

Ryz'n woke at six-thirty, an hour later than usual. This was her last day of vacation, so she took advantage by sleeping in an hour. Tomorrow, GRT would start to work in earnest. In the mirror, she noticed her eyes were red and swollen. The cool saltwater would help take care of that. She threw off Nicky's legion baseball inner shirt and stepped into one of her old, lightly shrunken, green M&L one-piece swimsuits that she pulled from the chest of drawers. Even though the suit had shrunken over the years, the suit was still one of her favorites because the green front featured all of M&L's school colors with a one-inch diagonal white stripe, bordered on either side by two, one-inch yellow diagonal stripes. The stripes ran across the suit from her left armpit to the hem on her right thigh. She chose her wrap-around shades to hide her bleary eyes. Ryz'n slipped into her short, belted, bright yellow, terrycloth, beach jacket, stepped into her flip-flops and grabbed an extra large beach towel. She stopped by the bathroom on her way downstairs. Anxious to swim, she hungered to do something physical to help her mind erase her problems, if only temporarily.

Normally, she would stop in the kitchen to visit with her Mom and maybe drink some juice, but with her mother already gone, after consuming a glass of water, she hustled down the two flights of stairs to exit from the basement, rather than use the front porch and the outside staircase. Eager to swim, Ry fairly touched the basement floor as she skipped lightly over it. However, she stubbed her toe on something, which arrested her flight. Looking in the interior dimness of the late dawn to see what it could be, she found some old bag. She pushed her shades back up onto the crown of her head. Her gaze rose from the floor to the couch. It was——Nicky! Incredulous, she rushed over, falling upon him.

"Nicholas! Oh Baby, are you all right? I was so worried, SO WORRIED." Her husband woke by fits and starts.

"Hunh? Ry? Yeah, I guess so. I—"

She peppered him with kisses.

"Whoa, Whoa! Lemme breathe a second," he begged. She backed off, but kept her arms around his neck.

"Whew! I uh—" Nick smacked his lips a couple times. Ryz'n was all hugs and kisses. When she let up finally, she asked what she could do for him.

"You hungry, Baby, thirsty? I'm a pretty good cook, you know? I'll fix ya whatever ya want."

"Well, have you eaten? I mean, were you going to eat?"

"Well, I was just going for my morning swim, but that's OK." She opened her terrycloth beach robe to reveal her colorful school swimsuit. He nodded, still wakeful.

"But you haven't had breakfast?"

"No, I usually eat after I swim."

"Well, shoot! Let's do that then." He forced a grin. "Swim first and then eat."

"Are you sure? I swim for forty-five minutes?"

Out at Home

“Yeah, that’s great. I got my suit and a towel, too, hangin’ on the line outside there, but I could sure use some water, though. I am kind o’ thirsty.”

“OK, just stay there and I’ll get ya some. But I swim pretty hard though.”

“That’s OK, just let me use the men’s room and put on my trunks. Be right with ya.”

“I’ll get your suit for ya and some cold water, too.” As Nick dragged himself off the couch, she bounded upstairs. Ryz’n knew he hadn’t really fully understood what his wife had meant by “swim pretty hard,” however he would learn. Before he could gather himself to enter the bathroom, she had returned from the kitchen with the ice water as promised. Ryz’n handed him the drink. Much to her satisfaction, he downed it without pausing.

“Thanks, I really needed that!”

“You’re welcome, Sweetie. Seems the least I could do under the circumstances.”

Nick handed her the empty, cold glass and blandly waved her off as he headed for the bathroom.

“Just a minute, Baby,” she pleaded. “I wanna apologize.” He stopped and turned his head.

“What for?”

“What for?” *For everything!* For blowing up the other night, coming down here without you and then screwing up the phone yesterday by accident so that it was off the hook all day.”

“Oh, that it explains those busy signals. Anh fahgeddabowdid. I ain’t thinkin’ of divorcin’ ya.”

She smiled. “Well, that’s a relief.”

“I gotta get my suit now.”

“No Nicky, I’ll get it. You just take it easy, Sweetie.”

Ryz’n bounced out the basement door and returned in a flash with his suit and a towel. She handed the items to him and kissed him on the cheek. Then, she stepped back, holding her hands behind her back, resting them on top of her upturned-rump, as if that were necessary to keep her hands to herself. She was so excited she could not keep from bounding up and down on the balls of her feet.

“Look, I’ll be right out, OK? Just need a minute.” He winked, showing her there were no hard feelings about anything.

The happy, young bride nodded excitedly. She recalled what her mother had said about Ry’s smothering presence over him, following him even to the bathroom. She backed off and watched him walk as lightly as a panther into the privy. His haunches moved languidly but powerfully, as she rose up and down on the balls of her feet, full of energy. She took the opportunity to bound upstairs and drop a couple drips of honey on her tongue. Then she hurried back downstairs to wait for him. When he came out, wearing his boxer style swim trunks, his eyes lit up at the sight of her.

“Say, I almost forgot your present!” He snapped his fingers excitedly.

“Present? You’re present enough for me, Nicky.” Ooh, she *was* laying it on thick; nevertheless, Ryz’n felt as though she fairly glowed with her sappy response.

Love on the Beach

“Well, here. This is for you. I mean, *it is your birthday*, isn’t it, Ry? A little late, maybe.” Dixie handed her a small gift-wrapped box.

“Why—when did you get this?” She opened the tiny box and extracted a gold locket.

“Oh, the morning after you came down here, picked it up from Carp’s Jewelry Store in Harlow Heights. Look at the back. She read the inscription:

Ry—

Happy 22nd

Nick

With that brief inscription, Ry instinctively understood Nicky, in his own way, was trying to acknowledge his acceptance of who he was—Nick and not Dixie—and that she was a special person in his life now. This was a big step for him, yes, a big step.

“Oh Nicky. You didn’t have to. Oh, I just love it to death. The best part is you’ve got the names right. You remembered our talk.” He smiled lamely.

She hugged and kissed him hard. She was thinking that maybe she should offer to give herself to him right now. And she would have, had he signed the inscription “From Your Loving Husband” or addressed it to his “Beloved Wife.” At that thought, Ryz’n squeezed him so hard she cracked his back. In the liberating give and take of this joyous reunion, he made the mistake of telling Ryz’n of his previous back-cracking by Trish Allein.

Ryz’n backed off somberly. This was not the time to argue. She planned to have a talk with him about his associations with other females. After all, they were married and he did not seem to understand that, but this was not the time to tell him. She recovered her glad groove and hid her disappointment.

“Sorry to squeeze you so hard, Sweetie. I’m just so glad to see ya. I was beginning to think your return had just been a beautiful dream and none of it was real.” Hearing her own flat words, she noticed her voice lacked the excitement she had displayed just before he had told her about Trish.

“Yeah, I know what ya mean. Yesterday was a real nightmare.”

“Really? Well, tell me about it on the way down to the beach.” She brightened. “Come on!”

“You’re on,” he enthused.

Outside, Ryz’n brushed against his blue cords hanging on the clothes line and flapping against a steady northerly breeze, when she noticed the blood stains.

“What’s this? Your blood Nicky? You OK, Honey?”

“Yeah, it’s part of what I was gonna tell you about. I gotta bloody shirt too, so don’t freak out when you see it.” He pulled the shirt off the line.

“Well, let me have it, Baby. We’ll wash out the blood stains down in the surf. I declare Nicky; it seems some things never change with you.” She felt suddenly as if she were his mother again and she did not like playing that role with him. He pulled the pair of cords off the line, too, and handed both of the bloodied items over to her.

Thanks, Baby. I can have these stains out in no time. Come on!”

“You sure it’s no hassle?”

“No, not all. Now, come on!”

Out at Home

The day had dawned cloudy. However, the light grey cover overhead slowly was giving way to a partly sunny June sky. Here and there, the sun peeked daringly around smaller, whiter puffs of cumulus. Ryz'n explained that the Ryan's home resided "between the highways." The old, single lane highway right ran alongside the beach and the new dual lane highway ran a few blocks to the west past the same dunes Wilbur and Orville Wright had flown over seventy years ago. The pair walked the couple short blocks to the shore. Without his shoes, Nicky was doing a good imitation of the triple jump at times over the hot sand and asphalt surfaces they crossed. Once he had to stop and pluck a burr out of his sole. The whole way Ryz'n gushed over him, choosing to forget his reference to Trish Allein.

On the way, Dixie told her of his adventures on her birthday, starting at the beginning, except he did not mention his song composition. He did not want her to be on his case to join the band. She double-checked the cut under his chin, which was already forming a scab, and told him the saltwater might sting the cut a little but it would prove to be a good healing agent.

They arrived at the beach as Dixie finished telling her the part about how he had replaced the bus tire. She reached up and kissed him slowly and repeatedly on the cut beneath his chin. Then, she kissed him passionately for anyone to see, but there was no one because the beach was empty. When she disrobed to reveal her green and yellow M&L swimsuit again, he made sure to compliment her on her slim waist and her superior, classy build. Ryz'n blushed self-consciously, when he observed the threadbare, shrunken suit could scarcely contain her formidable breastworks, which nearly spilled over the top and out the sides of her well worn, cotton suit.

She thanked him politely for the compliment, saying "it was much appreciated." They dropped their towels and sunglasses to the beach, but she retained the bloody clothes. He followed her down to the surf where she knelt to rub the bloody shirt in the sand beneath the surface of the water.

In a few minutes time, the combination of the saltwater and the abrasive sand lifted the stains right out. Still on her knees, Ryz'n wrung out the shirt and handed it to him, asking him to shake it out and hold onto it for a minute. Ryz'n repeated her laundering feat with his cords, while Dixie watched her and marveled. He found something extremely attractive about a well-built woman like Ryz'n on her knees, bending over in a straight-backed as she laundered his clothes. She always maintained such terrific posture, like a real lady. He joked that he hoped there were no sharks around to pick up the bloody scent. To his horror, she replied seriously that she hoped he was right. If she were kidding, she sure didn't show it. He searched the water surface for fins, but found none, thank goodness. When she had wrung out his pants, Ryz'n stood up and asked him to wring them out, while she did the same with the shirt. Then she walked with him across the sand to take the clothes up to the dunes and hang them on the first stout clumps of sea oats or sea grass they could find. With the task completed, Ry raced him into the surf. He let her lead. Running alongside and slightly behind her, Dixie could not help but notice her leg, back and arm muscles. In flight, their sleek, long gracefully

toned contours, which had been so compelling at rest on the bed, suddenly came to life. He marveled now at their strong, stark, transformation.

He followed her, as they bounced through and dived into the surf. Mann, this salt water was warmer than Ocean City surf, by several degrees, thought Dixie. Yet, the water was still cool and just as green, a fact that still astounded his senses. She explained the water temperature was usually around seventy this time of day, but that it would heat up a few degrees later. And yes, it was usually several degrees warmer than OC. And yes, it was not the Pacific blue that he knew so well.

The day was turning out to be gorgeous. She pointed out that the heavy storms of the previous evening had cleaned out yesterday's humid air. She noted that the now virtually cloudless sky was Carolina blue, even if the water was not. The temperature was around seventy-five and climbing with a stiff fifteen to twenty mile an hour breeze out of the north. Dixie thought the Wright bothers had chosen this location for the first flight with good reason.

Yelling over the sounds of surf and wind, Ryz'n warned Dixie about rip tides, telling her spouse that if he got caught in one, he should swim parallel to the shore to escape the deadly currents, which were notorious on the Banks. She explained her regimen of laps to him, as she pointed out a couple of landmarks on the beach, which she used to mark her lap turning points. She noted the waves were high probably due to last night's heavy storm. Lastly, she told him if he got tired, it was OK. He should just go in and sit on the beach and wait for her. She had been on the college swim team and had been swimming ever since he left for the service. She excused him, noting that he could not be expected to keep up with her.

Dixie heard everything she said, but he didn't really listen, especially to the last. He was anxious to get swimming and swim they did. Dixie could keep up with her fine in the free style and the backstroke. However, the breast and butterfly gave him trouble, especially the latter, which Ryz'n seemed to prefer, based on the number of laps she swam that stroke. She swam without a swim cap; her coarse, long hair becoming knotted and bedraggled. Dixie admired her for that. Dixie swam harder than he could ever recall swimming. He swam so hard that he actually became hot, despite the low seventies surface temperature and the strong breeze. That little wife of his set a strong pace.

After about twenty-five minutes, he began to falter. He barely stayed with her for another five minutes. He felt as though they had been swimming for over an hour. The high surf increased the degree of difficulty. His arms melted into lead. Dixie began to lag behind; taking in seawater and coughing it back out as he swam. He gave up trying to keep pace with her, swimming now at his own pace, which was more akin to jogging in place, than swimming. She lapped him once, then twice.

"Free style! Bell lap, Baby," she cried over the waves to challenge him. He threw everything he had left into matching her stroke for stroke. He finished only a few lengths behind her, but he was all in. He was having difficulty treading water. He gasped and hid his difficulty with a joke.

Out at Home

“Think I need a beautiful life guard to take me in. Give me mouth to mouth,” he gasped. He thought of the way Donna had rescued him that last day in Coquille State Park north of San Diego when his leg had camped, but he dared not mention that event to Ryz’n.

Ryz’n played along, towing him in, rescuing him as a life guard would. She was one strong little woman, thought Dixie. When the pair washed up on the beach, they unfolded their beach towels, side by side, where the sand was firm and dry, just beyond tide’s edge. Ryz’n played on, eagerly giving him mouth-to-mouth even though they both knew her life-saving efforts were totally unnecessary. (The mouthwash he had found back in the Ryan’s basement bathroom proved a godsend.) The more she worked to “revive” him, the more worked up he became. Dixie reciprocated by giving her his share of mouth-to-mouth, noting with relish that he was working her up, as well.

The wind blew at a steady at a pace of fifteen miles per hour or more. The waves crested close to six feet high, a little reminder of last night’s ferocious storms. For a fleeting second, Ryz’n considered going back to the house for her surf board. Swimming through the high waves today had been a bear. However, one look at Nick on his back, with his deep, even tan glistening with salt water, blew that idea away in a hurry. Washed by seawater, the ends of his naturally wavy hair had turned into shiny, jet black ringlets. His beckoning presence decided her against the surf board idea.

Instead, Ryz’n descended upon him, emphatically pressing her wet body into his. The couple smooched and wrestled playfully, both tittering mirthfully, as Nick rolled her onto her towel from his and Ryz’n countered by rolling him back over onto his towel. They ignored the sand sticking grittily to their backs and legs. Taking a breath, she sat up, straddling him and laughing. Those ancient tingles, which long since had been buried, were reawakening and fueling erotic sensations deep within her.

A strong northerly gust of wind kicked up some sand, blasting the front right side of her body. She planted her palms on their towels and raised her torso up, taking her weight off him. Again, just for an instant, Ryz’n considered the wind and the higher than average surf and thought about going back to the house for her board. But such thoughts evaporated when she looked down at Nicky, lying on his back beneath her with saltwater glistening all over his tan, well muscled frame, his black wavy ringlets gleaming wet. They were made even blacker than usual by the saltwater. Instead, she recalled their first date when she found herself in a similar position with Nick at the base pool, when he first had aroused within her those virginal, womanly, inner tingling sensations, feelings so glorious, they had made her feel guilty. She recalled how her Roman Catholic background had taught her that anything that felt *that* good had to be bad. Saltwater dripped coolly but deliciously from her long, wet hair onto her back and crawled down her spine. A wicked thought crossed her mind, taking root in her heart.

This was neither the time nor the place, nor how she dreamed it would be, but ... she had waited *so* long, more than long enough. Yes it was more than long enough, more like an eternity. *From [T]here to Eternity!* Ha! She considered the romantic beach scene from the famous movie, whose title she had just parodied and could not keep

from giggling internally, despite the serious nature of the moment. Like the movie however, this beach lay deserted, usually at this time of day anyway. Still supported on her palms with her elbows locked rigidly, Ry looked around like a gopher, popping his head out of his hole, scanning up and down the empty coastline. It was somewhere between seven-thirty and eight. The true anglers like her Dad would have gone in to clean their early morning catch. She had spied a fisherman or two far off in the distance, but, as she scoured to her right and left now, no one was within nearly a mile of them. The sun worshippers would not be out for a couple hours yet. But she was thinking too hard. She glanced down and Nick's two-tone eyes locked onto hers. His inimitable black and blue stare kicked off a slow wave of sweet, softness rolling over and permeating through her being and she began, unwillingly, almost imperceptibly, yet naturally to undulate her hips over him.

Surely, slowly Nicky rubbed his hands up and down her, over her waist over her torso, the small of her back and across the breadth of her buttocks. He sat up even with her. She understood he was apologizing with his active hands for that crack about her waist the other night. She felt warm, despite the strong breeze on her wet body. Something touched her. Something tingled beneath her, something warm yet fiery, where she had not been touched since Nicky had left. Her threadbare suit could not prevent the old juices from welling up within her. Even so, both his hands remained on her waist and roved over her buttocks, exploring her curves as if it were the first time. A slow-burning roman candle touched of simultaneously down below. In the back of her mind, Ry started to think the unthinkable. Ryz'n hand reached down and let her hands and fingers roam over his rock hard pecs and biceps, while she leisurely lowered her lips to his. A long wet, kiss served only to fire up the Roman candle beneath her and ignite new ones on her lips and tongue. Ryz'n opened her eyes to find his closed, but she did not break off their embrace. "*Unbridled enthusiasm (in love-making)*" and "*Anticipate and be aggressive (on the ball field).*" Those were maxims that Little Nick had lived by and they were principles which he had proven to her to be true. He had imbued those same maxims upon her psyche with mostly good results.

Ryz'n stopped thinking and let her ingrained, catechistic inhibitions slide. The Roman candles had been lit and were inexorably burning slowly towards each other, upward from down below and down from above. She was not about to lose them after thirsting so long after them. Maintaining her perch upon his lap, Ryz'n sat upon him, where that fire of ancient days smoldered between the two of them. She caught his eyes again. Her hunger for him was overwhelming. He stared into her, innocently vulnerable but no less a strapping man-child. Again, casting furtive, sideways glances first up and then down the empty beach, Ryz'n sighed and surrendered.

Only Nicky could make me want to do something as ridiculous as this ...

Nick sat up to meet her and they kissed again, long and wet as before.

"Ummm!" Ryz'n purred.

This is unbearable, deliciously unbearable—Anticipate and be aggressive, unbridled enthusiasm. Oh yeah!

Out at Home

Without fully realizing what she was doing, Ryz'n seized a hand full of Nicky's wet, black locks and pulled his head back, away from her mouth. She pushed him down hard onto the tan, sandy beach, while she hovered above him for a second, long enough for her gaze to latch onto his. Ryz'n turned her pink-painted, long-nailed fingertips inside the top hem of her suit and tugged, slowly pulling down the straps with the hem, well below her waist. She peered deeply into his eyes and they both knew, yes they knew this was that moment she had longed for, the one she had shared with him many times, that moment which he had dubbed as "lovers' mutual recognition."

She watched with delight as his eyes widened yet further and he sat up again to satisfy her. Ryz'n clutched the back of his head with both hands, pressing his face firmly into her bosom, while she threw back her head to beam at the heavens, taking a brief second to thank God for His goodness and grace. Then, digging her toes into the sand and using her powerful thigh muscles to push off the beach with both of her knees and her toes, Ryz'n shoved her chest forward into his face, forcing him back down to the ground with a mild thump. His mouth opened reflexively from the fall. Ravenous, she dived into the gaping aperture formed by his full, red lips. Ryz' smothered a chuckle at her own unrestrained, unbridled, aggressive behavior. For the first time in over three years, she felt free, completely liberated, as if she were flying without restraint, yet she was sober.

With Nick's help, she refused to relinquish their kiss. The crisp, ocean breezes whipped sand across her damp behind, spanking against her wet skin and she purred despite herself. Nick dug his hands into her round backside.

"Basketball butt" is what Little Nick had once dubbed her rear end. And she guessed somewhat ashamedly that he had been right. However, she had preferred the descriptive term of "sculpturesque," which Nick had adopted after an ancient tiff, when he had been looking to get on her good side. He had said that he fancied she "possessed the kind of sculpturesque derriere which would not have needed a bustle a century ago." And that description had pleased her immensely, for she loved Victorian women's styles. That Nicky always had had a very apt way with words. That's why he could write all those great lyrics.

"Oh Dear," gasped Ryz'n coming up for air, "I think I've lost all my sense of shame over you, Nicky."

"Well, stay right where you are and don't go lookin' for it now, whatever ya do," replied Nick, giggling from down under her two mountains of chest flesh. Ryz'n grinned down at him and, devilishly, he returned her grin. She caved and dived into him once more with relish without searching for her lost shame.

Just then, as they began their love-making in earnest—

"Look Mommy! They wrestle."

Ryz'n stopped short with her heart catching in her throat! From up the beach, a small child's voice wafted to them, carried on the shifting ocean breezes. Ryz'n was mortified. Quickly, she pulled her suit back up above her waist, but she could pull no further without rising up from Nicky and revealing herself. Out of the corner of her right eye and not a moment too soon, she spied a young family headed their way. A

Love on the Beach

mother and a dad trailed about ten yards behind what looked to be a three year-old girl, wearing a floppy sun hat. Clad in a one-piece, skirted, pink suit, the cute, little girl scurried ahead of her folks, straight for Ryz'n and Nick.

Ugh!

Left out of the equation from her earlier, beach desertion calculations were those families with little ones, who rise at the crack of dawn, filled with energy and anxious to get down to the beach as soon as mommy and daddy could rise, fix breakfast and prepare for the outing. Yes, even as anxious as she, a twenty-two-year old adult had been just now. However, now Ryz'n was anxious for an entirely different reason. Bare-chested, she and Nick were caught red-handed. Nick had raised his head from the sand to make love to her ample breasts, but Ryz'n plunged her sizable bosom back down into his face, knocking him back down to the sand and nearly suffocating him with her bounty as she fell atop him. She could not rear up to pull her suit over herself without being seen. All she could do was lay flat on top of Nicky.

“Can you wrestle Daddy like that, Mommy? See she's on top. She beats. She beats!”

“Paulina! Come back here. Come back, Sweetie. Leave *those* people alone.” With one eye cracked open, spying on her visitors, Ryz'n pretended to sleep. Below her, Nicky did not. Mistaking her aggressive, suffocating behavior for ardor, her amorous husband made love to her, which, to both her chagrin and her pleasure, appeared to be more than sufficient to his taste now. With great difficulty, Ryz'n stifled the guttural purrs forming deep within her. He sure knew how to please her. He had not forgotten that. The mother hustled after the girl, but she could not catch the child who waddled jerkily several yards in advance of her mother. Ryz'n was caught and she just would have to 'fess up as best as she could.

Ry cocked her head towards the unwanted beachcombers. She smiled sheepishly and whispered out of the side of her mouth as they approached. “Ease up Nicky. Ease up, we got company, Baby.” Beneath her, Nicky could not have heard the child, not with his nose buried between her breasts and with her arms wrapped about his head and neck, squeezing her tightly to him. She tapped the top of his head. Unceremoniously, Nick spit out a chunk of her flesh and rose up.

“What?”

Ryz'n nodded and whispered, “Over there. We got company, Baby.”

Nick craned his neck to view the strangers. “Oh shoot!”

Then, glancing downward, Ryz'n caught his eyes, which he promptly rolled and closed, abruptly dropping his head back to the beach in defeat.

Paulina ignored her mother, as curious children will and made a beeline straight towards the amorous Nick and Ryz'n. The child behaved as if the wrestlers were the most interesting item on the beach. Ryz'n turned away from the beachcombers to look down the coast.

The beach was empty everywhere but here. Pickles! Wouldn't you know it? Only Nicky could get me into a mess like this. Only Nicky,

She mashed the front of her nude torso into her lover's chest as tightly as she could and nestled the back of her head into the nape of Nick's neck on the sand. She brought

her elbows into her sides to hide any embarrassing overflow. Then she slid her legs to her left, off him and onto the sandy beach. She hoped little Paulina would heed her mother. Instead, Ryz'n heard the sound of little feet pattering ever closer toward them accompanied by increasingly louder little girl shrieks which surpassed the pounding of the surf behind them. A self-conscious Ryz'n subtly slid her torso off Nick onto the sand. Then, still holding him about the neck with her hands, she again turned to hide her face in Nick's shoulder and neck.

"She beats! She beats!" Little Paulina stood right next to Nick's head now.

Ryz'n heard the little girl address Nick.

"Did she beat ya, Mistah?"

Nick cleared his throat and choked. "Sh-she, ju-ju-just rescued me from the ocean."

"Oh, I thought you was wrestlin'. I thought she beat." Nicky craned his head back and his tone eased up as Ryz'n observed his Adam's apple bob up and down guiltily.

"Well, she did actually. She was, uh, helping me to ba-b-breathe, you know?"

"Oh, how?"

Ryz'n peeked over Nick and saw the chubby, toddler squat down with her hands upon her knees and bent her head in closer to lean over the young couple's faces for a more studious inspection of this phenomenon. The child was close enough to kiss them. The girl's innocent tone forced Ryz'n, who had hidden her face back into the crook of Nick's neck and shoulder, to chuckle at her husband's predicament.

Nick cleared his throat again. "Well, I-I" The mother came to Nick's rescue.

"Come now Paulina; let's walk up he-ah. Lookeh he-ah! Look at that seagull, honeh. See how it hovahs therah in the airah, so close?"

Ryz'n closed her eyes tighter and pressed her girls harder into the sand, as she heard tiny tracks in the sand trot around her head. Then Ryz'n sensed a shadow fall upon her bare shoulder blade.

"You beat! You beat!"

Paulina's persistent cries were right on top of her now.

Ryz'n strained to keep her eyes shut, hoping the little girl would leave. From above her, Ryz'n heard the mother who was very close by now.

"Paulina? Paulina! Come back, now Honeh. Leave *those* people alone." Ryz'n didn't mind being identified as one of "*those* people," if the child would heed her mother.

However, Ryz'n felt a tiny paw patting her softly on the left shoulder blade.

"You beat," the girl whispered as kindly as she could. "I saw. I saw. You beat."

Ryz'n opened her top, right eye to find a tow-headed little blonde with a bowl haircut, wearing a one piece pink bathing suit with a brief but dainty waist skirt. An inverted sailor's cap covered most of her head and sunscreen dabbed her upturned nose. Ryz'n lifted her head off the beach and turned to her left, while she shielded her ample bosom from the girl as best as she could with her left arm. Her right arm yet lay across Nicky's chest. She turned back to the little girl in pink and grinned.

Love on the Beach

“Ooooh!” gasped Paulina. Then the chubby cheeked Paulina squatted down so that her little bottom grazed the sand. She stuck the tip of her pudgy index finger into one of Ryz’n’s large dimples. The child replaced her gleeful exterior with a sudden expression of awe instead.

“Oooooohhh, booo-teeful, booo-teeful—like Lina!” She grinned, producing her own dimples. “Like Lina,” she claimed and stuck the tip of the forefinger of her other hand into her own dimple, creating a kind of dimple-to-dimple connection between the two of them. The guileless act subsumed Ryz’n’s fear and embarrassment. She laughed inadvertently.

“Hello. This is Paulina and wee-ah just takin’ a li’l walk down the beach,” explained the mother meekly, who was evidently almost as embarrassed as Ryz’n by the whole incident. Ryz’n smiled as radiantly as she could under the circumstances, but still pressed her body back into the sand and Nick’s side. Nick pushed her arm down between them and then rolled over on his side into her to shield her better from the north.

“No Momma, weah fishin’. Daddy got the pole. See?”

The little girl pointed to a man behind them, carrying a kid-sized rod and reel and a couple of buckets. Both adults wore bathing suits and sunscreen on their noses under their dark glasses. Both moved under identical wide-brimmed straw hats, as well.

“Yes, Dear. Let’s leave these nice people alone. I think I see the fish down theyah, Honeh, down by those birds.” She pointed past the young lovers down the beach.

“Yippeeee!” In her glee, the squatting child pivoted, falling upon her bottom. “Whoopsy, daisy!” She cried perfunctorily. Then without fanfare, the child rolled onto her chubby, dimpled knees and pushed off the ground, brushing off her little backside as she rose and yelled: “Byah-byah.” Paulina waved her chubby little hand, which also had dimples in place of knuckles. The gleeful tot cantered over the sand, with her mother soon to follow.

“Sorry to interrupt y’all,” apologized the embarrassed mother. Then she followed quickly after her cantering daughter. The father reached them presently and he wasn’t quite so agreeable, as he walked by.

“This is a public beach you know. Children shouldn’t be subjected to that kind of display. Crissake! Can’t you find a room?”

“Yes sir,” said Ryz’n with her head bowed. However, her heretofore humble husband stood up, allowing Ryz’n to thump, belly down, abruptly and ignominiously into the sand. Nick surprised her by confronting the man.

“Hey! Whatsa matta pop? You and momma don’t dance, don’t Rock’N’Roll?”

“Not on a public beach, not in broad daylight, we don’t!” His surly demeanor dripped rancor, but he passed them by. But Nick wouldn’t let up.

“Well that’s your problem then Pops. You oughtta try it sometime. Straighten you right out. Know what I mean, Dad?”

“Nicholas, that’s not nice. He’s right,” admonished Ryz’n. As he walked on, the guy turned around to shout one last insult.

“Listen to your whore, buddy, and take it inside, off the beach.”

Out at Home

When Nick started forward, Ryz'n tugged at Nick's leg with one hand but without much success as she tried to keep herself covered with the other. She could see from Nick's angered expression and his clenched fists that he was incensed. The father had turned back around following his family. Ryz'n pulled up her suit over her sandy bosom with the sand gritting into her skin all over chest. She did not dare reveal herself long enough to knock off the sand. Holding the suit in place with one arm crossed over her chest, she hurried after Nick and, from behind, seized one of his swinging arms. She arrested his gait and turned him partially back towards her.

"No, Nicky. He's right. Just forget it, Honey."

"You're no whore. Trust me! I've known whores and you ain't one." Nick turned back to the man and yelled.

What's this talk of whores, Ryz'n wondered. What did he know of whores? Maybe her Dad was right after all, about Nicky needing a medical check-up. But Nick had to make one last comeback

"Hey buddy! You'll be lucky if your daughter grows up to be a whore like this one. You sonova—"

Ryz'n thrust her free hand over his mouth. She was proud that he had stuck up for her, even if they were in the wrong. The man, who was twenty yards away by now, never looked back and never broke stride. His attentions were with his family, who were running after seagulls now and were already far ahead of him.

Then Ryz'n got a devilish feeling. She turned Nick's mouth back and down to hers and whispered sexily. "He's right, Baby. I *am* a whore—I'm *your* whore! Yours alone and don't ever forget it." She grinned and zestfully attacked his lips with hers.

When she let him up for air, Nick shook his head and said. "You *really are* something else. You know that?"

"I kind o' hoped you'd feel that way. Come on Honey," she gurgled and grinned, "let this sandy, saltwater 'whore' take you back to the sugar shack, take you down, all around." She had dismissed her father's suggestion about a check-up for Nick. She could not wait any longer for him on such nonsense. Nick shook his head.

"Yes sir, you sure are *somehin' else!* Sounds like the lyrics to a nasty song."

"There are some things you shouldn't write about in songs, Nicky—Do it? Yes. But don't write songs about it." She winked. Then she halted. "Even though you have done both, Baby," she confessed, rolling her eyes. "Yes, you most certainly have. Come on now, Sweetie." She pulled her shoulder straps firmly back in place. The gritty, sand inside her suit chafed against her body, but she knew the rewards would be worth the discomfort. She had felt those old feelings and all would be fine now. She had him now, back where he belonged. They picked up their belongings, including his clothes drying on the sea oats and, holding each other about the waist, strolled as lovers do, meandering leisurely back to the beach house.

Can I truly be this fortunate? Am I dreaming? At last. At last.

If she was, she did not want to wake up.

* * *

Love on the Beach

Back at the house, she and Nick rinsed off the sand from their amorous bodies beneath the outside shower. Actually quivering with excitement, Ryz'n could scarcely take a minute to dry them both off. Yes, she was so excited, she was shaking. And his excitement was equally obvious. Ry was all set to take Nicky upstairs to her room just as she had promised him on the beach, when Barb intercepted them on the outdoor porch landing. When Barb saw Nicky, she flipped. She wanted him to tell her what happened yesterday, "all about it." Ryz'n protested that she and Nicky had some unfinished business to attend, but, in her excitement, Barb's virginal mind failed to grasp Ryz'n's hints. Reluctantly, Ryz'n gave up, leaving her husband to entertain her old friend, while Ry pouted and took care of her other business.

They had to be out of the house by noon for the maid service, which had to tidy the place by four for the incoming renters. Ry showered, shaved her legs, washed her hair, dressed and decorated her neck with Nicky's golden gift in addition to her gold crucifix. She wore the crucifix high, more like a choker and Nicky's necklace she wore a little lower. She also placed the gold anklet he had given her years ago on her left ankle. Then, dressed only in her thigh-high, green satin bathrobe, Ry cooked breakfast for all three of them, while an excited Barb engaged Nicky in ceaseless, animated conversation. Barb explained why Bryson was not there. Evidently, he was helping the M&L coaching staff conduct a football clinic this week. Barb said that Bryson had said it was an honor to be picked to help out. Bry had taken the Bonneville yesterday to set up at M&L last night to set up for the clinic. Both Nicky and Ryz'n exchanged disappointed glances when Barb did not get the message, but neither wanted to be rude to Barb, who was such a good egg, even if she was one hundred per cent korn. Still, Ryz'n was more than a bit miffed. No one was to blame, but Ry felt teased, as she had been the other night in the motel room with him, yes even more than she had been in the motel room. Ryz'n focused on the positives. Nick was here with her and they still had that special magic between them. She submerged her anger behind a cheerful countenance, just as she had since the morning after the fruitless, motel incident and, indeed, as she had for most of her life since he had left her for the Corps.

Her mom had left plenty of breakfast food. They feasted on Ry's breakfast of flapjacks, eggs and bacon. Nicky observed happily that his bride was a very good cook, very good indeed and he told her she had a great pair of legs, as well. Ry had worn her short satin bathrobe in the hope he would notice her legs. When he complimented her, she beamed, basking warmly in his kind remark. And lest he forget, she also reminded him that she enjoyed sewing, too, having sewn most of her own clothes. Once more, she had impressed him with her domestic skills. She gave him the last piece of her birthday cake, which she had saved especially for him.