

Sara felt the moment the wave caught the board and began pulling it backwards. Grabbing the sides of the board, she thrust herself up into a crouch, wobbling crazily as she slid her feet into position. Arms outstretched, she struggled to balance as the board pitched under her.

Then, in a magical moment, she found her balance. The board steadied and rose, carried on the wave. She was floating. Flying. Laughter bubbled in her like champagne and she turned her face up to the sun.

Even her less-than-graceful dismount from the board in the shallows did nothing to dampen her enthusiasm. "I did it!" she shouted when Drew splashed toward her.

"You did it." His grin was as broad as hers felt, and he put his arm around her waist and hugged her to him as they waded in to the shore.

"I want to do it again," she said.

"Let's rest a minute." He sat on the sand and unsnapped the leash from his ankle.

She dropped beside him onto the wet sand and unleashed her board also, then lay on her back, one hand shielding her eyes from the bright sunlight. "I am tired," she said. "But thrilled."

Drew stretched out beside her, their bodies almost but not quite touching. "You did great," he said. "Now that you've got the balance thing figured out, you'll learn fast."

"Do you think I'll be able to compete in the tournament Saturday?"

"Sure. There's a 'new surfers' division. You'll do fine in that."

"I can't wait." She rolled onto her stomach and propped herself on her elbows, looking down at him. "Thank you for teaching me. This is so much fun, being here with you like this."

"I'm enjoying it, too." His eyes met hers, the amusement she'd seen there earlier replaced by frank interest and desire. At least, the thought that's what the look said. She was out of practice at reading men. "So...no woman in your life?" She tried to sound casual, though her stomach was doing somersaults as she spoke. "Girlfriend? Significant other?"

He shook his head. "I've been so involved with Gus and the business, I haven't made time to date."

A sigh of relief escaped her. "I know what you mean."

"What about you?" he asked. "Any boyfriends back in LA?"

She shook her head. "No time." She'd told herself she'd date later, when the business was really secure and she could afford to take more time off. But the business kept growing and there was always more to do. Then one day she'd looked up and she was twenty-six and more and more of her friends were married or living with someone or otherwise involved in serious relationships, while she couldn't remember the last name of the last guy she'd dated.

"Sounds like we've both been working hard," he said, moving in closer. The look he gave her warmed her in a way the sun could not and burned away any shyness or hesitation that remained between them.

She leaned closer, her breast brushing his side, one hand braced on his arm. "I've been wanting all morning to kiss you," she whispered. "I don't want to wait anymore."

She lowered her lips to his and his arms came up to encircle her, pulling her down onto him. She angled her mouth more firmly against his and threaded her fingers through his hair. His lips were full and firm against hers, caressing sensitive nerve endings and sending waves of pleasure through her.

She opened her mouth, inviting his tongue, reveling in the feel of him, tasting of sweetness and salt. He smelled of seawater, sand and clean sweat, and his skin beneath her hands was rough with sand.

He smoothed his hands down her back, caressing her skin, lingering over the indentation at the bottom of her spine, shaping his fingers to her buttocks and squeezing gently. A sharp ache of desire welled within her, making her catch her breath at its intensity. She could not remember when any man had affected her this way.

Hands on either side of her hips, he pulled her tight against him, letting her feel the fullness of his erection, pressing against her own throbbing sex until a soft moan escaped her. She felt drunk with desire, as free and energized as she had in those few moments of riding the wave.

She broke the kiss and smiled down at Drew. "I like your idea of resting up," she said.

He reached up and brushed her hair back from her forehead. "I like you," he said. "And I want to see a lot more of you."

"I want to see a lot more of you." She emphasized the words with a bump and grind movement against him.

"Yeah." His voice was rough with desire. He smoothed his hands across her buttocks again. "I'd suggest we go back to my place right now, but Grandpa's liable to walk in any time."

"And Candy's working back at our beach house." Plus, Sara had never liked to bring guys back to a place she shared with roommates. It was a personal rule of hers. Reluctantly, she pushed herself off of him and sat in the sand.

He sat beside her and massaged her shoulder. "There's something to be said for anticipation." He lifted her hair and kissed the back of her neck, sending another wave of desire straight to her sex.

"Mmmm." She closed her eyes and leaned against him. "Should we go back into the water?"

He glanced out at the ocean. "Waves are getting a little rough," he said.

For the first time, she noticed that the wind had picked up, ruffling her hair and blowing sand over them. The swells were

larger now, breaking roughly into whitewater, tangles of seaweed bobbing among the foam. "Is a storm coming?" she asked.

He glanced at the sky, where the sun still shone. "Just a little afternoon turbulence."

She glanced at the sky also, and was surprised to find the sun considerably lower toward the horizon. "What time is it?" she asked.

He checked his watch. "It's after two. No wonder I'm starved." He rose and offered her his hand. "Come back to the shop with me. I need to see how things are going and we can grab some lunch."

"I really need to check in with my office," she said. Knowing Candy was slaving away back at the beach house made her feel guilty. She couldn't remember the last time she'd left Uncle Spence to his own devices so long. The thought made her stomach twist. He was probably having a panic attack.

They collected their surf boards and walked back toward the more populated area of the shore. "I should probably try to get some work done this afternoon, too," Drew said, sounding reluctant.

"We could get together again tonight," she said. "And I should really be trying to get more points for the contest."

"We could check out the carnival," Drew said. "There are games and stuff there where I think you can win points."

"I'd love that." She squeezed his arm, enjoying the feel of the hard muscle of his bicep. "Ellie and Candy said something about a photo scavenger hunt on for tonight, too."

"A photo scavenger hunt?"

"You have to take pictures of certain things - like a girl in a purple bikini or a guy with a snake tattoo - I don't really know what, exactly. They're supposed to post a list tonight."

He laughed. "I'm game." He glanced at her. "As long as we can find some time to be alone, too."

She grinned. "I think that can definitely be arranged." Even if she had to hang a Do Not Disturb sign on her door in the beach house, she was determined to get Drew alone - and naked - before too many hours had passed.