

SAILING AT SUNSET

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A SHIVER OF AWARENESS TIPTOED UP her spine, and goose bumps spread across her skin.

“Are you cold?”

Danae was about to tell him that if he'd hold her pole, she'd go grab one of her cardigans. But then he shucked off his green army jacket and held it out to her. She considered refusing it, but she *was* getting cold.

She slipped her arm in the too-long sleeve, basking in Josh's leftover body heat. He wrapped it around her and guided her other arm through the hole. As he swept her hair out from underneath the jacket, his fingers grazed the sensitive skin on the nape of her neck, and her lungs forgot how to function.

“Better?” he asked.

Her tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth, foiling her attempt to speak, so she went with a nod. Her hand trembled as she zipped up the jacket, and she wanted to bury her nose in the fabric and take another whiff so she could soak in the intoxicating combination of ocean and the woodsy cologne Josh wore.

The moonlight lit up his profile, and her heart *thump, thump, thumped*. The tingly sensation she'd experienced earlier intensified, whispering that there was something between them. While she wasn't sure it was a good idea, she couldn't help but want to explore

their connection—after all, she hadn't felt like this in months.

Maybe longer, if she factored in never feeling so immediately drawn to anyone before.

With her pulse hammering away, it took a couple of seconds to realize the thump in her palm was a different sensation. "Josh, I feel something."

His Adam's apple bobbed up and down, and he placed his hand over hers. "I think I do, too."

"That means I have a bite, right? It's been almost two decades, and I don't remember much, besides my dad having to help me out a few times because the fish were so strong. But I was a lot young—"

The next jerk nearly wrenched the pole right out of her hands. She clasped the grippy handle and yanked back in an attempt to set the hook. The end of her pole bowed, to the point it almost hit the water.

"Must be a big one," Josh yelled, excitement ringing through the phrase and echoing through her core.

"Now what?" Her mind went blank, leaving her scrambling to recall the tips she'd stored away for what she assumed would be...never. Honestly, she'd never expected to catch anything.

"Reel it in!" Josh reached around her to tap the handle attached to the spool.

Right. Of course. Danae cranked it as quickly as she could, doing her best not to get distracted by the solid body directly behind her and his warm breath on her cheek. "You got it, you got it."

"It's either huge or fighting me. Oh, no," she said, her stomach plummeting to the ground. "What if it's both?"

Her shoulder and arm muscles burned as she con-

tinued to reel with all her might. In the background, she heard someone ask if she'd caught one. As her coworkers rushed their way, Josh took a giant step back.

"You've got this, Danae," Vanessa said. Not to be outdone, Paige yelled her encouragement, as did Mark.

One quick glance at the group, and determination flooded her. She pushed past the burning in her arm, and then she heard the jingle of the lure and the slapping of fins on the surface of the water.

Another tug, and she would've fallen on her bum if Josh hadn't braced a firm hand on her lower back to steady her.

Water splashed her face and hands as she lifted the fish and swung it into the boat, but thanks to Josh's jacket, her arms were nice and dry.

Everyone gathered to check out the black sea bass.

"That's a nice sized one, D," Mark said, and she did a double take. He hadn't called her D in a very long time. Like, since their breakup. She blinked at him but didn't see any clues as to why.

Not that she'd expected to.

Or maybe she had. Her adrenaline flowed in overwhelming spurts, and a surreal haze hung over the evening. Then a blip of a memory rose to her mind—Dad congratulating her, shouting and jumping with such gusto that they attracted the attention of a nearby fisherman who'd come to see the catch of the day.

After he quickly and humanely dispatched it, Danae shoved the pole into Josh's hands and squatted to see her fish. Vanessa turned on her phone's light so she could take pictures, and the blue and black scales glimmered in the bright glow.

If Danae didn't stand soon, her burning thighs

would give out on her, but she quite liked the view from down here. From this angle, their captain's beard was extra rugged, and the line of muscle in his forearm stood out as he gripped the fishing pole she'd used. "Okay," he said, "so now you have to get the hook out of its mouth."

That got her to her feet. "Um, that's okay. I'll hold the pole. You do the gross stuff."

"Lucky me," he said lightly, and the smile he aimed her way gave her that fresh-from-the-roller-coaster swirl.