed to flow strangely underwater; what seemed like only a few seconds could actually be a minute or two. He had learned not to trust his sense of time when diving. Expert free divers learned to estimate how much longer they could last by the sensations in their chest and know a minute or two ahead of time before they ran out of air. That was why they could stay under so long; they knew not to panic at the first sign of pressure in their chest. The world record was over ten minutes, but Lance wasn't quite as trained. As soon as he sensed that he would need to take a breath soon, he planned to drop what he was doing and return to safety. He figured on ten seconds to get out of the cabin even if he had to search for the opening above, then another fifteen down the passage and up to the surface. That would give him plenty of time.

He had to grope around in the darkness to find his way. He thought of what this cabin looked like in daylight, especially the tactile details that could guide him by touch. He moved toward the end of the cabin and the closet. Finally, his hand settled on the knob. He turned it, and suddenly it burst open and he was attacked by all of its contents. Clothes tangled in his arms and legs, and he had a moment of panic as visions of getting caught up in it and not being able to escape filled his thoughts. He forced himself to calm down; he was naked, so there was nothing for the coat hangers or fabric to catch on. At worst, he would suffer some scratches.

Soon enough, the items drifted down and settled on the bulkhead of the cabin, and he was free again. He thrust his hand into the closet and searched around. Eventually he found what he was looking for: a large package, vacuum-sealed in an airtight plastic cover. He took no time to check for leaks; he didn't have enough air to waste any time. Taking it by a handle at the top, he dragged it out to the cabin. It took some exertion to pull it up and out of his cabin into the main passageway, but eventually he got there. The sunlight shining through the main hatch opening was a welcome sight after the darkness of the cabin. He was starting to feel the squeezing in his chest that meant he was running out of air, so he grabbed the package and propelled himself towards the hatch opening and daylight. The bundle was too heavy to float, so as soon as he reached the entrance he left it there and swam upward. A couple of seconds later, his head broke the surface of the water and he glanced around.

Cammy and Autumn were only about ten feet away, dragging the torn pieces of sail into the liferaft. Autumn's eyes lit up with delight and relief as she spied him. Then she looked away, not wanting to appear too excited. He swam over, then reached up and rested for a minute with his arms on the edge of the raft.

"I found the survival kit," he smiled. "Even if we salvage nothing else, the trip will be worth it. Wait here."

He dove down again and grabbed the package. It was a strain, but he managed to drag it to the surface. He had weighed it before the trip, and it was about thirty pounds, so it wasn't the lightest thing to be carrying. The water made it feel much lighter, but it was still bulky and hard to drag to the surface. The girls helped him pull it into the raft, then he climbed in himself and rested there, tired after the exertion.

"You had us worried, Lance," Cammy told him. "You were down there a very long time."

"I told you it would be two or three minutes."

"Neither of us has a watch, but I was counting seconds in my head. It was closer to five minutes."

"Really?" he asked, shocked. He hadn't realized he had been down so long. Now that he thought about it, not having a watch with him wasn't the only risk he had taken. "I must really have hit my head earlier, to be so foolish," he commented. "Diving without a line to lead me back to the surface, even diving at all so soon after being unconscious. The last thing I needed was a prolonged period without air. I took a serious risk there. Well, let's just chalk my poor judgment up to fatigue so that I don't have to feel so embarrassed about making a couple of stupid mistakes like that."

"You shouldn't have said anything," Cammy grinned. "Neither Autumn nor I would have even thought anything of it if you hadn't mentioned it. I'm just glad you're back. You scared us. Autumn said she was about to go in after you."

Lance stared at his sister's friend, surprised to know that she would have risked her life to rescue him. He knew she liked him, but he had never thought of her as particularly brave. Then again, physical fears and social fears were different. One of his friends who had accompanied him to the top of Everest, for instance, could stand on the edge of a thousand foot drop and not bat an eyelid, but would freeze up and panic any time he had to do any kind of public speaking. Lance shouldn't underestimate Autumn just because she wasn't

good with words.

"Thanks," he told her with a smile. "I appreciate that."

"I didn't mean anything by it," she blurted out. "I just don't think our chances of survival are very good without you."

He could have told her that it was nothing to be ashamed of to be concerned about his well-being, but he decided just to drop it. "Let's get our bounty back to shore," he said instead, reaching for the oars.

"Oh no you don't," Cammy said, slapping his hand away. "You look exhausted. I'll row."

"Thank you," he nodded, actually relieved that she had offered to take his place. After his exertion the thought of rowing back to the beach didn't excite him in the least.

Lance lay down in the boat and rested, letting Cammy take the oars. He stared up at the blue sky, noting with interest how foreign a solid color could appear to eyes used to seeing many things at once. It reminded him of their predicament. Back home they had so many things to occupy them: school or work, friends, family, hobbies, books and television. Here, on an island in the middle of the ocean, their cares were few.

As Lance rested and Cammy rowed, Autumn kept a look out for any other flotsam that might prove useful. Cammy altered her course so her friend could pick these up, and by the time they reached shore, they had quite a collection.

Lance carried the survival kit to the lagoon while the girls hauled the masses of sail. The first thing they did upon returning to camp was lay the fragments of sail out on the sand to give it time to dry. He was happy to see that some of the pieces were pretty large, a good size for making a lean-to or even a tent. That would give them shade during the morning when they couldn't shelter under the shadow of the cliff.

Lance tore open the plastic cover on the survival kit and withdrew the contents. The whole bundle was wrapped in a thick, wool blanket that would have to serve as a bed, and many of the other contents were equally as useful. The biggest by far was a machete that Lance had picked up on his safari in Africa. It would serve well to blaze trails or cut open coconuts. A chunk of flint and a steel pocket knife would provide fire. Though not as easy to use as matches or a lighter, it would last a lot longer. A flare gun with several flares could be used to signal a passing ship. There was a small yet complete first aid kit, but he hoped they wouldn't have to use it. One of the more useful items was a spool of nylon cord, about a hundred feet if he remembered correctly. Not a lot, but if they used it sparingly it could serve all their needs. The rest of the items were of varying usefulness, but one in particular stood out.

"Our number one problem is solved," he announced with a grin, picking up a large bottle of waterproof sunscreen.

They immediately set to work applying the lotion to their bodies. Being a gentleman, he looked away when the girls rubbed it on their more private spots, and especially tried not to glance when they rubbed it on each

other's backs. Though it was all perfectly innocent, the sight of the two girls touching each other like that awakened certain feelings in him, though he somehow managed to suppress them.

Cammy then offered to do the same for his back, and he agreed. Tired as he was from all of the events of the past day, her hands on his back felt almost better than anything he had ever experienced. It wasn't quite a massage, but it might as well have been for how much it relaxed him.

Now that they had a some time to rest, the pangs of hunger set in. From the position of the sun, Lance guessed the time to be late morning, probably around 1100 hours or so. There was a package of jerky in the survival kit, which they opened and feasted on. They only took a small piece each, just enough to sate their hunger. Until they explored the island and identified the local fauna, it might be the only meat they had.

Lance perused the area and discovered a nearby fallen coconut, which he split open to accompany the meal. They each had some sips of the juice, then cut out and devoured the meat. It wasn't exactly a three-course dinner, but they enjoyed it all the same.

Despite the invigorating and refreshing brunch, Lance still had no energy left. As they got up to head back to the raft to retrieve the rest of their gatherings, Cammy insisted that he rest. He tried to argue, but Autumn came in on Cammy's side, and he found himself arguing with two girls who were at least as stubborn as he was. He gave in and let them carry the items back to camp.

"I think I'm going to take the raft out and see what else we can salvage," Cammy said, nodding toward the wreckage of the *Siren's Song*. "Do you want to come with me, Autumn?"

Her friend nodded.

"You two be careful," Lance cautioned. "Don't overload the raft or pick up anything pointed that could put a hole in it."

"We'll be fine," smiled Cammy. "Besides, it will give Autumn and me a chance to talk."

Lance nodded, picking up on the subtle hint that there were things the girls needed to talk about that weren't meant for his ears. It didn't bother him; while it would be nice to have someone himself that he could share a secret with, he knew from experience that women had a much stronger need than men to bond with members of the same sex. Besides, the talk might center around him, and he was sure there were some things they might mention that he really didn't want to hear.

As they headed back to the raft, he lay down on the sand to take a much-needed nap. He hadn't gotten much sleep in the past few nights, so it was time to catch up. He closed his eyes and basked in the warmth of the sun, letting its rays work their lethargic magic on him. It didn't take him long to drift off into peaceful oblivion.

He awoke to the sound of laughing voices. It brought back memories of happy times, of warm summer days at the park and cheerful afternoons at the public pool. For a moment Lance forgot where he was, and when he opened his eyes he was surprised to see unfamiliar surroundings. His disorientation didn't last long, and the events of the past day returned to his memory.

Survival, he thought. That had been at the forefront of his thoughts ever since the accident, and it was the first thing he thought of now. He had to make sure the girls got through this ordeal alive.

They didn't share his concern, apparently. The girls were waist-deep in the lagoon, laughing and splashing each other. With the backdrop of the waterfall and the jungle behind them, the sunlight sparkling on the surface of the lagoon, and the rivulets of water running down their bodies, he could definitely get used to this sight. From what he could tell of their attitude, to them this was just another part of the vacation. For just an instant, he thought of getting after them; what were they doing having fun when there were so many things to worry about? But he decided to hold his tongue. It was his fault after all; he had done his job too well. His reassuring words, meant to keep them from being frightened, had comforted them even better than he had expected. They weren't aware of the dangers; all they knew was that everything would be all right.

Lance made up his mind. He would do nothing to disturb that peace of mind. Cammy in particular had already suffered more than one person ever should. She deserved a chance to relax and have fun without a care in the world. And Autumn, the poor, sweet girl, rarely came out of her shell, so he wasn't about to shove her back into it on the occasions that she did. Let them have their fun. He would take on the responsibility of keeping them alive.

He yawned and stretched, then, ignoring the complaints of his stiff muscles, rose to his feet and brushed off the sand that clung to his body. From the water, Cammy waved to him, and he flashed her a smile. Autumn, of course, blushed and turned away.

The girls had retrieved several articles of clothing from the water and laid them out to dry on the beach next to the sail. There were two pairs of his boxer shorts and a tee-shirt. Lance did a quick organization in his mind and realized that, factoring in Cammy's clothes that she had worn and assuming that Lance wore no shirt, they could all cover themselves to at least a certain degree of modesty.

He didn't know whether to be relieved or disappointed. On the one hand, both girls had very nice bodies, and he wouldn't mind seeing a lot more of them. On the other hand, he knew he shouldn't be thinking those thoughts.

To take his mind off of it, he decided to get to work. His first thoughts were to salvage as much as possible from the wreck, but upon rising he felt some dizziness and a pounding in his head. Whether that meant a concussion or just the aftereffects of nearly drowning last night, it meant he shouldn't attempt to dive anymore. Although it would have been nice to collect a few more things from the yacht, he sensibly decided to stay on land.

There was still plenty to do without returning to the boat. After a couple of hours in the sun, the sail canvas

was completely dry, so it was time to set up a temporary shelter.

"Hey girls, would you give me a hand with this?" he asked. The two of them waded through the water back to the beach. The clothes were still a little damp, so they continued with nothing on, to his delight.

Lance made some crude measurements by walking off distances with his feet. The two largest pieces were the perfect size to fashion a three-man (or more accurately three-person) pup tent with a floor to keep them from having to sleep on the open ground. There wouldn't be a lot of room to spread out; they would have to sleep huddled together side-by-side. He wondered how well Autumn would take that news. In fact, it bothered him a little too; he had always considered himself a gentleman, so the thought of sleeping in a small tent with a couple of naked girls clashed with his sense of propriety. Worse was the realization that it also excited him. Of course, he wouldn't be a man if it didn't, so he decided just to ignore those feelings. There was nothing to be done about it anyway.

There were two convenient palm trees at the edge of the beach spaced a perfect distance apart. He took the rope and had the girls help him to run a line between them, about five feet high. Then he used the pocket knife to punch holes in the corners of the largest piece of sail cloth, and together they draped it over the rope. The girls aided him in gathering small yet sturdy sticks to act as pegs to stake the corners of the tent down. For now, they only staked one side down. The other side they propped up on a pair of long sticks to give them an open shelter out of the sun. In the evening, they would lower it and stake it into the ground to form a large pup tent. Finally, they took the second largest piece of cloth and spread it out on the ground inside the tent. That gave them a space of about six feet by eight feet under the cover.

"That will serve for now," he told them. "Tomorrow we'll start work on a more permanent shelter."

"Permanent," Autumn commented. "That sounds so ominous."

"It's just in case we're here longer than we expect," he replied, trying to sound cheerful. "I figure we can put together a decent hut in a few days. I'd like to have a place to get out of the rain if another storm hits, and I don't trust the tent to survive it."

The job finished, the girls returned to their playing. Now that the shelter was built, he decided that the work was done for the day. Tomorrow, after salvaging everything he could from the yacht, he would go exploring to look for signs of civilization or, barring that, any animals he could trap. The jerky wouldn't last forever and they couldn't live on just coconuts and breadfruit. For now, though, he just sat in the newly created shade, relaxing.

The girls swam out to the waterfall and bathed underneath it. He watched them with what he hoped looked like apathy, but the truth was that the sight of their naked bodies under a tropical waterfall was something he would never forget. It was like something out of a gentleman's magazine or a nude photography exhibit, except that the girls were young enough that anyone who photographed them was likely to get arrested.

As the afternoon wore on, there was no sign of ships or planes. That was a bad sign. Even in the middle of the Pacific, rescues usually happened within the first twenty-four hours if the signal from the EPIRB had

been picked up. If it hadn't, that meant that nobody knew they were missing, and they might have to wait until a passing ship spotted them, which might take weeks.

He decided not to tell the girls that. They were in good spirits, all things considered, and he didn't want to ruin it. Morale was always important in survival situations.

In the mean time, he took a couple of the smaller scraps of sail cloth and began sewing together a pair of moccasins. Going barefoot on the beach was fine, but if he planned to venture inland at all, he would need something on his feet. The canvas wouldn't prevent him from stubbing his toe on a rock, but at least it would keep him from cutting himself on sticks or brambles.

As he worked, he watched the girls splashing in the water. It was good to see them enjoying themselves, after the ordeal. Were it not for the fact that they had no means of returning to civilization, they might as well have been on vacation. But then, why not? They had spent time on several islands like this already, though admittedly the others had always been inhabited, and there had always been the boat to return to whenever they wanted. This island might lack the amenities of the others, but aside from the fact that they didn't know how long they would be here, it really was no different from camping.

His eyes kept lingering on Autumn's body. At first he tried to keep from staring, but knowing that it was a losing battle, he eventually gave up. He reasoned that it was better to get used to the sight, and let the novelty of it wear off. Still, he wondered whether that might ever happen. She had the kind of body that could keep a man entertained forever.

The more disturbing thought was that Cammy's looked every bit as nice. He shouldn't be thinking about his sister like that, but he couldn't help but recognize the beauty of her figure. Both girls had slender waists and graceful curves. Autumn was slightly skinnier, but that was in no way an insult to Cammy, whose body was just naturally more developed. Autumn's breasts were smaller, but that was just due to her age. A year could make a huge difference in their early teens.

Another thought lingered in the back of his mind, one that he had managed to keep from thinking about until now. But with the chores finished and nothing to do to occupy his attention, it fought its way to the forefront of his mind.

If they ended up staying here on the island for an extended period, especially with the sight of the girls' bodies before his eyes constantly, certain feelings were likely to arise. He already knew of Autumn's affection for him, but until today he hadn't given any thought to returning it. In a civilized culture, such a relationship would be unthinkable, illegal even. But they were far from civilization. Aboard the *Siren's Song*, they had known that the next port was never more than a couple of weeks away, so he hadn't even thought of developing more than a casual friendship with Autumn in a limited time. She was nice enough to look at, and he had always tried to be friendly with her, but never had he considered anything more. Now that they no longer knew how much time they would spend together, things were different. What if he was wrong, and they didn't see another boat for months, or even years? They were two members of the opposite sex on a deserted island. Despite the difference in their ages, could a romance between them develop? If so, was that

something he should be looking forward to, or trying to avoid? He didn't know the answer to either question.

Cammy's presence, of course, changed things, probably for the better. With just Lance and Autumn together, a platonic relationship might be more difficult to maintain without them either falling in love or ending up hating each other. Cammy was a link between them, but also a barrier; Autumn would always be, first and foremost, Cammy's friend, and Lance would always be Cammy's brother. Besides, he might never find a private moment to spend with Autumn.

Most disturbing of all was how disappointed he felt by that thought.

Eventually the girls returned from their bathing, but Cammy didn't want to just rest. Instead, they all took a long walk down the beach. It wasn't a true exploration because they only wandered about half a mile from camp. He kept his eyes on the peak of the hill in the distance as they walked so that he could make a rough triangulation and figure out about how far away it was. Assuming it was in the center of the island, his first guess wasn't far off; the island was likely about four or five miles in diameter. Hardly a speck in the middle of the Pacific, but still large enough to provide all of their necessities.

He also looked for footprints in the sand, although that was unlikely because the storm last night would have erased them completely. Not surprisingly, he found none. He also found no litter or anything man-made at all except for the items washed up on the shore from the *Siren's Song*. If there were any people on the island, either they were meticulously clean or they didn't venture to this side very often.

By the time they returned to camp, the clothes had dried. Lance expected Autumn at least to immediately dress, but she surprised him by remaining nude. Cammy did as well, so he also left his clothes off. None of them mentioned it at all; they just had an unspoken agreement between themselves that it was all right not to wear clothes.

They dined on more jerky and coconuts, but they built a fire so that they could cook some breadfruit to add to the meal this time. After dinner, they sat in the fading light, relaxing and talking. As usual, Autumn said nothing, but Cammy talked enough for the both of them. The two girls were, in a way, complete opposites. Whatever Cammy did, she did with enthusiasm, whereas with Autumn, those who didn't know her might suspect that she didn't enjoy doing anything at all. Lance knew better; she just liked to let everyone else do all the talking.

They were on the wrong side of the island to see the sunset, but it was just as enjoyable to lie out on the beach and watch the stars come out. August was the best time of the year to watch for shooting stars, and they saw plenty as the light faded into darkness. The blue of daylight turned to pink, then purple, which gradually deepened as bit by bit the stars came into view, and the whole universe opened up to their eyes in a way that could only be truly appreciated out here thousands of miles from the lights of the nearest city. He marveled at the wonder of it all, at the fact that right now he could literally see forever.

The last time they sat out like this had been aboard the *Siren's Song* a couple of nights ago, and they had stayed out almost all night. They couldn't afford to do that again this time; although they had no urgent

business the next day, he wanted to make sure they got up early so that any tasks they needed to do they could complete in the morning before it got too hot. There would be plenty of time for a swim in the heat of the afternoon.

"Okay kids," he said teasingly. "Time for bed."

"Aw, do we have to, Lancy?" Cammy whined in her best baby voice, and despite the darkness, he could sense her grin from the tone of her voice. He used to hate it when she called him that, but ever since her illness, he was just so happy to hear her voice that she could say anything she wanted and he wouldn't mind.

"Aren't you looking forward to spending your first full day marooned on an island in the South Pacific?" he asked.

"Well, since you put it that way..." Cammy rose to her feet and brushed off the sand. Lance and Autumn did likewise, they then headed back to the camp.

As they walked, Cammy moved in close to him. She put her hand on his shoulder and pulled him gently down so that she could whisper in his ear.

"You're not just eager to get Autumn into our bed, are you?" she asked.

"Oh, very funny," he told her sarcastically, and she giggled.

In fact, Lance had been nervous about it all day. Despite the fact that Autumn and he had spent last night in each other's arms, it felt awkward preparing to go to bed with two naked girls, one of whom was his sister. He would have been happier setting up a separate tent for the girls, but there wasn't enough canvas for that. He was tempted to tell them to put more clothes on, but it seemed silly to wear more clothes to sleep in than they had worn during the day, so he didn't say anything.

There was really no point in building a campfire, since the temperature wasn't likely to drop enough to make another source of heat necessary, especially with the blanket from the survival kit to cover them when they went to bed. It would be cool, but not cool enough that it would be worth the effort to keep a fire burning all night. There was just enough light from the moon and stars to help them find their way to the tent and climb into bed.

When they crawled into the tent, Cammy offered to sleep in the middle, which alleviated most of his worries. At least he wouldn't be sleeping next to Autumn. That didn't mean he wouldn't have enjoyed it; just the opposite in fact. He would have enjoyed it too much. He knew the pleasure of holding the girl in his arms, though it had been mostly just to comfort and console one another the first time. Although he would never take advantage of Autumn, it would be a test of his willpower and self-control if she were to lie next to him all night.

With Cammy between them, most of the temptation was gone. Cammy was a beautiful and sexy girl herself, but she was his sister. He could hold her nude body in his arms all night and not feel the slightest temptation

to make love to her.

He wondered how much of that was true, and how much was self-delusion. He fell asleep worrying about his unnatural thoughts, and what it meant for their future on the island.

Chapter 4

Discovery

He awoke in the morning to the pleasant sensation of something warm and soft pressed up against his body. He lay there for a few minutes half asleep, basking in the feeling. It was so calming and delightful that he didn't want to open his eyes for fear that it was just a part of his dreams and it would vanish once the waking world took over.

Then it moved, pulling him out of his slumber. Lance opened his eyes and stared up for a minute at the unfamiliar plain white ceiling above him, sleepiness still blurring his vision. For a moment he didn't know where he was, then he remembered what had happened.

He glanced down, and suddenly froze up with shock. His little sister Cammy lay half on top of him, her head on his chest and her hand clutching his shoulder. She wore a peaceful smile on her face. The pleasant sensation he had felt was her body pressed up against his. Now that he knew what it was, he was unsure of how to react. Should he wake her and take the chance of embarrassing her? Should he pretend to be asleep and hope that she rolled off him on her own?

He glanced over and saw Autumn staring at them, her eyes wide and face growing red. That did it; there was no way to pretend to be asleep. He nudge Cammy gently. She yawned and opened her eyes, glancing around. Upon seeing where she was, she immediately rolled over off of him, laughing.

"Oops," she said. "I slept between you two to make sure nothing happened in the night. I guess it wasn't Autumn I should have been worrying about, but myself."

Lance smiled. It was good that she could joke about it. That meant it hadn't bothered her as much as it could have, to wake up sleeping naked on top of her brother. The thought should have disgusted him, but for some reason it didn't. Her body had felt far too nice, in fact.

He was about to sit up, but Cammy suddenly crawled over half on top of him, then leaned down and gave him a quick kiss on the lips, catching him off his guard. "Thanks anyway," she smiled, then rolled over off of him again, leaving him shocked and confused. She probably hadn't meant anything by it, but it had felt so damn good! Sexy even. His own little sister was turning him on.

He shouldn't be having those thoughts, especially about his sister. Instead, he sat up and crawled out of the tent into the cool morning air.

It was a little chilly for not wearing any clothes, but he just couldn't bring himself to put the shorts on. As long as the girls were willing to run around naked, he wasn't going to do anything to stop them. He decided that that thought, at least, was harmless. Sure they had nice bodies, and he liked to look at them, but that

didn't mean he was planning on doing anything. As long as he kept his fantasies to himself, there was no harm done.

The girls followed him out of the tent, huddling together for warmth. Lance tried not to stare as they momentarily brushed up against each other, their breasts touching. Neither of them made a big deal out of it, so he didn't either. But he kept an eye out to see if anything similar happened again.

Actually, he was glad for the cold. Between feeling Cammy's body, that kiss, and now seeing the incidental contact between the girls, only the chill kept him from growing erect.

The day would heat up soon enough, especially here on the sand. In fact, he was eager to get started with the morning's activities before it grew too hot.

He built a fire and they cooked some breadfruit. With some coconut to go with it, they at least kept their bellies full. But such a meager diet wouldn't support them for long. The animal trail that they had spotted yesterday indicated a potential source of meat, and he wanted to determine its identity so that they could plan their future menu. He also wanted to have a look around their new home.

He set aside some of the cooked breadfruit for later; he would need something to munch on during his excursion into the interior of the island. His headache remained, and although it had diminished to a mere background annoyance and he had no problem pushing it mostly out of conscious thought, he decided against venturing out to the yacht again for the time being. It would not do to black out when diving and leaving the two girls to fend completely for themselves.

"Today I'm going to explore the island," Lance announced. "I'm going to see if I can make it to the top of that hill. I'll be able to get a better idea of the size of the island, and hopefully spot signs of civilization."

"Can we come too?" asked Cammy.

"I wish you could," he told them. "But that hill looks kind of steep. I'm a pretty good mountain climber, so it doesn't bother me, but until you've had some practice, I don't think you should attempt it. Besides, I'm going to be traipsing through the jungle, and I only made one pair of moccasins. You'd better stay here."

"You get all the fun," Cammy teased him.

"Well, if you're looking for fun, you could always start work on a hut. That tent will work fine for now, but if we're going to be here a while, we'll be glad for something more permanent."

"But we don't know how to make a hut."

"It's just like we started doing earlier. Lash the sticks together with dry grass, and weave more dry grass in with the sticks to seal it up. Look for some bigger sticks though; the larger you make it, the more room we'll have inside."

"Okay, fine," Cammy agreed. "You go off adventuring and leave the women folk to do the housekeeping. Or the homemaking, I should say. In this case, it's literal." She kept a grin on her face as she said it, so he knew she wasn't actually angry.

After breakfast, Lance slipped on the shorts and moccasins, covered himself with sunscreen, filled the canteen with water from the lagoon, grabbed the machete, and headed off into the forest. He first climbed the hill overlooking the clearing, and waved down at the girls from the top of the waterfall. The stream headed more or less straight for the hill, so he decided to follow it. It would keep him from getting lost.

The undergrowth wasn't particularly thick; an island this size couldn't support a truly dense jungle. There were only a few places where he had to hack his way through the bushes. He made sure to keep looking back to reorient himself. There wasn't much danger of getting lost; in a worst-case scenario he could just head to the beach in any direction and follow the circumference of the island back to the camp. Still, he preferred to keep the most direct route in mind.

The ground was far from flat. There were numerous rises and gullies, and several times he had to travel a good distance out of his way to avoid having to climb steep slopes where the stream cascaded over abrupt cliff faces. Overall, the ground sloped upward toward the hill.

The temperature climbed as the day wore on, and Lance found himself sweating profusely. He was glad he had chosen to follow the stream; several times he refilled his canteen during the journey, drinking what seemed like gallons of water as he traveled.

Twice he came across animal paths, both roughly the same size as the one down by the camp. The animals that made the paths, though, remained elusive, and for good reason, considering that Lance intended to cook and eat them. He wasn't a cruel person, but survival dictated that he had to eventually find a source of meat. Coconuts and breadfruit couldn't sustain them forever.

There was always fish, of course. But he didn't have the equipment to make a proper net. That meant spearfishing, which he had never tried before and was therefore probably no good at, or a stick and a string, which would mean sitting out for long periods of time for each catch. He might try it sometimes just for variety, but he preferred land animals, that he could build a trap to catch.

He had no way to measure the time but by the progress of the sun across the sky. An hour went by, then two. On even ground without the forest in the way, Lance figured he could have reached at least the base of the hill within an hour; the island wasn't that big after all. However, he hadn't really expected to reach it until noon.

Despite his predicament, he really did enjoy the jungle. A thousand colors surrounded him, with many different shades of green dotted with brightly colored tropical flowers. He could spend all day staring at the amazing patterns of leaves, grass, and tree trunks. Each flower was an intricate masterpiece, a work of art with wondrous detail. Each tree had its own peculiar shape formed partly by its kind and partly by its long and mysterious history.

He wondered how the girls were doing. Cammy had faced their predicament with her usual never-ending cheerfulness, and Autumn had at least not complained once. He wasn't particularly concerned with them making progress on the hut; it was more important that they keep up their spirits. But was that cheerful acceptance of their fate just an act? Was Cammy putting on a good face so that he wouldn't worry about her? Maybe they were back at camp confessing their fears to each other right now.

No, he couldn't believe that. If they had any fault, it was in not taking their situation seriously enough. That was Lance's doing of course; he had tried to make it sound like they should treat this adventure as just another part of their vacation while they waited for the inevitable rescue. He knew the truth though; after the first twenty-four hours, rescue was anything but inevitable. It meant their emergency beacon had probably failed, and nobody knew they were missing. Eventually they would have to face the reality that they were likely here for a long time. Months at least. But until that became more obvious, he was happy to let them have their fun.

He remembered watching them splashing and playing in the lagoon, and how it had excited him to see their young, nubile bodies. That was another reason why he wanted to make this journey alone. He needed to sort out his thoughts. It was too easy for him to let his passions get out of control when he had a couple of gorgeous, naked girls around him. Knowing how Autumn felt about him added a further complication. Supposing he gave in to his passions, how far would she be willing to take things?

Those were dangerous thoughts. He couldn't afford to surrender to his instincts like that because he could end up doing something they would both regret. Here on an island thousands of miles from civilization, he had to be the source of his own civilization. The better question was, just what should his relationship with Autumn be?

He was no fool; despite the difference in their ages, a man and a woman trapped together on a deserted island were bound to form some kind of relationship, and her feelings for him were going to help define it. Even with Cammy there, he wasn't sure that Lance and Autumn could maintain a platonic friendship without it developing into something deeper.

Then he laughed aloud as he realized just how absurd that was. They had already spent two months together aboard a tiny boat, and nothing had come of it. In fact, that was an understatement. Autumn and Lance weren't even friends; he still hardly knew her. Why should he expect that things would change now that they were on an island instead of a boat?

He was obviously thinking with the wrong head. It was the sight of the girls' nude bodies that had done it. The only thing that had really changed was that they were now running around naked. So what? In time he would get used to it, and it would no longer arouse him as it did now. Then things would be just like they were back aboard the *Siren's Song*.

With that in mind, he could afford to let himself enjoy seeing the girls without their clothes on. There was nothing wrong with appreciating such beauty.

The sun was high overhead when he reached the base of the hill. He had been slowly ascending ever since leaving camp, but now he faced a rather steep slope. It wouldn't be a difficult climb; nothing compared to Everest of course. If he used the switchback method, he could still mostly just hike to the top.

The stream had thinned as he traveled until now it was little more than a trickle down the side of the hill. No doubt it would vanish completely before he had climbed very far. In fact, in places it disappeared beneath a covering of moss and foliage, and he could only tell its presence by its sound and the shimmering where sunlit running water peeked out through holes in the growth. He would have to make sure he filled his canteen before beginning the ascent.

Before starting up, he took time to cut open a coconut that he found on the ground. He drank as much of the juice as didn't spill when he cut it open, then ate his fill of the meat. He didn't have too much because he didn't want to risk cramps as he climbed the hill. The slope was too shallow to cause him to fall, but there would be no place to lie out flat until the cramps passed.

After eating and resting for about twenty minutes, he began his ascent. There were no trails to follow, but there wasn't much ground cover either so he was able to rather easily angle his way up, stopping and changing direction every so often. There were two drawbacks to climbing at an angle. First, it multiplied the distance. Second, with the trees in the way to prevent him from keeping focused on landmarks, it was too easy to lose his sense of direction. Still, he figured that once he reached the top he could reorient himself again. The way down would be easier because he could go straight, and as long as he pointed himself roughly in the right direction at the beginning, he could find the stream again at the bottom and follow it back to camp.

He rested frequently; there was no sense overexerting himself when there was no time limit. Besides, the less effort he put into it, the less he would sweat and the less water he would need. He sipped only lightly from the canteen now and then, not wanting to drink it all up and be stuck with nothing left before he reached the summit.

About halfway up the slope, a representative of his future dinner plans hopped out in front of him. He smiled as he saw it, realizing that there was no chance of them starving on this island. He already knew how to snare, skin, and cook a rabbit, having done so on a couple of survival camps in the past.

Toward the top of the hill, the incline shallowed out, so he abandoned his sideways method and scrambled the last fifty feet or so straight to the top. Finally he made it, and he sat down exhausted but victorious. The top of the hill was a rounded dome with a diameter of about twenty feet before it dropped away down the slope. There were a couple of trees growing right at the top, but nothing that could obscure his view. In the east, he could follow the line of the stream with his eyes right to the cliff overlooking the camp. Out beyond the breakers he could see a dark line submerged in the water indicating the reef. Even the hull of the *Siren's Song* was visible.

The north and south were pretty much the same as the east, with the white line of the beach forming a "C" around the island. In the west, the jungle was quite a bit thicker, and reached all the way to the ocean. He

couldn't tell for sure, but it looked like the shore was lined with mangroves on most of the western side.

He searched in vain for buildings, roads, or other signs of human presence, but there was nothing. For all he knew, Lance and the girls were the first people ever to set foot on this island. He marveled at the fact that even in this age of satellites and global positioning technology, of trade routes and detailed topographical maps of the sea floor, in the vastness of the Pacific there could still exist an island that had never been seen before.

He took a few minutes to scan the ocean for any passing ships, but there were none. He also saw no jet trails in the sky. The sight of the empty sea and sky, with the whole of the island laid out in front of his eyes, made him suddenly feel very alone. Other than the girls, there was no one around for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of miles.

That made him want to return to camp as soon as possible. He could do with some company right now, especially someone like the always-cheerful Cammy. Even shy little Autumn would be better than just sitting here at the top of the hill alone with his thoughts.

Now that he had discovered just how isolated they were, there was no point in staying here atop the hill any longer. He began carefully scrambling down the slope in the direction of the camp. He took it slowly and cautiously, knowing that his eagerness to return to the girls might make him go a little faster than he should if he wasn't careful. It wouldn't do to fall and break a leg. If he did, Cammy and Autumn would surely come looking for him and as long as they headed toward the hill they would eventually find him, but there was no point making the journey more difficult than necessary.

At the bottom of the hill he located the stream, so he filled his canteen and began his return journey. This time it went much faster; not only did the sight of familiar landscapes help things, but moving toward the coast meant it was downhill for most of the way. Despite the gloominess he had felt at the top of the hill, the thought of returning to the girls cheered him.

He followed the landmarks back that he had stopped to memorize on his way into the interior of the island, not that there was any chance of getting lost. He had the stream to follow after all. Mostly he just identified them so he could gauge how far he had walked and how much further he had to travel. Soon he found himself in familiar surroundings, and the welcome sight of the hill overlooking the camp.

It was then that he discovered yet another source of food. There was no mistaking the large, glossy leaves of the taro plant, growing from the swampy shallows of the stream. That made sense now that he thought of it; where there was breadfruit, there was bound to be taro, both brought to this part of the Pacific by prehistoric seafarers.

It was almost as important a discovery as the rabbits on the side of the hill. The castaways could mash the roots into poi, giving them a nice base for their diet. He would have to go looking for more taro plants later. Right now, he just wanted to get back to camp and report on his findings.

As he came over the crest of the hill, he glanced down into the lagoon below. He froze when he saw what

was going on. Cammy and Autumn stood under the waterfall, facing each other and holding hands. They obviously didn't see him. The two girls leaned in and wrapped their arms around one another. Their heads moved in close, and suddenly they had their lips pressed together.

Lance's heart pounded in his chest, and he watched with both excitement and shock. This was something he had never suspected about the girls, something that took him completely by surprise. He didn't know what to think, or how to react.

As soon as he managed to regain control of himself, he hurriedly stepped back out of view, trembling from the overwhelming realization, his mind a mass of confusion. The sight of the two beautiful young girls, naked and kissing like that, was one of the most erotic things he had ever seen. But he also felt guilty, both because he shouldn't be spying on them like that, and because he shouldn't be feeling that way about his sister.

It really didn't surprise him so much to discover that she was a lesbian; ever since her recovery, she had been enthusiastic about trying new things, as if to try to cram in as many experiences as possible. It was a natural reaction to a confrontation with her own mortality.

More surprising was the realization that Autumn had those tendencies. For one thing, the girl was always so shy and reserved; he couldn't imagine her experimenting with her sexuality in that way. For another, Cammy had already told him that Autumn entertained romantic feelings about him. That meant that even if she liked girls, she apparently liked guys as well.

He had to admit, he felt a certain jealousy. Not a lot, but he had already given some mostly idle thought to the possibility of a relationship with Autumn, and now it looked like that wouldn't be a possibility. In his fantasies he had imagined weeks or months on the island with the ever-decreasing chance of rescue, and the more practical notion of living here forever. It would be only natural for the man and the girl to get together.

Still, it was probably better this way. Lance Lyons had been from one end of the world to the other, so he considered himself rather broad-minded. The idea of two girls in love didn't bother him at all. And should the three castaways ever be rescued, it wouldn't do for him to have fallen in love with a fourteen-year-old girl. He could still have his fantasies, but they would have to remain just that.

He waited a few minutes to let the more obvious physical evidence of his excitement disappear, then began to whistle a cheerful tune, perhaps a bit louder than necessary, as he made his way down the side of the hill toward the camp. He wanted to give the girls plenty of warning; it felt a little inappropriate to walk in on them in the midst of their passion. Cammy might laugh it off, but Autumn would probably pass out from embarrassment.

Part of him hoped the rushing of the waterfall would drown out his whistling, that he would catch the girls red-handed and they would have to bring their feelings out in the open. He fantasized about them giving up any claim on privacy and continuing their escapades right in front of his eyes. But he also knew that it wouldn't be that simple, and more likely their embarrassment would put an end to that relationship.

When he came into view, the girls had separated. Cammy stood waist-deep in the water, and Autumn sat on a rock near the waterfall with her feet dangling in the water. The sight before his eyes reminded him of two mermaids relaxing in a sheltered cove. These mermaids acted as if nothing had happened. They certainly knew how to fake it; if he hadn't just seen them kissing a few minutes earlier, he would never suspect that anything had gone on between them.

"You two sure have a one-track mind," he grinned. The girls stopped and stared at him for a second. Autumn began to turn red.

"What do you mean?" asked Cammy, no doubt trying to sound nonchalant.

"I mean, all you do all day is swim," he replied.

Both girls laughed nervously at that, relaxing.

"I mean it," he continued in a lighthearted tone. "I'm working my butt off and I find you two just goofing around." He wasn't really scolding them; he really didn't mind after all. The sight of the water glistening on their youthful skin and the torrents running down their bodies was plenty of motivation for him to do all the work and let them have their fun.

"Turn around," Cammy told him with a grin.

"What?"

"Just do it," she insisted.

He shrugged, and turned away from them.

"Nope, still there," she said.

"What is?"

"Your butt. So you haven't worked it off yet. You're apparently not doing enough."

"Oh, very funny," he laughed. Autumn burst out into giggles at that.

"Anyway, I think you need a break," Cammy continued. "Why don't you come join us? You know what they say about all work and no play."

"It makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise?"

"No, you're thinking of 'early to bed, and early to rise.'"

"I thought that had something to do with getting the worm."

"Oh, you're impossible!" Cammy growled playfully. "But seriously, don't you think he should come have a swim with us, Autumn?"

Her friend's eyes went wide. "Um... I..." she stammered.

Lance came to her rescue by changing the subject. "Anyway, I have some bad news," he told them. He said it that way to deliberately make it sound worse than it was, so that they would be relieved when he told them the truth.

"What?" asked Cammy seriously.

"I've found a source of meat, but..."

"Come on, just tell us."

"Well, it happens to be cute and fluffy little animals. Rabbits, in particular."

"Oh, that's all?" asked Cammy, a smile on her face. "You had us worried there for a minute. We don't mind, do we, Autumn?"

"But..." said her friend, "you're not going to kill them right in front of us, are you?"

"Tell you what. I'll set the snares away from camp, and I'll skin and clean the rabbits on the spot. The only thing you two will see is something that vaguely looks like it may once have been a rabbit."

"That's fine," Autumn said.

He had a lot to tell them, but he figured it was just as easy to tell them in the lagoon while out of it. Besides, the water really did look nice and refreshing. He wondered if the girls would mind if he took off his shorts. Probably not, so he stripped down and waded out toward the girls. Neither of them mentioned it, to his relief. Autumn, perhaps still just a little afraid of him, kept her distance, but Cammy surprised him by immediately dashing over behind him and jumping on his back. Shocked at her boldness, he let his legs give out, and they both dunked under the water. They came up laughing and sputtering. Lance couldn't believe she had done that, considering that neither of them wore a stitch. Worse still, he couldn't believe just how good her young body felt against his back. She was not particularly heavy, but she was soft in all the right places.

He decided not to let it bother him. Cammy had always been playful, and she probably didn't even realize what she was doing. To her, it was just innocent fun and games.

Lance told them about what he had discovered, that this island was completely isolated. The breadfruit and taro suggested that Lance and the girls weren't the first people to set foot on this island, but whoever had been here before hadn't likely visited for a long time, perhaps centuries. Unfortunately, that meant the island was pretty far off the beaten track. He had no idea how far off course the storm had blown the *Siren's Song*.

As they frolicked in the water, Lance couldn't get the image of the two girls hugging and kissing out of his

mind. Certainly they weren't doing anything now to suggest that they were anything but merely good friends, and for a moment he wondered if he had imagined the whole thing. Perhaps the heat had made him hallucinate, his eyes playing tricks on him. It had looked like something right out of a fantasy painting after all. But no, delusions from heat stroke were usually accompanied by a dozen other symptoms, and he felt just fine. He decided just to put it out of his mind, especially since he was enjoying himself so much swimming and splashing and playing.

After about half an hour in the lagoon, they waded out and lay down on the sand to dry off. After the day's journey, Lance was particularly tired, so he rewarded himself for a job well done with a nice, long nap. Cammy woke him two hours later by shoving a piece of coconut in his mouth. She giggled as he woke and sat up, staring around. After taking a second to get his bearings, he caught her in a headlock and rubbed the top of her head with his knuckles.

He showed the girls the taro plant he had discovered and set them to work looking for others. They discovered quite a few of them around the stream, enough to keep them fed indefinitely. He pulled up a couple of the plants to harvest the roots.

Lance and the girls dined on coconuts, breadfruit, and boiled taro roots that evening, then Lance decided to set out some snares before it got too dark. The girls were curious as to how to set them, so he let them follow him into the jungle.

Setting a rabbit snare wasn't too difficult. All he needed was a piece of string tied in a slipknot and attached to a sturdy stick shoved into the ground, and a few smaller sticks to prop up the loop. If he set them along the rabbit paths they had seen earlier, they didn't even need any bait.

Not being aware of the population density of the rabbits, he didn't know how many snares to set. He started with three, a good average number. Since the snares would catch the rabbits alive, if he caught too many he would release the ones he didn't need. If that happened repeatedly, he would cut back to two snares or even one, but if the snares were empty most days, he would set another two.

After the work was done, they headed out to the beach to watch the stars come out. Cammy asked if it might be all right some time to camp out on the western side of the island where they could see the sunset, but Lance told her that unfortunately it was all mangrove swamps over there. Still, the beauty of the darkening sky over the tranquil sea had its own charm, especially out here away from the lights of civilization. They lay out on the beach until the last traces of sunlight had vanished, watching the moon and the occasional shooting star. They pointed out the constellations they knew, and even made up a few new ones. Before he knew it, Lance found himself nodding off, and he fell asleep without even returning to the camp and the tent.

Chapter 5

Attraction

The next morning he was almost disappointed when he found Cammy lying next to him instead of on top of him like yesterday. Her body had felt so soft and warm, he had actually looked forward to feeling it again. It was all for the best, however; he really shouldn't be thinking those thoughts anyway, especially about his little sister.

On the other hand, Autumn lay next to him on the other side, not that he should be thinking those thoughts about her either. They had all fallen asleep like that on the beach. It was a little chilly out here in the open, where the cool morning air could steal away the warmth of the three bodies instead of keeping it bottled up inside the tent. Lance was fortunate enough to be lying between the two girls where he could feel a little bit of heat from both of them, so he knew the girls must be especially cold.

A small leaf from one of the trees had drifted down during the night and nestled in the shadow of one of Autumn's breasts. It had found a home in a place to make men jealous. Lance looked away, finding himself in the strange situation of wishing he were a leaf right now.

They both still slept, so he decided not to wake them. Instead, he quietly rose to his feet and crept back to camp, where he set to work building a fire. He wanted to make sure they had some place warm to gather round when they awoke.

As he worked on starting up the fire, he kept glancing over at the girls lying there on the beach. He couldn't deny that they were both beautiful girls. At times he wished he weren't such a gentleman, because having those two there with him on the island, all three of them without clothes, reminded him of how long it had been since the last time he had had sex. There had been no opportunity aboard the *Siren's Song* of course. And now, stranded here on this island, it looked like it might be a while longer. Even if he had no legal or moral issues with seducing a girl that young, he would have a hard time convincing them to give in. Autumn would probably die from mortification at the mere suggestion, and Cammy... He was ashamed at how little disgust he felt by that thought.

Autumn stirred, then rolled over and snuggled up next to Cammy, who put her arms around the girl. Lance looked away. If he were to let his eyes linger, he wouldn't be able to hide the physical effect it had on him. In other circumstances, he would think nothing of it. It was just two girls huddling together for warmth. But after what he had seen yesterday, it took on a whole new meaning.

The fire was nice and warm by the time they roused. Autumn was the first one up. She glanced around groggily and then turned to see Lance sitting there by the fire. He waved her over, so she shook Cammy awake, then the two girls joined him by the campfire.

"That feels nice," Cammy said, rubbing the chill from her arms and legs. "Thanks, Lance."

"Maybe tomorrow I'll teach you two how to build a fire, so you can take turns. I'm tired of doing all the work around here." He meant it as a joke of course, and kept a smile on his face to let them know he was just teasing. Cammy, however, took it a little more seriously than that.

"We really appreciate you looking out for us," she told him. "Don't we, Autumn?"

"Yeah," Autumn mumbled, as usual never using two words when one would suffice.

"It's just that you know so much about everything," Cammy continued. "Autumn and I would be completely lost without you."

Lance couldn't help but grin at the flattery. His sister sure knew how to use it.

"Look," she said. "If you want us to help out some more, just ask us. We don't want to be a bother to you, and to tell you the truth, I wouldn't mind learning some of these survival tricks that you seem to know so well."

"You two aren't a bother," he told them. "I'm happy to do it. Just having you here to keep me company is all the reward I need. On the other hand, I wouldn't mind a little extra help. We've got a lot of work to do these next couple of days."

"We'd love to help, wouldn't we, Autumn?" Cammy grinned.

Autumn just nodded.

After breakfast Lance made his way down to the shoreline directly in from the wreck of the *Siren's Song*. He could see from the shell line and flotsam on the sand that the tide had been very high that night. A sense of unease gripped him and he stared out to where the wreck should have been.

There was nothing there.

Lance inwardly cursed. He should have risked his head after all and kept diving on the yacht. Obviously it was too late now. The sea had claimed what was left of it.

He wandered back and forth along the beach checking to see if there was any sign of the boat, either where it had been or nearby. There was nothing. Finally, reining in his feelings, he decided to head back to the girls and simply not mention the yacht. No doubt they still believed they would be rescued soon, so the loss of the yacht may not even register with them.

Once back with the girls they began preparations for building a more permanent shelter. The tent wouldn't last long in a storm, so they needed something that could withstand a little wind and rain.

The two trees that they used for the tent would serve well for two of the corners. That would make it very sturdy. Lance set the girls to work gathering together a bunch of large and straight sticks. They found some

that were basically small logs, which would work well for the frame. He used the machete to cut them to the right sizes, then lashed them together in three squares. One would form the back wall, and two would make a sloping roof. It wouldn't do to have the rain collect in the middle and cause it to collapse on top of them. He would leave the side walls until later.

To make a good frame to attach the covering to, he took some long but thin and slightly flexible sticks and wove them together into a something resembling chain link fence. By alternating the position of the ends on the inside and outside of the log squares, he didn't even have to use any more rope to fasten it together.

Building the frames took the whole morning. He checked the snares again before lunch, but again there were no rabbits. He wasn't too worried; if he didn't catch any before dinner, he would set out several more snares. They were a little low on string since they were using it to lash together the frame of the hut, but he could afford a few more feet for snares.

After another lunch of fruit and taro, Lance looked over their handiwork. The frames seemed nice and solid. The trick would be the covering. There was plenty of grass around that they could dry and use for thatching. The problem was that he didn't know how to do it. He had been on half a dozen survival camps in various climates, and could make a shelter out of just about anything, but those shelters were just temporary, meant to be discarded after serving their purpose.

Supposedly palm leaves made good thatching material, and there were plenty of palm trees around, but the leaves, though broad, seemed too flimsy to provide much protection, so he discarded that idea. That brought them back to the grass.

In the end, it was Autumn who came up with the idea for making a solid wall of grass on the frames. She suggested binding the straw together into small bundles, using more grass instead of string to tie them. These bundles could be then attached to the "chain link" frames, again using more grass to tie them. Cammy refined her idea by suggesting that they tie the bundles on the inside of the frame at the top and the outside of the frame at the bottom, layering them like shingles. This would keep the rain from dripping inside.

Lance made an experimental few bundles of grass and attached them like the girls suggested, and it seemed to work well, so he set them to work collecting all the dry grass they could while he cut down some more to lay out in the sun to dry.

It took them all afternoon to cover one of the square frames. That was fine; he had expected it to take several days anyway. Even if it took a week or more, it would be well worth the effort. He didn't mention it to the girls, but he was pretty sure now that they were in for the long haul. If they were going to be spotted by Search and Rescue, it would have happened by now.

Just before dinner, he checked the snares once more, and found that he had caught a rabbit. He killed it and skinned it, then took it back to camp.

He found the girls relaxing in a grassy meadow near the camp, lying on their backs next to each other and staring up at the sky. In the warm tones of late afternoon, their bodies almost glowed. He tried not to stare at

the beautiful softness of their skin, bathed in sunlight and surrounded by the emerald greens and bright reds, whites, pinks, and oranges of the flowers. Each of the girls had even picked a flower and placed it over their ear. This simple adornment multiplied their beauty the way no makeup or clothes could ever hope to match.

They sat up, glancing at the thing in Lance's hand that had once been a rabbit. Cammy looked curious, but Autumn wore a look of disgust on her face. However, for all her show, after he cooked it over the fire she was happy to eat her fair share. It was the first meat they had eaten in days, not counting jerky, and it tasted delicious.

That night they slept in the tent again, then got up and set to work immediately. This time with all day to work on the thatching, they managed to cover both pieces of the roof, and still had time left over for a late afternoon swim. Lance mostly stayed out of the water. Lately his favorite hobby was watching the girls bathe. He enjoyed the sight of their jiggling breasts as they laughed and splashed each other, the way the dampness sparkled on their bodies in the sunlight, and the way the water droplets rolled down their smooth skin when they stood still. The glistening mermaids painted a lovely picture before his eyes.

He found it especially delightful when the girls washed each other's backs. Even if he hadn't seen them kissing already, that kind of touching seemed a little intimate. On the other hand, it could be construed as perfectly innocent; they weren't touching any parts of each other's bodies that would be covered by a swimsuit anyway. And they certainly wouldn't be giving him such a show if they knew what was going through his mind. He kept fantasizing about one of the girls getting a little frisky and reaching around for some less innocent groping, but it never happened.

The next day they finalized the framework by setting up the back wall and attaching the roof pieces to it and to the trees in front. A couple of logs on the bottom sides solidified it. Now they had a glimpse of the end result of their labors, and the girls were delighted to see it taking shape. Lance had to admit, there was a certain feeling of accomplishment in building something like this. It was especially nice for the girls because they had actually come up with some of the ideas for it and not just followed his orders. It measured only about twelve feet on a side and nine feet high at the pinnacle, but compared to their previous accommodations it was a mansion.

They worked until well after supper that day, finishing the thatching on the two sides just before it was too dark to see. Now they had three walls and a roof finished. To celebrate their success, they slept in their new nearly-complete home, taking down the tent and hanging it in front as a temporary fourth wall.

They woke up the next day eager to finish the job. This meant building a fourth wall and some triangular pieces to fill in the empty space caused by the sloped roof. Lance suggested they make the entire front wall movable, with a simple hinge made by a couple of loops of rope wrapped around one of the trees. That way, the entire wall became the door. They used lighter sticks instead of heavy logs like they had used for the frame of the other walls and roof, and it seemed to work well.

They attached the front triangular piece to the roof, but the back one they made removable so that they could open it during the day to allow some cross-ventilation to cool the inside of the hut. With the dry grass of the

walls soaking up a lot of the heat during the day, it would get a little stuffy inside otherwise.

They still had to sleep on the ground, but Lance had some ideas in mind to build some portable hammocks out of the sailcloth now that they no longer needed it. The girls hadn't complained one bit, though, so he was in no real hurry.

Now that their new home was complete, he looked for another major task to occupy them. He had earlier dismissed spearfishing as requiring too much time and effort to learn, but now that he had plenty of leisure time, it seemed like an interesting possibility for a hobby.

When he mentioned his idea to the girls, they both seemed quite eager to learn as well. They were especially excited because it wasn't something that he was already an expert in; they would learn it together.

It required the right equipment, of course. The spear itself was easy; they just needed a long, straight stick. The spearhead, on the other hand, was the tricky part. There were three choices. He could use the pocket knife, but he wasn't sure how long it would keep from rusting in the salt water, and he didn't want to risk it. He could simply sharpen the point of the stick. That would probably work just fine. Or he could fashion a point from stone. That wasn't the fastest or most efficient method, but then, speed and efficiency weren't the goal here.

He decided on the third option. A few years ago he had gone on a retreat in the Southwest with a group of people learning about Pre-Columbian Native American traditions. One of the things they had learned was how to make arrowheads. The knapping, or lithic reduction (a needlessly technical term that meant nothing more than chipping away pieces of stone), could be performed with objects that were readily at hand here on the island. He couldn't claim to be an expert, but it would be fun to give it a try out here in the wild.

Lance described the types of stones they would need and had the girls go scour the beach for them. He searched for a large, flat-topped stone to use as his work bench, and found one at the base of the hill near the waterfall. It was too big to carry, but he was able with some difficulty to roll it out to the beach near the lagoon. Unfortunately, as he was moving it the last couple of feet into place, he felt something pop in his shoulder.

"Ow!" he exclaimed, grabbing his shoulder with his other hand. Fortunately the girls were out of hearing range; he didn't want them to worry.

It turned out not to be that bad after all. He had just pulled a muscle. After moving his arm around for a minute or two, most of the pain went away.

Cammy and Autumn returned with an arm load of rocks a few minutes later. Lance gathered up a couple of good candidates and placed them on top of the flat-topped stone, then knelt in front of it to demonstrate the technique. By hitting the softer rocks with harder rocks at strategic points, pieces would flake off. They would use that method to roughly shape their spearheads. The finer details could be done with softer rocks, or even wood or bone. He hoped to create something like an arrowhead, with notches behind the point that could be used to lash it to the spear itself.

He wasn't very good at it, which was to be expected. He mostly ended up with a bunch of broken rocks that were completely useless. But he hadn't expected it to work on the first try anyway. No doubt it would take several days before he was skilled enough to be able to fashion a useful spearhead.

The girls gave it a try as well, with similar lack of success. They had a good time laughing and joking at their pathetic attempts though, which in the end was more important than the results of their labors. Cammy told him he would make a terrible cave man, and he agreed.

As the day wore on, the soreness in his shoulder gradually worsened, until he finally had to give up. He set down the rocks and rubbed his shoulder, wincing.

Cammy immediately noticed his distress, and hurried over to him. "What's wrong?" she asked, concerned.

"Oh, nothing really. I think I pulled a muscle moving that big rock into place, and it's just gotten worse."

"Well you'd better stop working right now. You've been wearing yourself out. You'll be no use to us if you end up flat on your back for a week."

"Yes Mom," he grinned.

Cammy laughed. "Well, since I'm taking her place, I'm going to send you to your room. Go lie down in the hut."

"But I've got to go check the snares and harvest some more taro root for supper."

"I'll do that. You stay here. That's an order, young man."

Lance laughed. Cammy really did sound like their mother just then. The truth was that he was glad for the opportunity to take it easy for a while. He really had been working hard, and he felt just a little envious of how much fun the girls had been having. Not that he would ever let it get him down; he had been the one who had decided that it would be that way, after all.

While Cammy headed out into the jungle, Lance sat down in the shade of the newly built hut. He massaged his shoulder with his good hand, wincing occasionally at the pain. He had really wrenched it hard. As he worked over his shoulder with his good arm, Autumn appeared in the doorway of the hut. He bid her enter, and she came over and sat down beside him in the shade. He glanced over at her with a smile.

"How... how's your shoulder?" she asked.

"I think it will be fine if I don't do any heavy lifting for a couple of days. So you don't have to worry about me picking you up and throwing you in the lagoon," he joked.

Autumn merely smiled and blushed, staring at the ground. Well, it was about as close to a laugh as he could expect to get out of her.

"Lance?" she asked.

"What?"

"Um..." she said. "Um, never mind."

Lance felt sorry for her; she was so shy that she could hardly say anything to him. Maybe all she needed was a little coaxing.

"Autumn, it sounds like you want to say something to me, but you just can't get it out," he told her. "Look, there's no reason to be shy with me. If you're worried whether I like you, well, I do. You've been a great friend to Cammy, and even if you haven't been the most talkative person, you're nice to be around. So whatever it is, you can tell me. Okay?"

"Well, it's just... I wanted to... thank you for bringing me on this trip."

Lance laughed, then immediately caught himself as she turned bright red.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Autumn," he told her. "I wasn't laughing at you. Okay, maybe your timing wasn't the greatest, but really, I was laughing because you caught me off guard. I mean, are you really glad you came along? Now that we're stranded on an island in the middle of the Pacific without knowing how long it will be until we're rescued?"

"Yes I am," she replied. "It's so beautiful here, and so peaceful. We have food, water, shelter, really everything we need. So what if we're not on the boat? I like being here even more."

Lance was astonished. That was more than she had said to him in days. Maybe she was just defending her statement, but at least she was speaking with him. And there was a certain truth to what she said, a certain wisdom that he had been missing this whole time.

"You're right," he smiled. "I've been so caught up with just trying to survive that I hadn't thought to stop and enjoy myself. I've seen you two having fun, laughing and joking, and enjoying each other's company while I've been setting traps, building the shelter, and lighting fires. But you know what? I think in the end, you've chosen the more important part."

Autumn nodded, but didn't say anything. She stared out at the rippling water of the lagoon. Lance followed her gaze, and noticed the way the sun sparkled on the water, almost like fairies dancing. Autumn was right; it really was beautiful and peaceful. Yes, they had to work if they wanted to eat, but they had had to work on the boat in order to keep it running. Was this really so different?

He felt something soft on his hand, and he glanced down. Autumn had placed her own hand on top of his. Their eyes met for an instant, then she immediately pulled away.

"I'm sorry," she said with a fearful look in her eyes. "I shouldn't have--"

He was surprised and touched by her boldness. It was the first time she had been the least bit forward with him. He wasn't sure how appropriate her gesture was, but at least she had made the effort, and he hated to think of what it would do to her self-confidence if it turned out to be a bad experience.

"Yes you should have," he insisted, grabbing her hand and holding it in his own. She stared at him in shock, but he simply smiled tenderly at her. "Autumn," he said. "It's okay. Cammy told me you have certain... feelings for me."

She turned away, blushing. "She shouldn't have said that," she mumbled.

"There's no need to be ashamed of your feelings," he said. "I'm touched, and I'm honored. You're a beautiful, sweet girl, and I'm glad you're here."

"Does that mean... does that mean that you... like me too?"

"I like you," he told her cautiously, "but not necessarily in that way. I mean, I am eleven years older than you, after all. I'm not saying that to put you down, or to imply that you're at all inferior to me. I just mean that any kind of relationship between us would be... well... illegal."

"Not here it isn't," she insisted. "We're hundreds of miles from civilization, and all its stupid rules. Here, *we* make the rules. Why can't you and I fall in love if we want?"

She had a point. Was there any real obstacle to them getting together like that? They had left the rules of civilized society far behind, and here on this island, they had nothing but freedom.

He sighed. "Okay, I'll admit that things are different here than they would be back in the States. I just don't want to make a mistake that could ruin our lives."

Autumn nodded, though with a look of disappointment in her eyes. "I understand," she said. "And it's okay if you don't like me the way I like you. Maybe someday I'll get over you. It's just that you're the first boy I've ever felt comfortable being around."

Considering how shy she had acted around him, he would hate to see what she would be like around other boys. He didn't mention that, though; it would be a little insulting. He merely sat there in silence, giving her time to collect her thoughts.

"Lance?" she said.

"Yes, Autumn?"

"You don't mind if I hold your hand, do you?"

He smiled at her, then lifted her hand in his own, bringing it up to his lips to give it a tender kiss. "I think at least we can do that much," he said. She blushed again, but this time with a smile on her lips.

They sat like that for a while, not saying anything and not needing to. Autumn really was the sweetest girl, and he wished he could give her what she wanted. Maybe she was right. Maybe out here in the middle of the Pacific, there was nothing wrong with a 25-year-old man and a 14-year-old girl getting together like that. Would it really be so bad? It might be just the thing she needed.

Or it could be the worst thing to happen to her. She was young and inexperienced, and really just had a case of puppy love. She didn't know what she was doing, so it was up to him to be the strong one.

By silent agreement, they dropped each other's hands when Cammy returned. She appeared in front of the hut, then upon seeing them there, came over and sat down on Lance's other side.

"No rabbits today," she announced.

"Actually, I'm kind of relieved," Lance smiled. "Preparing them for cooking would have been painful with my arm like this."

"Here, let me see." She crawled around back behind him, then grasped his arm firmly just below the shoulder. She moved it around, causing him to wince and suck in his breath a couple of times.

"Okay, I'm ordering you to take it easy for the next few days," she said. "We'll put the spearhead-making project on hold for a while. Autumn and I will take care of things."

"I'm sure I'll be fine by tomorrow," he told her. "But thanks."

In fact, his arm *was* mostly back to normal by the next day. He was glad of that; while it had certainly felt nice to hold Autumn's hand, he knew he couldn't take too much of that, or he probably wouldn't be able to restrain himself. He wasn't quite up to smashing more rocks together, but despite Cammy's insistence that he stay home (the fact that she used the word "home" in reference to the camp was not lost on him), he needed to get away for a while. He said as much, but reassured them that it wasn't because he was angry at them; he just needed some time alone to think.

He set off just after breakfast, mostly just walking along the beach. Here away from the girls, in the solitude of his isolation, he had time to think about the way things were turning out. Cammy had used the word "home" to describe the camp, and that concerned him, especially since he had begun to think of it the same way. They now had a kind of a house, and were starting to fall into a routine of daily chores. In several days they had seen no sign of rescue planes or ships; in fact, they had seen nothing to indicate the presence of other human beings at all. Like it or not, they had to deal with the fact that they were going to be alone on the island for quite some time.

The word "home" also implied a kind of family. Yes, Lance and Cammy were blood relations, but Autumn didn't quite fit into that. Despite that, he couldn't quite see her as an outsider, because she fit in so well with the other two. And now that she had begun to open up her heart to him, he felt more and more like she really

belonged with them.

That was the main thing that bothered him. He didn't know what to think, or to feel, about her any more. Yesterday it had been so clear; even while holding her hand he had known that they couldn't take it beyond that. He had decided to be strong, but his resolve was beginning to weaken. Admittedly, part of it was just the fact that he hadn't been with a woman in months, and part of it was seeing the girls' nude bodies every day. If there were no more to it, he was pretty sure he could hold out as long as he needed to.

But part of it was that he was getting comfortable with the girls. He had always found Cammy fun to be around, but now that Autumn was beginning to open up to him, he was really starting to like her. She was beautiful, and sweet, and just nice to be with, despite her shyness. He was also well aware of the fact that he was the only man on the island, and she the only girl who wasn't related to him. But could they ever be more than just friends?

What, really, was so wrong about having a romantic relationship with her? True, back in the States he could go to prison for that, but like she said, out here they made their own rules. Despite the difference in their ages, maybe it wouldn't be such a bad thing to love her the way she wanted. After all, the rules of society that prevented it were just arbitrary restrictions based upon cultural norms, and here on this island the three castaways made up their own culture.

No, that was more wishful thinking than anything else. Whether it took weeks or months, eventually they would be rescued, and then they would have to return to civilization and face the consequences of that forbidden love. The reason why he wasn't allowed to love her was that she was still immature, not ready to handle that kind of responsibility, at least in the world they lived in. She was only just about to start high school, after all.

He would just have to control his urges, he decided. No doubt in another week or two they would be on their way back to civilization, then he could find himself a girlfriend of his own age. Autumn would just have to get over him.

Happy that he was once again clear on what he needed to do, he turned around and headed back to the camp. It was a little earlier than he had expected to return; he had planned to be gone most of the day, but here it was not even noon yet. But he had mostly left to give him some time to think, and he had managed to sort out his thoughts already.

The girls were nowhere to be seen as he approached the camp. It was still too cold for a swim, so naturally they weren't in the lagoon. The embers of the fire still smoldered on the sand, and he had warned them not to leave camp without putting it out. Most likely they were in the hut. It faced away from him, so he wouldn't be able to see them until turning the corner.

"Cammy," he heard Autumn's voice from inside the hut.

"What is it?" asked Cammy.

"Can I ask you a favor?"

"Sure."

"Well... the other day, when you went to check the snares and left me alone with Lance..."

"I'm sorry, did that bother you? I'll be careful not to leave you two alone again if you want."

"Oh, no! Just the opposite. Lance was so sweet to me."

"Sweet? What do you mean?"

"Well... he let me... let me hold his hand, for one thing."

"He did what?"

"Well, he knows how I feel about him."

"Autumn, look. I only left you two alone because I know that Lance isn't the type of guy to try anything. At least, I thought he was. But if he was willing to hold your hand--"

"But I liked it, Cammy. He's a wonderful guy. Just give me a few more times alone with him, that's all I ask."

"Do you really know what you're asking? What if... what if something happens?"

"I know what I'm doing."

"Do you? If he were only a couple of years older than us, you'd have my blessing. I'd love to see you going out with someone as nice as Lance. But he's twenty-five. Almost twice your age. I think maybe I'd better not leave you two alone together."

"Come on, Cammy. I'll make it worth your while."

"Oh yeah? How?"

"Well for one thing, I'll do this."

Lance couldn't see what happened next, but he heard Cammy give a sharp squeal, followed by giggles.

"That's not fair, Autumn," she said. "You know that's my weakness. Besides, I thought you had your heart set on Lance."

"That doesn't mean I can't enjoy myself with you in the mean time. You're going to leave me alone with your big brother tomorrow, aren't you?" Autumn demanded.

"No I'm not. I-- Ooh! That's so naughty!"

"Do you want me to stop?"

"No."

"Then say you'll leave me alone with Lance."

"No."

"Say it."

"No."

"Fine then, I guess you don't really want me to do what I was planning to do to you."

"And what's that?"

"Sorry."

"Come on, Autumn. Don't tease me like-- Oh my god!"

"I bet you weren't expecting *that!* There's plenty more where that came from. You know what you have to do to get it."

"Oh god, Autumn, I... I... I'll let you spend some time alone with Lance! There. I said it."

"Good girl. Now here's your reward."

"Oh god that feels good!"

Lance hurriedly yet quietly slipped away. He should have left sooner, but somehow the conversation, not meant for his ears, had drawn him in. He shivered as a chill went down his spine for some reason.

Chapter 6

Surrender

That conversation had revealed several things to him that surprised, no, shocked him. It came as no surprise that Autumn wanted to spend more time alone with him, but it sounded like she had more than just friendship in mind. He could deal with that; despite the fact that she was a pretty girl, he had the willpower to resist her charms, especially now that he was forewarned. He also had a confirmation that the two girls were more than just friends as well. He wasn't sure how that affected things; obviously Autumn liked both men and women, and if she was already making love to one of the people on the island...

That didn't make it right for him to give in. She was still only fourteen after all.

The most shocking part of the whole conversation, though, was the complete reversal of the girl's personality. With him, she was shy and timid. There in the hut with Cammy, however, she had been bold and even dominating. Could it be that he was wrong about her? Was she perhaps stronger than he had thought? Maybe it was just around him that she turned into a nervous, frightened little thing.

No, Cammy had mentioned before that she was that way at school too. So that meant that it was less about the effect Lance had on her than about the effect Cammy had on her.

He had heard that in a lot of cases, the dominant/submissive roles in a relationship were reversed in the bedroom. Maybe that was the case here. Most of the time Autumn was the submissive one, but when she made love with Cammy...

Made love with Cammy. That mental image returned. He could clearly imagine the two girls lying there in the hut, touching each other's bodies, exploring, fondling, groping...

He shivered again. That thought was having its effect on him physically. It wouldn't do to return to camp sporting an erection, so he had to do something about it. Fortunately, there was a source of cold water nearby. The biggest source of cold water on the planet, in fact. Right now, he felt he needed it. He made his way a couple hundred yards down the beach, then waded out into the sea.

When he returned to camp later that afternoon, the girls had left the hut and were sitting together in the sand talking cheerfully as if nothing had happened. Lance pretended that he hadn't overheard anything; now was really not the time to go into it.

Now that he knew that the girls were planning to leave him alone with Autumn, he wanted no part of it. Things were already spiraling out of control, and he didn't know if he would be able to control himself with

the girls plotting against him like that. He still wasn't sure just how far they intended to take things, and he couldn't afford to find out.

He watched Autumn in particular for the rest of the day, though he deliberately tried not to look like he was watching. After the incident in the tent, she seemed to have returned once more to her shy, reserved self. There was something sexy about the vulnerable little girl that he knew; perhaps it was some kind of protective instinct in him, passed on from a primitive age. On the other hand, he had to admit that the voice of the bold, self-confident, aggressive girl had also excited him.

For the rest of the day, she seemed to act a little more affectionate toward him. She offered to help out as he chipped away the rocks in another attempt to make a couple of spearheads, she talked with him more than she used to, and she sat next to him at dinner time. Afterward, she knelt behind him and rubbed his shoulders, which felt altogether too nice. Her new attitude touched him; maybe that conversation yesterday had been good for her, and she had begun to open up to him. On the other hand, he also knew that she hoped for another chance to get him alone, and maybe her new attitude was an attempt to wear down his defenses so that she could take things further the next time.

Or maybe he was being paranoid, and reading too much into it. He couldn't be sure she even knew how to play those games. At fourteen and likely inexperienced in love, she probably didn't even know what she was doing.

He noticed Cammy watching the proceedings with suspicion disguised as disinterest. She did a good job of hiding it, but Lance knew her too well. She had always been a little protective of her friend, and a touch possessive of her big brother. With the two of them acting more friendly toward one another than ever before, no doubt Cammy was getting worried.

She couldn't be any more worried than Lance, though. At least if something happened, it wouldn't be Cammy's fault. Lance had to be on his guard, though, or things could get out of hand very quickly.

When they retired to bed that night, Lance made sure that Cammy slept between them. At least with his sister, the temptation wasn't as strong, though in all honesty, he couldn't deny that he felt a little attracted to her as well. That much he could manage, and even if he couldn't, Cammy would never allow him to take advantage of her. With Autumn, he had his doubts. He lay on the mat for the longest time, staring up at the ceiling and wondering if he could stay strong enough to last until they were rescued.

When he awoke the next morning, he found that for all his refusal to be alone with Autumn, he had lost out in the end. Cammy was nowhere to be seen, but he found Autumn curled up against his chest. She slept quietly with a contented smile on her face.

He stared for a moment at her beautiful young, almost childlike features beneath a mop of disheveled yet nevertheless gorgeous hair, with a couple of strands falling over her face. Without thinking, he reached out and brushed them away.

"Mm," she hummed peacefully in that cute little voice of hers. Without waking, she slid her arm up his chest and took hold of his shoulder, snuggling up even closer to him.

That was almost too much for him to bear. He had fought valiantly against his own urges, trying so hard to keep from doing what he so desperately wanted to do, but now with the warmth and softness of the girl's nude body pressed up against his own, he found it difficult to restrain himself. He felt himself growing hard between the legs, not the first time it had happened but particularly inconvenient this time with Autumn right there with him. He couldn't afford to wake her or she would see the results of his unwholesome thoughts, nor could he afford to let her sleep because the longer she lay there the more his willpower slipped away. It just wasn't fair.

Autumn stirred, and he immediately closed his eyes. Maybe if he didn't move she wouldn't wake. Or if she did, maybe pretending to be asleep would keep her from being frightened by the sight of his erection. Or at the very least, she might just get up and leave him there, making no comment about it.

He could feel her rising up, but instead of standing, she merely reclined on one of her arms. Her other hand, which had been flung over his chest, now gently caressed him. Oh god! That felt too good. He could hardly stand it.

"Lance," she whispered, but he stubbornly refused to open his eyes. He couldn't afford to even speak to her right now; he didn't know what he would say. It would be best all around if she just got up and left him there in the hut. Let her go find Cammy, or eat breakfast, or something, *anything* but stay here alone with him and his mounting desires.

He felt a subtle shift in the position of her body, and realized almost too late that she was leaning in for a kiss. At the last second, he turned his head to the side. Autumn jumped, startled at the sudden movement.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Look, Autumn, I..."

"No, it was my fault," she replied. "I know you don't like me, so I figured this was my one and only chance, while you were asleep."

"Like you?" he asked. "That's not it at all. Autumn, I do like you. A lot. A lot more than is probably healthy, in fact. That's why you can't just go around kissing me like that. I'm afraid that these past few days, my thoughts toward you have been... well... anything but wholesome. If I were to let you kiss me, I don't think I could control myself."

"I don't see why that's a problem."

His eyes widened in shock. Did she mean what he thought she meant?

"Lance, I need you," said Autumn. "This is something I've wanted since long before we ended up here on the island. Maybe before we even started the sailing trip. I know I'm shy, and I don't do well around men. That's why it has to be you. I don't think I would be able to go through with it if it were anyone else."

"Autumn, I--"

She didn't let him finish. Despite his protests, she quickly leaned in and kissed him. She held her lips against his for the longest time, and although Lance tried to push her away, he found that his arms refused to move. As if his whole body conspired against him, he just lay there and let the kiss happen. And why not? His body had been wanting this for a long time; only his rational mind still refused. As he enjoyed the beauty of her face, the warmth of her body, and the exquisite taste of her lips, even his mind began to give in.

Eventually she drew back, and Lance felt a kind of disappointment that he knew he shouldn't. He gazed up into Autumn's beautiful eyes, and she smiled back at him. "Now wasn't that nice?" she breathed.

"Oh god, yes," he moaned. "That's just not fair."

She laughed. "I know. I'll do anything to get what I want, fair or not."

He suddenly realized what was happening. Autumn had switched her personality again, and now she was back to the strong-willed dominatrix that she had been with Cammy yesterday. The shy girl had disappeared entirely. That changed things a lot. That was something he hadn't even considered before. So far it had taken all of his willpower to resist the hesitant and uncertain Autumn. Against this new bold and self-confident Autumn, he didn't stand a chance.

He tried to push her away, but somehow his hand just ended up clinging to her hip. She smiled again, getting the wrong impression from his actions (or was it the right one?)

"You see?" she asked. "That's not so bad. You know you want this as much as I do."

"But we can't..."

"Who's going to stop us?"

"What if Cammy comes back?"

"She won't. I told her to take a long walk. A *long* walk. I'm sure she'll be gone all morning. I can be very persuasive when I want something this badly."

She certainly could! Lance knew he couldn't hold out much longer. She was just too damn beautiful, and soft, and downright sexy. He was certain that no man would be able to resist her charms, especially with her coming on to him so boldly.

She wasn't content to just lie there beside him, either. She climbed on top of him, pressing her body up against his. She took his hands and held them against the ground next to his head, effectively pinning him down.

"If it will make you feel any better, we can pretend you don't have a choice in the matter," she told him with a wink. "In fact, I'd be more than happy to go get what's left of the rope and tie you down. But we both know

that you're much too strong for me to overpower you, so I would never be able to do this if you weren't willing."

She lowered her head and kissed him again, and only in his mind did he attempt to put up a struggle. She had the sweetest lips and the softest skin. Even after days of hard work and sleeping on the ground, she was as soft as if she had just stepped out of the shower. Her breasts in particular felt particularly nice against his chest, but that was nothing compared to the sensation of the outer lips of her pussy rubbing against his rock-hard cock. He also found himself enjoying her smell, a surprisingly tantalizing fragrance under the circumstances. Everything about her drove him wild with lust.

"You know in the end you're going to give in to me," she told him as soon as she broke off the kiss. "Why fight it? Whether you take me now or later, it's still going to happen. Why not give in sooner and have that much longer to enjoy me?"

Why indeed? She made an excellent argument. If somehow with some superhuman effort he managed to resist her until they were rescued, everything would be fine. But if he lost out at the last day, he would be just as guilty as if he let her have her way with him right now. And if that were the case, why shouldn't he just surrender right now and enjoy it?

When she kissed him on the neck, a shiver ran down his spine, and he knew at that moment what he would do. Lance slipped his arms around her and held her tightly to him. She moaned with desire and continued to kiss him all over the neck and chest. As she did so, she rubbed her pussy up and down on his cock, leaving a moist trail as she grew more and more excited.

It really was too much for him. He pulled his hands out of her grasp, then rolled her over onto her back. This time he grabbed *her* hands and pinned them down as he attacked her face and neck with his lips.

"Looks like I don't have to tie you up after all," she giggled.

"Only if you want to prevent me from ravishing your body," he replied with a grin. Now that he had made his decision, he was going to enjoy himself.

"So you're going to ravish my body?" she asked.

"You bet I am."

"And if I screamed, there would be no one to hear it and come to my rescue."

"No one at all."

"Well then, shut up and do it already."

He laughed, then released her hands. He didn't let her sit up, though, because he immediately leaned down and took one of her nipples into his mouth. It was the first time he had tasted a girl that young, and it was

heavenly. There was still that little voice in the back of his mind telling him that this was wrong, but he had stopped listening to it. He let his lips and tongue run all over her cute little tits, turning the nipples nice and hard. At the same time, her breathing grew deeper and heavier as the pleasure caused her heart to race.

She held his head to her chest as she moaned. He attacked her chest with ferocity, licking and sucking and nibbling at her tasty little nipples. He would make sure she would never forget this day, and he knew he would never forget it either.

As Lance worked on her chest, Autumn reached down and took hold of his cock, sending a wave of pleasure through him. He wondered if she had ever touched one before. Probably not; this must all be so new to her. Despite that, she seemed to know what to do. Her hand gently but firmly stroked it up and down, increasing his excitement. Like the rest of her body, the hard work and harsh environment had not affected the softness of her hand. It had been so long since a woman had done that to him, he was in danger of losing it right now.

But however long it had been for him, it had been even longer for her. He wanted to give her the same pleasure. He reached out with one of his hands and placed it between her legs. She opened wide for him, and he let his fingers slide along the groove, which was already wet with her excitement. Her moans increased in pitch as he fondled her and she wriggled around on the ground; she had begun to lose control of her body just the same as he had.

He wanted to taste it, he decided. His lips returned to her chest, but this time he began to kiss down her body.

"Oh Lance!" she exclaimed in excited delight as she realized where he was headed. He took his time, wanting to draw it out as long as possible to let the pleasure build. He kissed her stomach, circling the navel. She had the cutest, flat little stomach; still just a little skinny in her youth, she was already a goddess.

Then he reached his goal, and let his tongue run up and down her slit. She squealed with the thrill of the sensation. He gently pried the lips apart with his fingers and flicked his tongue against the inside and causing her to groan. She tasted wonderful, and the thought that he was the first man to do this to her added to the thrill of it.

Then he realized, he was the first man to enjoy her body like this, but perhaps not the first person. His little sister Cammy had sampled the pleasure of Autumn's body. From the sounds of their lovemaking, he was pretty sure that Autumn had done this to Cammy, so probably it had happened the other way round as well.

For some reason, that excited him even more. The thought of the two girls engaged in such forbidden passion fueled his desire. Surprisingly, the fact that one of them was his sister made it all the better.

"But it's not fair of me to do nothing for you in return," Autumn told him.

"It's okay," he told her. "The feel of your hand is plenty."

"So you don't want me to return the favor?"

Lance lifted his head and stared at her. Did she really mean what he thought she meant?

"Lie down," she told him. Eager to find out how far she was willing to go, he spread out on his back. Autumn crawled over to him, then slipped one of her hands and one of her legs over him so that she positioned herself above him, facing the opposite direction.

"Now you may continue," she said, lowering her thigh toward his mouth. He eagerly accepted it, prying her open again and shoving it in deep. At the same time, he felt the most exquisite sensation on his cock, and realized that she was licking it.

For an inexperienced girl, she sure seemed to know what to do. Her tongue worked all over his extended member, teasing it delightfully and driving him into a passionate frenzy. It wasn't just out of a sense of obligation or fairness, either. She actually seemed eager to be doing it to him. Perhaps it was the same eagerness with which he reciprocated, a kind of excitement in their partners' pleasure. He could hardly believe that this shy little girl was actually doing this to him.

A moment later she shocked him again by wrapping her lips around it. He almost lost it right there, but somehow managed to keep control. No matter how much he wanted to let go, he knew she wouldn't appreciate that, and it might disgust, humiliate or even anger her. Maybe later he might bring it up for a future lovemaking session.

Lance noticed that in his own thoughts he had already accepted that this would be a permanent relationship, at least until they left the island. Maybe he would feel guilty about this first incident, but he also knew that once his desires took control again, he would lose all his willpower and surrender to Autumn's charms anew. She had conquered him completely.

The intense stimulation was having its effect on his body, and his hips began to move in time with Autumn's sucking. He moaned around her pussy as he lapped at it hungrily. Autumn giggled, partly at the effect she was producing, but no doubt partly just because of the almost ticklish sensation he was causing with his tongue. They both had heightened feelings in their nerves right now, which magnified even the lightest stimulation.

Considering how moist and loose she was right now, he figured it was time for the main event. He gently pushed her to the side, and she rolled over off of him. He sat up, then lay down next to her and kissed her on the forehead.

"Are you ready for me?" he asked tenderly, stroking her cheek.

"I've been ready since we first got on the boat," she smiled.

"And are you sure that this is what you want?"

She nodded. "But I want to be on top," she grinned.

Cheerfully, he lay down on his back. Though the ground wasn't particularly comfortable, the pleasure he would soon receive would more than make up for it. Besides, it would probably be more uncomfortable for Autumn to be underneath him, with his entire weight pressing down on her body. The springiness of a bed would help to mitigate that, but out here they had no such luxury. He didn't mind doing this for her, because to him, her little body hardly weighed a thing. Besides, he wanted her first time to be special, so he would do everything he could to make her enjoy it.

She climbed over him until she straddled his hips. Glancing down between them, she took his cock in her hand, eliciting another groan of pleasure from him. She positioned it at her opening, then slowly lowered herself onto it. She let out a sigh as she did so, as if all of her cares and worries since being stranded here on the island melted away as she finally achieved what she had been dreaming of.

Lance expected to hit a barrier as he slid inside of her; no doubt a shy girl like Autumn had never been with a man before. But instead, he felt only her youthful tightness enveloping him as he passed where it should have been.

"You're not a virgin?" he asked, surprised. Autumn turned red, and he realized how insensitive it had been for him to ask that.

"I'm sorry," he told her. "I just wasn't thinking. It wasn't right of me to ask something so personal."

"No, it's okay," she replied. "It really depends on your definition. If you really want to know, I broke my cherry last year by accident. I never told anyone, and I'd prefer not to talk about it."

"That's fine," he smiled. "But is this your first time?"

"This is the first time I've had sex with a boy," she nodded.

He noted her use of the qualifier, but didn't make a big deal of it. He knew the reason for that qualifier. He still found it a little hard to believe that his own baby sister had seduced her, despite having seen and heard the clear evidence himself. That would also be a conversation for another time. They would have to discuss it eventually; with Autumn having an affair with both of them, the three castaways would have to come to some kind of arrangement.

Right now, though, he didn't want to think about it. All he wanted was to relax and enjoy the delightful sensation of Autumn's hot body enclosing him.

Now he let himself go, thrusting upward into her. At the same time, she rocked her hips up and down on top of him. They soon found a rhythm, and let their primal instincts take over. At first Autumn sat up, kneeling over him. Lance gazed up at her beautiful face and reached out to fondle her chest. He ran his hands over them, squeezing her nipples between his fingers and massaging her little breasts. He loved the sight of her, the soft feel of her in his hands, and especially the tight, moist heat of her young pussy.

Then she laid her body down on top of him, mashing into his chest, and the warmth and softness all over his

torso felt even better. How could he have ever thought that he would refuse himself such an exquisite delight? Not every man had the opportunity to make love to a girl like Autumn; he was one of the fortunate few. Right now, he was half convinced that he was the luckiest man alive. This beautiful goddess had deigned to give herself to a lowly mortal like Lance, unworthy as he was of her.

"That's it," she moaned. "Pound me hard. I want it. I want it bad."

Again that slutty little dominatrix was taking over, which excited Lance even more. He thrust in hard and deep, causing her to squeal with pleasure. She felt so hot and tight around him, he could hardly believe it. A couple of days ago he could never have imagined that he would ever get this chance, and now here he was, drilling into her sweet, young body as she begged him for more.

She wasn't quite tall enough to be able to kiss him on the lips, but she kissed him all over the chest, passionately, desperately, even greedily. He loved the feel of her lips on him, the quick touches that added more stimulation to his already over-stimulated body. Whether she knew how much pleasure it gave him or simply did it instinctually he couldn't tell, but it really didn't matter.

A minute later he sensed a change in Autumn. Her body began to tense up as her moans increased in pitch and tempo, and he knew it wouldn't be long now.

"Oh god!" she cried out. "Oh Lance! I... I..." Then her words cut off in an orgasmic scream as she reached her climax. She gripped him tightly as the throes of her orgasm pounded into her, causing her body to shudder almost violently.

The sight, sound, and feel of her in such extreme pleasure, and the knowledge that he was the one causing it, set him off as well. He felt the building fire in his loins, and didn't even try to hold it back. He thrust as hard as he could into her and released his seed. His entire body jerked over and over again, the rhythm of their lovemaking turning into the uncontrolled spasms of ecstasy. They both wailed in pleasure as they hit the peak.

Then the pleasure dropped off, and they came down from that angelic high, holding each other tightly in a loving embrace. The violent spasms reduced to minor twitching as the remnants of their orgasms still shot electrically through them, then even that disappeared, leaving only the warm glow of satisfaction and love. Autumn lay her head down on Lance's chest with a happy smile, and he held her to him, expecting at any moment to feel the guilt he had predicted, but finding instead only love for this sweet young girl.

"Autumn," he whispered.

"Mm?"

"How do you feel?"

"Happy. I'm so happy, Lance. I've wanted this for so long, and now it's finally happened to me."

"So you're not bothered by the fact that I'm eleven years older than you, and that in any civilized society I could go to jail for what we just did?"

"I won't tell anyone if you don't," she smiled.

He laughed, then kissed her on the forehead.

They held each other like that for a while longer, both exhausted and both content. Autumn even fell asleep like that, and Lance lay there caressing her back with his hands, no longer worried about making a mistake, because he had already made it, and it turned out to be the best thing that had ever happened to him. He began to feel drowsy himself, and decided not to fight it. He closed his eyes and prepared to sleep.

A few minutes later he heard something moving outside the hut, but through his groggy and exhausted haze he didn't think about what it meant. Only when he heard a gasp at the entrance did he open his eyes, to see his sister Cammy standing there, eyes wide and a hand over her mouth.

Chapter 7

Fulfillment

Cammy disappeared a moment later, and they could hear her footsteps in the sand as she dashed off into the distance. Lance sat up, wondering what he should do. He glanced down at Autumn, who lay there staring up at him, a worried look on her face.

"Autumn," he told her gently. "I need to go have a talk with Cammy, big brother to little sister. You might have convinced her to go for a long walk, but I don't think she was expecting to see this when she came back."

Autumn nodded, so he rose to his feet and left the hut. He turned to face the direction she had run, and spotted her a hundred yards down the beach, sitting in the sand and staring out into the blue ocean. She didn't seem to be going anywhere, so he took a quick dip in the lagoon to clean himself off before approaching her. He strode down the beach, trying to think of what he would tell her. From what he had overheard between the two girls earlier, Cammy hadn't really been in favor of this relationship. Now Lance had betrayed her, and he needed to set things right. Unfortunately, he didn't know any way to do it without making either Autumn or Cammy hate him.

Cammy was his sister. That was the most important thing. He decided that if he had to choose between the two girls, he would always choose his family.

As he approached her, she merely continued to stare out to sea. He sat down beside her, then after a moment of hesitation, slipped an arm around her shoulders.

"Cammy," he said tenderly. "I'm sorry. I didn't know this would bother you, or I would never have done it."

"It's okay," she replied. "I knew it was bound to happen eventually; I just didn't think it would be so soon."

"Bound to happen?"

"I mean, we've been here long enough that we have to start wondering if we'll ever get rescued. Maybe we won't. And you're the only boy and girl on the island who aren't related, so, well..."

Lance sighed. "You're absolutely right, Cammy. I was starting to feel a little lonely, and you know how Autumn feels about me, so I guess it was kind of natural for it to happen."

"Yeah, Autumn mentioned to me yesterday that she wanted me to make myself scarce so that she could have a chance to spend some time alone with you. Honestly, I didn't think it would go this far. At least, not yet."

"Neither did I."

"Look, I don't want to make it sound like I'm against it. You two have found someone, and I'm happy for you. Especially for Autumn, because she's been in love before, but she's never had anyone return that love. It's just that... well, what if we don't get rescued? I can never have the same thing, can I?"

"Don't say that, Cammy. I'm sure we'll be home in a week or two, and then one of these days some nice boy will--"

"Don't," she insisted.

"What?"

"Don't patronize me. I don't want to hear about 'some nice boy' or 'one of these days.' Lance, I just need..."

She closed her eyes and hung her head, and he could see the tears running down her cheeks. Lance drew her in to him and hugged her tightly.

"Cammy, I love you," he told her. "I can't stand to see you unhappy. Please tell me what's bothering you, and if it's in my power to fix it, I will. I'm your big brother, remember? So let me look after you."

She lifted her head and gazed up at him with tear-filled eyes. "Lance," she said. "I need to be loved *now*, not some time in the future."

"I do love you," he insisted.

"No, I don't mean like that. I don't want to feel left out. If you want to be with Autumn, that's okay, but I want to be included in that."

His eyes went wide with shock. "Cammy," he gasped. "Do you realize what you're asking?"

She nodded, then leaned in and kissed him on the lips. For a moment he thought of pulling back, of rejecting her, but against his better judgment he let it happen. He had only a moment of hesitation, then he let himself relax and enjoy the feel of her lips. There was none of the disgust that he thought he might experience at the thought of kissing his sister, only love and passion. Maybe it was because he had always felt especially close to her after learning of her nearly terminal illness. Maybe he just felt protective of her as her big brother, and his desire to see her happy overwhelmed any feelings of impropriety he might have had. Or maybe just seeing her beautiful nude body these past few days had allowed a certain attraction toward her to awaken in him.

He had one last qualm though, so he drew back and gazed into her eyes. "Cammy," he said tenderly. "Are you sure about this? Doesn't it bother you that I'm your brother?"

"So what? The reason there are laws against that kind of relationship is because of the consequences if we were to have children. But after the treatment for my cancer, I can't have children anymore."

Lance had known all about that, but he had never spoken with her about it because he thought it might be

painful for her to be reminded of the fact. "I'm sorry, Cammy," he said.

"Don't be sorry. It doesn't bother me. Frankly, the thought of going through childbirth scares me. Besides, because of this, I can be with you without worrying about it. Please, Lance. This is what I want."

He leaned in and kissed her again, wrapping his arms around her and holding her body to his. Cammy, his sister, the girl he had loved for fifteen years. Especially after nearly losing her, twice, he knew he would do anything for her, anything to make her happy. It no longer mattered what happened to him, as long as he could see the smile on her face and know that he had given it to her.

He was still a little overwhelmed by everything that had happened. He had just finished making love to Autumn, the sweetest little girl he had ever known, and now his own sister wanted the same treatment. And he wanted them both. Did that make him some kind of lecherous pervert, or just the luckiest man in the world?

He didn't care. All that mattered now was giving Cammy what she wanted.

"Lie down," he told her. Cammy lay on the beach, and Lance reclined beside her. It was still too soon after his tryst with Autumn for him to be able to give her everything she wanted, but at least he could worship her body with his hands and his mouth. Still somewhat hesitantly, he reached down and placed a hand on her stomach. Cammy sighed and closed her eyes. Lance began to move his hand slowly over her body, caressing her gently and tenderly, and letting himself enjoy the feeling of her soft skin. Admittedly, his hands were a little rough after all of the manual labor of the past few days, but his sister didn't seem to mind.

He focused on her stomach at first, rubbing her there in a kind of massage that helped to relax her and ease the tension out of her body. He let his hand move in ever-increasing circles, until he brushed against the bottom of her breasts. She simply smiled and breathed in deeply.

This was it, the point of no return. Up till now, everything he had done to her, aside from those kisses, had been nothing that a big brother wasn't supposed to do with his sister. If he continued, he would be crossing a line, and could never return.

"Lance," said Cammy breathily.

He slid his hand over her breast and gently kneaded it between his fingers, eliciting another sigh from her. From the smile on her face, he could tell that she really enjoyed it. He enjoyed it too, just knowing that he was doing something special for the girl he loved most in the world.

Yes, he loved her more than he loved anyone. He could see that now. Maybe one time it had been only as a sister. Then that love had strengthened every time he visited her in the hospital, every time he wondered if it would be the last time he would see her alive. Now here on the island, his love for her had matured.

He leaned over and kissed her on the chest, just below the neck, causing her to smile and hum in delight. He continued to kiss her all over her neck, shoulders, and chest as his hand massaged her breast tenderly. Then

he let his hand slip lower, and she sucked in her breath, realizing where he headed. Lance was not quite up to the task of giving her everything she wanted just yet, but at least he could do with his hands what he couldn't do with the rest of his body, then finish the job later.

When he reached her sensitive spot, Cammy cried out. She was already damp down there just from the anticipation, and Lance gently teased her with his fingers, causing her to squirm. He stared down at her pretty face, with her eyes closed and an open-mouthed smile on her lips as she breathed in deeply, and he thought he had never seen such a beautiful sight. Then she opened her eyes and gazed up at him with adoration, and he realized that this sight was even more beautiful.

Lance happened to catch some movement out of the corner of his eye. He glanced up and saw Autumn there, half-hidden behind a tree. She stood there with a look of hurt on her face. Cammy turned and saw her as well. For a few seconds, brother and sister stared at their friend, then Autumn burst into tears and dashed off into the jungle.

"Oh no," said Cammy. "I didn't want..."

"Come on," Lance told her. "We need to settle this once and for all." He helped Cammy to her feet, then took her hand and followed the fleeing Autumn back toward the camp. Ahead of them, the girl ducked into the hut. Lance and Cammy slowed their pace; she was going nowhere after all.

When they reached the hut, they turned the corner and saw her sitting on the floor with her legs pulled up to her chest and her head buried in her knees weeping. Lance sat down on one side of her and Cammy on the other.

"Lance, how could you?" Autumn sobbed. "I loved you. I trusted you. And now I find out..."

"Autumn," he told her gently. "I still love you. Don't think of this as some kind of affair--"

"I just want to feel needed. But you two are brother and sister, so you love each other already, and now you don't need me any more."

"Is that what you think?" Cammy asked, putting an arm around her shoulder. "Of course we need you! Isn't that right, Lance?"

"Absolutely. Autumn, you once told me that here on the island we make our own rules. So why can't we have a rule that says that a man can love two women at once? Besides, I happen to know something that you two have been keeping secret from me. I saw you kissing in the lagoon the other day, and I overheard you in the hut later. So I'm no more guilty of cheating on you two than you are of cheating on me."

"You know about that?" asked Autumn.

"Yes. And from what I heard, it sounds like there's no reason for anyone to be jealous. Let's just get everything out in the open. No more secrets. I don't want anyone to go behind anyone's back any more; let's

just all agree to love each other."

"Really? You mean, you don't mind if Cammy and I..."

"Actually, it's a real turn-on. The other day I had to go dunk myself in the ocean after hearing you two in the hut."

Autumn actually giggled at that.

"So I think that if all three of us are willing," said Cammy, "we should all do it together."

Autumn smiled and wiped away the tears from her eyes. "I guess that's all right," she said. "I mean, I love you both, and I don't want to choose between you."

"You don't have to," Cammy told her. She leaned in and kissed her friend on the lips. It was tender and sweet, and Lance nearly gasped at the sight. Despite the short interval since his last orgasm, he found himself growing erect again.

When the kiss ended, Cammy glanced down and giggled. "I can see Lance likes this arrangement," she said. She reached out and took hold of it, sending a shiver of excitement through his body at the touch.

"Feels nice, doesn't it?" asked Autumn.

"Oh yeah," said Lance.

"Oh yeah," said Cammy.

Autumn giggled, then leaned in and whispered something in her friend's ear. Cammy's eyes grew wide as a grin spread onto her face. Then she did something that shocked Lance; she leaned down and took him into her mouth.

"Oh shit!" Lance moaned in delirious pleasure. Cammy sucked on it, sending electric thrills through him with every motion. He could hardly believe it was his little sister doing this to him. He had seen her sick and nearly lifeless in the hospital, he had seen her vivacious and energetic after her recuperation, but he had never seen this side of her. The complete transformation added another level of excitement to the pleasure.

Autumn, meanwhile, knelt behind Cammy and pressed her body up against her back. She reached forward and groped Cammy's breasts, teasing them in much the same way Lance had earlier. He watched the girls' lesbian play in delight, not even trying to hide his reaction from the girls. If not for his recent orgasm he probably would have climaxed right there in Cammy's mouth just from the sight of it.

Autumn let one of her hands slide down Cammy's body until she slipped it onto her young mound, causing his sister to squeal in pleasure with the sudden sensation. Lance had begun to warm her up, but now Autumn was continuing where he had left off. She massaged between Cammy's legs with much more skill than Lance had shown earlier; naturally she had more experience with that sort of thing and knew what felt good.

Cammy moaned at the sensation, her body beginning to squirm with her friend's ministrations.

"I love it when you do that to me, Autumn," Cammy gasped, taking her mouth off of her big brother's cock long enough to say the words.

"I know," Autumn replied. "I can get you to do anything by doing this to you. Cammy's my little sex slave."

So the sexy vixen Autumn was back, taking control of the lovemaking. Lance found that tremendously erotic, especially now with all three of them involved. Just watching Autumn dominate his sister thrilled him beyond belief, but the added stimulation of Cammy's mouth wrapped around his cock made it that much better.

Autumn leaned down and kissed Cammy on the neck, still massaging her body. The three of them were already getting into a rhythm, with Cammy's body rocking forward and back as Autumn rubbed her between the legs, and Autumn matching her movements to her friend's. Cammy's ministrations on her big brother fell into that same pattern, and Lance moaned with every bob of his little sister's head.

He didn't know how much more of this he could take. Were it not for his tryst with Autumn earlier that day, he would already have lost it. Even now, the thrill of the forbidden passion between his sister and himself, coupled with the erotic sight of the two girls before him and the intensely pleasurable physical stimulation on the most sensitive part of his body, threatened to tip him over the edge.

He wondered if Cammy would mind. She had been the one to instigate this after all. She had practically begged him for this opportunity. But he also knew that if he lost control right now, he wouldn't give her what she truly needed. And now that he thought of it, he needed it just as badly.

"Cammy," he groaned, unable to control the lust in his own voice. "I want to... I want to..."

His sister lifted her head, giving him a moment of relief. "You want to what?" she asked with a teasing smile.

"I'll bet I can guess," Autumn answered for him. "He wants to shove that long, hot cock of his right up your pussy. He wants to drill you till you beg for mercy. He wants to--"

"I get the idea," Cammy grinned, cutting her off. "Lance dear, is that what you want to do?" she asked in a playfully sweet voice.

"Oh yeah," he gasped, too excited to even attempt to be as eloquent as Autumn.

"Well then, I guess I'd better let you do it then." She rose up and brought one leg over his waist. Lance leaned back on his hands, giving her plenty of room to maneuver. He wasn't sure how she wanted to do this, but was happy to oblige her whatever her desires.

"Lie down," she told him gently.

"That's no way to talk to your brother," Autumn grinned. "Do it like this. Get down on the ground!" she

barked at Lance.

He laughed, then lay back. Cammy scooted up so that she knelt above his hips, her beautiful young pussy just inches above his engorged cock. Even the very anticipation of what was about to happen sent a shiver through his body.

"May I do the honors?" asked Autumn. Not waiting for an answer, she took Lance's cock in her hand and pointed it up toward his little sister's waiting slit. Cammy gently lowered herself toward it.

Lance gasped at the first contact, not only from the physical sensation but from the thrill of having now moved past the point of no return. As he entered her, he marveled at the thought that this was his own baby sister that he was doing this to. Until the island, he had never even had the slightest inclination toward a sexual relationship with her, and now only a few days later he was engaging in a deliciously depraved act with her. Normally he was pretty conservative with his sexuality, but now he found that very depravity exciting and erotic.

Like Autumn, Cammy was no virgin, he discovered. He refrained from asking her about it; the question might embarrass her, and truth be told, the idea of her as being sexually experienced also turned him on, and he preferred his fantasies to the reality he would no doubt discover if he asked her about it.

With his cock buried deep inside her, he gazed up at her with love and adoration. There was a certain liberating feeling in finally doing this with her; no more would he have to keep his desires in check, or spend time alone with his thoughts, or take a cold dip in the ocean. And because he loved Cammy so much, he felt a kind of fulfillment, as if this were always meant to be.

He let his sister take over, rocking up and down on her hips and finding that rhythm again. He relaxed and let it happen, delighting in the feel of her warm, moist body wrapped around him. His own hips rose up of their own accord to join in the sensual dance, thrusting over and over, deeper and deeper, inside of her.

Autumn let her hands slide all over Cammy's body, rubbing her and groping her all over but focusing especially on her more intimate spots. She leaned in and gave Cammy an open-mouthed kiss, and Lance watched in amazement and delight as their tongues intertwined. Then Autumn drew back and began to kiss down Cammy's body, first her chin, then her neck, then her upper chest. She turned her head to the side and glanced at Lance, grinning as she brought her face up next to Cammy's breast. Giving him a perfect view, she opened her mouth and ran her tongue over the nipple.

He groaned at the sight, and both girls giggled at his reaction. There was something intensely beautiful and delightfully naughty about two girls pleasuring each other's bodies like that. Lance had seen his share of pictures on the internet, and he knew a couple of women who leaned that way, but never had he seen it right there in front of him like that.

Autumn had more in mind, though. She gently took the nipple between her teeth and nibbled on it, eliciting a squeal of pleasure from Cammy. Lance would have thought it would hurt, but he supposed that if Autumn were really gentle, even the mild pain could add to the intensity of the sensation. She let her mouth wander

lower, kissing and licking down Cammy's body, past her ribcage, past her stomach, and finally to the focus of their lovemaking. Lance felt her tongue brush against the shaft of his cock, running from the base right up to the point where it disappeared inside his little sister, and then continuing on along Cammy's body. Cammy squealed again as Autumn apparently reached that extremely sensitive point.

"Oh god, that feels good!" Cammy moaned. "I love it! Fuck me, big brother!"

"Yeah, fuck her, big brother," Autumn giggled.

The nasty talk fueled his desire, and he pounded into her even harder. Autumn had to move back to keep her head from being crushed between the two of them, but she knelt behind Cammy instead, letting her hands return to their original positions. She rubbed her friend's clit furiously as Lance thrust deeply inside her.

The double stimulation was too much for Cammy, who screamed in ecstasy and shook with an intense orgasm. Lance watched as it wracked her body with extreme pleasure. He had seen a number of erotic sights these past few days, but nothing could compare to the vision of his baby sister in the throes of her climax, and knowing that he was at least in part responsible for it.

That sight pushed him over the edge too. His own body tensed up and he gave one final thrust, shoving impossibly deep into her body and literally lifting both girls off of the ground. His cock twitched inside of her, spurting his seed for the second time that day. It was every bit as intense as the first time.

Then his strength gave out, and his hips slammed back down on the ground. The two of them continued to rock together for a few seconds as they gradually came down from the high. Lance gasped in his breaths until his heart slowed enough that he could breathe normally.

Cammy lay down on top of him, resting her head against his chest and purring with contentment. Autumn lay next to them, reaching out with one hand and tenderly brushing away Cammy's mussed hair from her face. She leaned in and gave her a gentle kiss on the cheek, then lay down once more beside them and hugged them both.

"So that's it then," sighed Lance. "I can't believe how wonderful it feels to have both of you. I love you both more than you could possibly imagine."

"I imagine I love you just as much," Cammy smiled. "So I take it this doesn't bother you any more, Autumn?"

"As long as Lance is man enough to handle both of our needs, I'm very happy about this arrangement."

"Any time he's not up to it, I'll take care of you," Cammy winked.

There was nothing more to be said, so the three of them lay together in each other's arms, just enjoying the warmth and closeness of their bodies. Lance knew that this kind of activity would be frowned upon in the civilized world, but he didn't care. For now, they had the island, their own private paradise, where they were

free to love each other the way they wanted.

Life after that was wonderful. Now that they had gotten over their moral hangups, they let themselves love each other without guilt or hesitation. Sometimes one of the three would give the other two some private time together, but more often all three were included in their lovemaking. Lance was thrilled to be able to make love to two gorgeous girls at once, but sometimes he just liked to watch the two of them engage in Sapphic delight. Autumn seemed especially happy, and her shyness was quickly wearing down. She even started flirting with him, and he found her inexperienced attempts amusing yet also sexy. Cammy, playful as always, got a lot more physical, and at least once a day he found himself wrestling with her, usually resulting in the two of them making love. Autumn usually joined in somewhere in the middle, and they were more than happy to include her.

Sometimes he just lay in the sun, watching the girls wash each other's backs under the waterfall. Sometimes they frolicked in the lagoon, or bathed in the ocean.

There was still plenty of work to do, but the girls were eager to help out, especially if it meant giving Lance more leisure time to spend with them. Sometimes their sexual play was more exhausting than the work itself, so every night they slept well, despite having only a piece of sail cloth between them and the ground. They did their chores in the morning before it got too warm, then spent all afternoon swimming or playing or having sex, then sat out on the beach each night and watched the stars come out.

Autumn was the first to make a decent spearhead, so they fashioned a spear from a straight stick and gave fishing a try. It took a couple of days of practice before their first catch, but eventually they managed to do it, so they added fish to the menu, which suited Lance just fine; he was getting tired of rabbit.

The days passed surprisingly quickly, filled with fun and excitement rather than fear and despair. Despite all of the things they lacked, they had made a home here. Over the next couple of weeks, their cares and worries slowly dwindled until the three castaways nearly forgot that there was another world out there at all.

Three weeks after their arrival almost to the day, Lance woke up one morning and stared out to sea. Far off on the horizon he spied a black speck, moving slowly north. His eyes went wide as he realized it was a ship!

He hurried and woke the girls, who dashed out to the beach to see it. From its constant motion, it obviously hadn't seen them. No doubt it would require some kind of signal to get its attention. Lance dashed back to camp and retrieved the flare gun. He loaded it, then headed back to the beach. He held it in the air and prepared to fire.

Before pulling the trigger, however, he happened to glance at Autumn, and was surprised to see a look of regret on her face. He understood the reason for that look because he felt somewhat the same way himself. Returning to civilization meant returning to its rules, where a twenty-five-year-old man could not make love to a fourteen-year-old girl, where a brother could not make love to a sister, where a man could only love one woman at a time, and where two teenage girls who loved each other would have to face daily prejudice and

scorn. Autumn had finally realized her dream, and all too soon the dream had to end.

He turned to Cammy and saw the same look in her eyes. Yes, returning to civilization meant giving up the happiness they had found here. That ship could take them back to the world of soft beds, varied cuisine, hot showers, water faucets, roads, entertainment, and money. But despite their limited possessions and resources, despite the heat of the sun and hard work required just to stay alive, this was their own private tropical paradise, and leaving it meant leaving behind happy times and even, in a way, each other. That ship might rescue them from the island, but it would also take them away from some of the best times they had ever had.

Lance smiled, then set the gun down on the sand. Maybe there would be another ship in a couple of weeks. Maybe not. In the mean time, they weren't in any particular hurry to leave. He put his arms around the girls, then the three of them sat down on the beach and watched the ship slowly sail away into the distance.

THE END

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