



Always Us: First Glance

Jamie Penrose



Jamie sits on a turquoise towel under the relentless Mediterranean sun, using a weathered paperback as a shield against the world. The golden heat radiates off the sand, while Jamie gazes toward the horizon, feeling small and out of place.



Clad in turquoise speedos that feel far too bold, Jamie tries to hide from the gaze of passing tourists. Every laugh from a nearby group makes Jamie pull the book higher, seeking refuge in the pages of an existentialist novel.



Suddenly, the water breaks and a figure emerges from the surf like a statue carved from salt and light. Callum walks onto the beach with effortless confidence, his red speedos a striking contrast against the deep blue of the sea.



As Callum shakes the saltwater from his hair, his eyes lock onto Jamie's behind dark sunglasses. The world seems to go quiet, the sound of the waves and gulls fading away as a slow, knowing grin spreads across Callum's face.



Callum approaches, his voice low and melodic as he asks if the sand is as hot as it looks. Jamie replies that it is like walking on a grill, feeling a sudden spark of warmth that has nothing to do with the sun.



Callum joins Jamie on the sand, and the space between them hums with a new energy. They talk about life and travel, and Callum gently teases Jamie for reading such heavy books on a beautiful Saturday afternoon.



They race into the cool Mediterranean waves together, the shock of the water washing away Jamie's self-consciousness. They dive under the swells and surface laughing, the ocean becoming a playground where they are finally free.



Out at the deep blue buoy, they float together in a moment of shared silence. Callum's hand brushes Jamie's shoulder to steady himself, a simple touch that feels like an invitation to something much deeper.



As the sun begins to set, they sit at a rustic beach bar, their damp skin occasionally touching as they lean in to talk over the music. They sip cold, sweet drinks while the sky turns to honey and the air grows thick with possibility.



In the quiet of the hotel room, the masks finally come off and the outside world disappears. They share a deep, salt-tasted kiss, realizing that what started as a first glance on the beach is the beginning of a much longer story.