

**REDEMPTION
IN THE
HARBOR**

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INTRODUCTION

In the picturesque town of Little Compton, Rhode Island, a tale of redemption unfolds against the backdrop of the tranquil harbor. Lillian Marie Couvert, seeking solace from a turbulent past, finds unexpected companionship in Jack Masterson, a retired military vet turned fisherman haunted by his own ghosts. As their friendship deepens amid the therapeutic waves, an unspoken romance emerges, exposing hidden wounds and shared vulnerabilities. Together, they embark on a journey of love, healing, and faith, but shadows from their past threaten the peace they've found. "Redemption In The Harbor" is a poignant love story, exploring the transformative power of love and the promise of a new beginning in a town by the sea.

NEW BEGINNINGS

The crashing waves beckoned, their rhythmic roar drowning out the demons that haunted Lillian's mind. She walked along the shore, bare feet embraced by damp sand, taking in the vast expanse of the azure sea. The salty breeze kissed her skin and played with her dark curls, whispering promises of new beginnings.

Lillian closed her eyes, listening to the ocean's soothing melody. For the first time in years, her shoulders felt lighter, as if the sea had washed away the weight of her past. "Lillian!" She froze. That voice. Burned into her mind. It had only been a week since she left. She is pulled back into that moment, that night.

She throws her bag in the trunk of her car and hurries back inside for the last one. She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror nested against the rococo-styled wall just across from the front door of the newly renovated foyer. She looked disheveled. Wearing a black jogging suit, and low-top tennis. Her heat-straightened hair was pulled back into a haphazard claw clip. Beads of sweat formed around her rounded nose. She hears her husband's car pull up, his headlights streaming into the entryway lighting up the fear in her eyes. Her breathing peaked, and her heart hammered in her chest as he slammed his car door shut. She had no other choice, she was already packed, she had to face him. She quickly throws her bag over her shoulder, his car door slams shut,

and he rushes to the front door of their Brooklyn Heights flat. She stands, her breathing shallow, bracing to face him. He throws the front door open and stands in the doorway like an ominous specter. His suit was disheveled, his shirt half untucked, and tie loose and his hair a mess, he smelled of cheap whiskey. He must've gotten into a bar fight. His cold eyes glossed over with drunken rage, bore into her, causing her to shrink back.

"Where do you think you're going?" he said, voice dripping with false warmth. "You can't just leave. I own you! You're not leaving."

Quickly Lillian runs around the table in the center of the foyer. Trying to get around him and run out the open door. "Come here!" He lunges at her over the table, knocking it over as he tackles her to the floor. The sound of crashing furniture and breaking glass a needed reminder of her future if she didn't fight back, if she didn't get away. "You're my wife. I decide when this is over."

"No! Get off of me!" she tries to free herself from his tight grip around her. Getting one arm loose she grabs his face in her hand, dragging her fingernails into his flesh over his left eye, tearing his skin enough to make him loosen his grip. She knees him in the groin and pushes him off of her. Crawling to her bag over shards of a porcelain vase that sat atop the foyer table now strewn across the floor. She hadn't kneed him hard enough when he grabbed her legs pulling her back down, and rolling her over to sit on top of her. His face was twisted as he looked down at her, blood from the scratch she had given him had pooled in his eye. Turning his left eye red. His fringed black hair hung down both sides of his olive-toned face, framing his sculptured jaw that was shaded by a barely grown beard. She struggled against him. Trying to push him off, beating against his firm chest. She laid a final open-palmed blow across his right cheek. Lillian was exhausted from the fight. He easily pinned her arms down above

her head. Leaning down his lips brushed the side of her face as he whispered into her ear with a thick Balkan accent "I will never let you go."

He releases her arms to quickly wrap his hands around her throat. Tightening his grip, choking her. She tries to peel his hands off of her as she loses breath. scratching and scraping his hands and arms, fighting for her life. She was losing consciousness. The devil on top of her was fading into black. Going, going, gone. It was dark now, and warm. She could stay here and sleep for a while. No more pain, no more suffering under his hand. Just rest. "Get up Lillian!" her eyes snapped open, he was still on top of her, choking the last of her life out of her, when she found the strength to fight him. flailing her arms and legs, she wouldn't let him take her life so easily. She dug her nails back into his eye. Deepening the wound she had given him. He threw his head back in pain. The blood was streaming down his face now. She reached over to her right and grabbed a piece of the broken vase just large enough to land a blow over his head. Down the dog went.

She pulled herself up, holding her sore and bruised throat, gasping for air, as he writhed on the floor bloodied and holding his head. Now was her chance the door was open, but she hesitated. Leaning over watching him. This man who abused her, subjected her to domestic violence, and marital rape. She still loved and pitied him, but she had to go, staying here meant death.

She grabbed her bag and rushed out the door. Throwing it into the back with her other bags and boxes, and slamming her trunk shut. She gets in the eggplant-colored Mercedes Benz he bought her the last time he beat her. It was his apology. She starts the engine prepared to leave and never return as he suddenly appears in the doorway, hurdled over holding his left eye in one hand, his other holding him up against the doorframe. His bright white shirt contrasted with the red of his

blood. "You'll regret this Lillian! You're my wife, wherever you go I'll find you!" he shouts. She doesn't wait a moment. She shifts into gear and reverses like hell out of the driveway, speeding off into the night.

The waves crashed louder now, pulling her back out of that memory. Fueling her courage. She opens her eyes, still standing on the beach. "Not anymore," she declared. "I won't let you control me." The demons crept back, taunting her resolve. But the sea still called, its timeless rhythm promising hope. She would start over here, far from Robert's grasp. The past could not reach her now. Lillian took a deep breath, turning back to the endless horizon. The sun sank lower, bathing the waves in crimson and gold. She closed her eyes, letting the melody of the sea soothe her rattled nerves.

The memory of that night had shaken her, threatening to undo the sense of peace she'd hoped to find here. But the sound of the surf washing over sand whispered that this place could still be her sanctuary. As she began walking again, Lillian focused on the details surrounding her - the tang of salt in the air, the caw of gulls overhead, the smooth sand under her feet. The darkness fading from her past, the light of this seaside haven guiding her instead. With each step, Lillian shed the weight Robert's memory had momentarily brought back. She was not that woman anymore. Here, she could rewrite her story.

The cottages along the shore came into view, glowing with warm light in the dusk. Lillian hurried to her new home awaiting, its worn charm a promise of quiet moments spent healing. Her little piece of New England sat atop a little hill, slightly removed from the other cottages, surrounded on all sides by a white picket fence. Only the whites had faded over time. It was summer, so bushes and sweet flowers adorned the sides of her home and front yard. It was small, like a toy house. Something children could play in, but it was home now, and she couldn't imagine anywhere else better. She quickened her pace,

eager for the comfort the cottage brought. Its weathered door would close out the lingering shadows of her past, leaving only hope and possibility within its walls. As Lillian reached her new sanctuary, the last rays of sun dipped below the waves. Despite Robert's resurfacing in her mind, she knew she'd made the right choice coming here. In this seaside haven, she would find the strength to start fresh. A new chapter lay ahead.

Lillian paused outside the worn wooden door of her cottage, breathing in the salty sea air. The sound of waves crashing on the rocky shore just beyond her small sanctuary grounded her. As she stepped inside, the inviting aroma of aged wood and ocean breeze enveloped her. She took comfort in the cozy interior, with its walls painted in calming hues of blue and weathered white. The setting sun streamed through the sheer curtains, casting a warm glow on the well-loved furniture. Making her way to the small kitchen, Lillian filled the kettle and put it on to boil. The familiar ritual soothed her rattled nerves. Soon the whistle of the kettle mingled with the ever-present melody of the sea outside.

Cup of chamomile tea in hand, Lillian curled up in the reading nook by the window. The distant cries of seagulls and rhythmic waves washed away the tension of the day's events. Watching the sunset paint shades of orange and pink across the darkening sky, Lillian let her mind wander. She thought of the winding cobblestone streets in town she had yet to explore, the local shops and cafes she looked forward to discovering. There was still so much promise ahead in this seaside haven. She wouldn't let Robert derail the fresh start she had found here. Sipping her tea, Lillian resolved to focus only on the possibilities of this place - and of her own healing.

Lillian sank deeper into the plush cushions of the reading nook, letting the coziness envelop her like a warm embrace. She set her empty

teacup on the small side table and reached for her journal, its worn leather cover softened from years of use. Opening to a fresh page, Lillian began to write, the scratch of pen on paper mingling with the soothing melody of the waves. She poured her jumbled thoughts and swirling emotions onto the page, giving shape to her hopes, fears, and dreams. Writing had always been cathartic for her, a way to process and make sense of things. After filling several pages, Lillian set down her pen and flexed her cramped hand. Glancing out the window, she noticed the sky had darkened to a velvety blue, dotted with stars. The golden glow from a nearby lighthouse cut through the night.

Lillian tucked her journal away and headed to the tiny bedroom to undress. As she washed her face and changed into pajamas, her mind kept returning to the entry she had written. Ending her abusive relationship with Robert had been difficult, but necessary. This cottage represented a new chapter, a chance to rediscover who she was without him. Slipping under the covers, Lillian took a deep breath and slowly released it. The sound of the ocean soothed her as she drifted off to sleep, the events of the day finally settling. Tomorrow would be a new start.

The morning sun filtered through the sheer curtains, casting a warm glow across Lillian's face and rousing her from sleep. She slowly blinked awake, momentarily disoriented by the unfamiliar cottage surroundings. Then the events of the week came flooding back. She was starting her new beginning in the charming seaside town of Little Compton. Lillian stretched and rose from the bed, embracing the tranquility of the cottage. After freshening up, she prepared a simple breakfast of tea and toast. The aroma of Earl Grey mingled with the salty ocean air drifting in through the open window. Lillian savored the quiet start to her day.

Eager to continue exploring the town, she got dressed and headed out the door. The cobblestone streets glistened, damp from an early morning rain. A horse-drawn carriage clip-clopped by, hinting at the old-world charm of the village. Lillian's curiosity led her to a row of quaint shops and cafes. The aroma of freshly baked bread wafted from the bakery, mingling with the earthy scent of coffee beans roasting next door. She popped into a boutique, admiring the handmade jewelry and bright bolts of fabric.

The friendly shopkeeper greeted Lillian. "Good morning! Are you new to town?" Lillian smiled warmly. "Yes, just moved here. I'm enjoying discovering all the lovely shops." They chatted for a few minutes before Lillian continued her stroll, warmed by the genial welcome. The rich colors of the storefronts and glimpses of hidden gardens fueled her sense of wonder. Lillian's aimless stroll eventually led her to a charming café tucked away on a side street. A hand-painted sign reading "Nellie's Nook" hung above the door, beckoning her inside. The aroma of roasted coffee enveloped her as she stepped in.

Mismatched tables and cozy armchairs created a relaxed atmosphere. Vintage books and local artwork adorned the walls, giving the café a homey feel. Lillian selected a table by the window overlooking the street. "Good morning! Welcome to Nellie's," a friendly voice greeted her. Lillian looked up to see a woman with faded dyed green hair and warm hazel eyes smiling down at her.

"I'm Nellie, the owner. Can I get you something to drink?"

"Hello, I'm Lillian," she replied. "A latte would be lovely, thank you." Nellie nodded. "Coming right up!"

Lillian studied the café as she waited, taking in the smells of fresh pastries and coffee. Sunlight streamed in through the windows, catching the dust motes dancing in the air. Nellie returned with her latte. "Here you are. I hope you enjoy it - the beans are locally roasted."

"It smells wonderful, thank you," Lillian said, taking a sip. The rich espresso mingled with foamed milk, warming her from the inside out.

Nellie's eyes crinkled as she smiled. "My pleasure. Let me know if you need anything else." Lillian spent the next hour reading and gazing out the window, comforted by the cozy atmosphere. As she finished her coffee, she felt a sense of belonging in this charming town. She had a feeling Nellie's Nook would become a regular stop on her new adventures in Little Compton.

Over the next few weeks, Lillian found herself drawn back to Nellie's cafe again and again. There was something comforting about the worn wooden floors, the faint aroma of roasted coffee beans, and the tinkle of the bell above the door that welcomed her inside. Nellie began to recognize Lillian, lighting up with a smile whenever she came in. "Your usual latte today?" she'd ask, already preparing Lillian's drink.

They fell into easy conversation as Nellie worked behind the counter. Lillian learned that Nellie was a lifelong resident of Little Compton who had opened the cafe five years ago. She had a passion for photography and loved capturing candid shots of the town and surrounding coastline. "You should show me your work sometime," Lillian said one morning. "I'd love to see Little Compton through your eyes."

Nellie's face brightened. "I'd be happy to! I'm having an exhibit at the local art gallery next month - you must come to the opening." Lillian promised she would be there, touched that Nellie had invited her. On weekends, the two would linger over tea and pastries, talking about everything under the sun. Lillian found herself opening up about her move to Little Compton, seeking the peace and community she had been missing.

Nellie listened with empathy in her eyes. "I'm so glad you found your way here," she said, reaching out to squeeze Lillian's hand. "This

town has been a sanctuary for me too." A deep understanding blossomed between them - two kindred spirits who had discovered home in this charming seaside haven.

Lillian's small cottage by the sea became a sanctuary of transformation as she unpacked her belongings, infusing the space with the essence of her resilience and hope. The salty ocean breeze carried a promise of fresh beginnings through the open windows as she lovingly arranged cherished possessions - family photographs, books, and trinkets imbued with memories.

She pulled an old glass vase out of a dingy box. She had forgotten she owned it, the trinkets and mementos inside it were all before she married Robert. At the very bottom was an old wooden cross. She made it at the catholic orphanage where she grew up. Abandoned at an early age by her parents, her faith was all she had back then. Since marrying Robert, her relationship with God waned. Her faith was so important to her, and now, she can't remember the last time she prayed. Robert really absorbed every part of who she was.

This town is her chance to rediscover herself. So she hung the cross on the center pane of the front window, just behind the couch. As a constant reminder to regain her faith. Bathed in warm sunlight, the cozy interior underwent a metamorphosis, soon adorned with Lillian's artistic sketches and paintings inspired by the sea. The rhythmic waves crashing against the rocky shore became a comforting melody, blending harmoniously with the subtle creaks of the cottage's well-worn furniture. The house was small. Built on a budget no doubt. It was a far cry from the fine setting Robert had gotten her accustomed to back in New York. A small shotgun house.

Standing at the doorway, there was an old loveseat covered in someone's grandmother's floral curtains to the left, it sat on top of an old faded rug. A mahogany coffee table stood in front of it. Adjacent to

the couch by the left side window was a white breakfast table with two matching chairs. There was no TV so it took up most of the space. To the right was a small window seat overlooking the bluebonnets growing in the window seal. The kitchen was open, it was across from the breakfast table. It's antique cabinets and farm sink felt homey. The pink 1946 Frigidaire added a touch of vintage charm to the space. Directly across from the fridge was a small bathroom. It held all the necessities. A toilet, a sink, and a mirror, but the best part was the standalone claw foot tub. Lillian had plans for that tub. Finally, in the far back was the bedroom. Nestled into the corner was a bed, with French-styled linens draped over it, and enough pillows to drown in. The curtains in the room were yellow and floral, the vanity was antique and petite it fits right next to the bed. The place was perfect. It was home.

In those quiet moments of settling in, Lillian felt the heavy weight of her abusive past begin to lift, replaced by a newfound sense of empowerment and possibility. The cottage, with its carefully curated simplicity and the soothing, constant cadence of the ocean, became not just a dwelling but a vessel for the rekindling of her weary spirit - a place to craft the next hopeful chapter of her life in this quaint seaside town.

As the golden hour descended, Lillian took a solitary walk along the windswept beach, the sky painted in hues of pink and orange. The sand seemed to cradle her footsteps as the waves gently whispered tales of resilience and new beginnings. With each breath of crisp, sea-salted air, Lillian found solace in the vastness of the ocean, the horizon stretching before her like a canvas of endless opportunities. As the sun slowly dipped below the water's edge, she paused to reflect on her profound journey - feeling the heavy weight of the past begin to dissipate, slowly but surely, with the outgoing tide.

The warm morning sun filtered through the sheer curtains of Lillian's seaside cottage, gently rousing her from slumber. As she blinked awake, the sound of the waves rhythmically lapping at the shore outside her window filled her with a sense of peace. Today felt full of promise. After getting ready, Lillian stepped outside into the salty ocean air. She slowly wandered the cobblestone streets of charming Little Compton, taking in the sights. The morning bustle had begun - locals exchanged friendly hellos as they walked their dogs or carried groceries. The scent of freshly baked bread wafted from the corner bakery.

Lillian introduced herself to the baker, Martha, marveling at the rows of perfectly golden loaves. As they chatted, Martha's kindness and enthusiasm made Lillian feel instantly welcomed. Continuing down the street, Lillian popped into the local bookshop, where she was greeted by the shopkeeper, Amy. Surrounded by books, the shop felt like a cozy refuge. Lillian mentioned her love of art and poetry. Amy's face lit up as she showed Lillian a new poetry book from a local author. "You'll have to come to our weekly book club meetings!" Amy warmly insisted.

Lillian left the shop with the poetry book clutched to her chest, a smile on her face. With each friendly encounter, she felt the first threads of belonging weaving into this town. For the first time in a long while, Lillian felt she was exactly where she was meant to be. Lillian strolled along the rocky shoreline, the poetry book in hand. The constant rhythm of the waves was soothing. She found a sunny spot on the rocks and sat down, opening the book. As she read the lyrical words, she felt a sense of peace wash over her.

The turmoil of her past seemed to fade into the background. Here, surrounded by the ocean's tranquility and Little Compton's welcoming embrace, Lillian allowed herself to envision a brighter future. She

took a deep breath of the salty air, a sense of hope and lightness rising within her. Later that afternoon, Lillian made her way to Nellie's cozy cottage on the edge of town. Nellie greeted her with a warm hug. The mouthwatering aroma of Nellie's homemade vegetable stew filled the kitchen.

Over steaming bowls, the two friends fell into easy conversation. Nellie's melodic laugh mingled with the clinking of spoons against bowls. Lillian felt profoundly grateful for this new friendship - it felt as though she had known Nellie for years. In the glow of the evening light, Lillian helped Nellie wash the dishes. Their hands occasionally brushed as they worked side by side in comfortable silence. Lillian realized she couldn't remember the last time she had felt such a sense of belonging.

NEW FRIENDS

In the gentle embrace of Little Compton's beach, Lillian embarked on yet another solitary walk, finding solace in the rhythmic dance of the waves and the soothing heat emanating from the setting sun. The golden hues painted across the horizon cast a warm glow, wrapping her in a tranquil cocoon that gradually unraveled the threads of anxiety that had woven themselves tightly around her. As the waves tenderly kissed the sandy expanse beneath her feet, and seagulls glided lazily overhead, Lillian felt a profound connection to this place—a haven that whispered promises of a new beginning.

The serene melody of the sea, the soft caress of the breeze, and the distant cries of the seagulls all wove together to create a symphony of serenity. Amid this tranquil landscape, Little Compton seemed to extend an open invitation for Lillian to redefine her life—a chance to build a sanctuary free from the echoes of regret and the lingering pain of her past. This beach, with its endless horizon and the comforting cadence of the waves, held the potential to become not just a destination but a place she could call home—a canvas upon which she could paint the hues of a life untethered from the shadows that haunted her.

With every step, Lillian embraced the possibility of crafting a new narrative, one untouched by the darkness that once defined her. Here, in the quietude of the beach, she envisioned a life devoid of the haunt-

ing memories and the specter of him, Robert. Each measured step Lillian took mirrored the beats of her own heart and the chapters of her tumultuous life. The waves whispered tales of her past, an indistinct murmur that blended seamlessly with the symphony of the ocean. Her tightly coiled black hair danced in harmony with the breeze. The salty air enveloped her in a familiar embrace, carrying fragments of memories, both bitter and sweet, as she traversed the shoreline.

As Lillian continued her contemplative stroll along the shoreline, the melody of the waves took an unexpected turn, the creaking of an old fishing boat in the harbor broke up her trance. The sound of old wood and metal playing against the waves drew her attention, leading her gaze towards the dock where a figure, silhouetted by the glow of the setting sun, tended to a fishing net. The smell of salt and seaweed permeated the air, "oh, that's right this is a fishing town" she thought. The fishy odor and noise of the docked boats snapped her out of her idyllic vision of Little Compton, but only for a moment.

Intrigued by the mysterious figure on the dock, she quickened her pace a bit, the grains of sand beneath her feet shifting in response to her steps. As she approached, the silhouette revealed itself to be a man, his form solid and strong. The warm hues of the sunset played upon his figure, casting a captivating aura around him. The man's attention was wholly absorbed in the meticulous task at hand, each movement deliberate and purposeful.

As she drew closer to the dock, she could see the man more clearly. There he stood a man of striking presence and raw, unbridled vitality. He commanded the fishing net with a skill that bespoke years of experience. He wore a pair of faded green overalls tucked into black duck boots. The suspenders lay flapped over his square hips. His shirt was white, short-sleeved, and clung to his sturdy form. The muscles in his toned arms flexing with each deliberate pull of his net. The net is

now laden with a bountiful harvest of fish, clams, crabs, and other sea critters. His hands were sure, and steady, as he reeled the net in. It was a large catch for such a shallow end of the water. She could tell he has been doing this for years. She drew closer still, something about him, she wanted to know more.

The air, already filled with the familiar scent of salt and seaweed, intensified as she watched him work. The clinks of metal against metal, as the man meticulously attended to his fishing gear, melded with the occasional call of seagulls overhead. The symphony, now enriched by the tangible fruits of his labor.

His presence injected an air of enigma into the previously serene scene, capturing Lillian's attention in an unspoken exchange. The play of sunlight on the crests of the waves outlined the contours of his rugged features, a face weathered by the elements and yet imbued with a captivating allure. His eyes were hidden by ruddy blonde hair hanging low over his brow. "No more men Lillian!" she thought to herself as she snatched her gaze away from the man on the dock, looking down at her steps. "They are trouble, we've learned this lesson" scolding herself for being attracted to a man she doesn't know. She went to steal another glance, but suddenly her phone rang in her pocket, its loud ringtone sounding the "star spangled banner". She fumbled with her phone to turn it off, afraid he might see her. "Get a grip, you're not hiding, he has no idea you were staring," she thought. Her ringtone set a stark contrast against the orchestra of waves, gulls, and fishing boats in the harbor.

He glanced up to see where the noise was coming from. He spotted Lillian, standing on the beach her clumsy fingers fiddling with her phone. She was illuminated by the warm glow of the sun. Making her creamy brown skin look bronze. Her black coily hair glistened, as it had been kissed by the mist carried on the ocean breeze. She wore a

pair of tattered blue jeans that sat low on her curvy hips, and a burnt orange semi-sheer pull-over that showed a bit of her midriff, hung off of one shoulder. Exposing the soft curve of her bust. Her full mauve toned lips slightly parted, as the breeze brushed her hair against her round cheek.

She finally got her phone to stop ringing, it was Nellie, no doubt calling about the art gallery showing. She'd have to call her back later. She knew she had drawn attention to herself. Hiding behind her long black hair would not make her invisible. It was time to face the music and look up. His piercing gaze, momentarily diverted from the fishing net, and met hers in a magnetic connection that transcended the ordinary. His deep blue eyes, like the ocean, locked with hers, blue and hazel melted together in that moment. Holding her mesmerizing gaze while pulling in his net proved to be a task he could not do simultaneously. One heavy wave came and tugged the net with a force even his capable hands could not fight. Distracted by the radiance of this woman, he couldn't keep a hold of his net, the force of the wave was powerful, he couldn't pull his hands loose, the wave took the and him with it.

Lillian watched him, watching her, as he continued to pull in his net. The tide was coming in as the sunset. He struggled with his task at hand, she could tell. She blushed under his gaze and looked down at her feet. Suddenly, she hears a strained grunt and a crash of waves. Quickly glancing up to catch a sight of him falling into the shallow end of the dock. Caught up in his net as the the angry waves crashed over him. "Oh my god!" she shouts, without hesitation, she rushes into the water for him.

The water is cold, cutting through her clothes as she wades deep into the shallows of the harbor. Waist deep in the water, as violent waves crash against her threatening to pull her down too. She gets to

him, caught up in a mess of rope. She grabs him, as he fights both the waves, and the net tangled around him. Tugging at the net, she lifts it off his head and shoulders and relinquishes it to the ocean. Her hands grace his back, as he is half sunk in the water. His toned physique trembling under her palm, he was cold and exhausted fighting the waves that tried to take him out to sea. "Come on let's get you out of the water," She says, throwing her arms around him, and pulling his body to hers. He was tense and cold yet firm. He glanced at her through the crushing waves. She stood over him like an angel, the sun casting a fiery glow around her. She could barely lift him. He was a mass of pure muscle. He threw his arm over her shoulder, his head hung low, coughing up water.

Together they left the briny and harsh evening sea to fall onto the sandy cushion of the beach. He's sat and slumped over trying to catch his shaky breath. It all happened in an instant. Kneeling beside him, she's concerned he may have hit his head, or breathed in too much water while he was under. "Hey, I need you to say something. You were under for a while before I got to you. Are you okay?" She says, "I'm fine" he throws over his shoulder. She started to take offense at such at his tone but remembered he just nearly drowned. As he continued to catch his breath, she glanced him over, looking for wounds. "I'm just going to check you for cuts, or wounds", he said nothing, only took shallow breaths.

She traces the tip of her fingers across his shoulders and back, his thick neck, and his arms. His drenched shirt clung to every line of his toned body. She admires his strong build, his veins nearly bursting out of his skin. As she searched him for wounds, she noticed he had scars. Scars unlike any she's ever seen. Small and circular, pinpoint, with smaller scars leading into the center. What could create scars like these she wonders? He struggles to catch his breath as she trails her

fingertips over his skin. "Jesus," he thought, as she electrified every place she touched. He nearly trembled under her soft hands.

She realizes she is all but gawking at this point, she blushes and pulls her hands away. "You're okay, I don't see any wounds or bleeding, but you may have hit your head, and you breathed in a lot of water you could still dry drown. You should get to the hospital for a second look." "I'll be fine" he stands, towering over her like a Greek god. She is, for a moment, struck by his beauty. The nearly set sun lit him up from behind. He glistened, still drenched in ocean water. She snaps herself out of his tempting trance and stands up to face him. "I'm fine is all you can say, how about thanks for, you know, not letting you drown" she quips.

He eyes her, shocked she said that to him. His lips parted a little as he started to return her sass, "another time" He thought to himself shaking his head. She did save his life after all. "Thanks," he says, his voice quiet and raspy, almost whispering. "That usually never happens I'm pretty good with a fishing line," he says as he runs his eyes down her body. He thinks he was subtle, but she saw him check her out. Looking away as she blushes "It happens to us all I guess." A beat passes between them, he fixes his shirt which is slightly pulled up around his waist exposing his toned and firm stomach. "I'm Jack," he says reaching out his strong yet graceful hands, the veins under his skin outline his hand as if he was painted or carved of stone. She takes it, "I'm Lillian". The feel of callouses in his palm is comforting and electrifying. He clearly works with his hands a lot.

"When you live in a small town like this you get to know people," he says taking a few steps away from her. "You get familiar with their faces. Your face I'd definitely remember." He tilted his head to the side a little, studying her. "I take it you're new here?" he says as he turns and heads toward the dock. "I am" shouts Lillian, as she hurries to catch

up to him. They walk together toward the dock, pacing themselves. "I moved here just a few weeks ago to get away fro-," He glances over at her, curious and expectant. "uh, away from New York. The rat race, you know." He nods, "I know exactly what you mean. The world is... a lot". He looks at her tilting his head once more. They stared into each other's eyes as they walked. "Lillian, you need to leave. You can't do this, you can't get involved. You just got here." She thought to herself. "Jack," she says as she cuts their walk short. "It was nice to meet you, but I should be getting home, it'll be dark soon." Now she's the one backing away. She offers a wave and turns on her heels picking up her pace back up the beach. Jack watched as she went, putting his hands into his damp overall pockets, and turning to go his own way, back to his boat. Intrigued by this beautiful woman, who he hoped he'd see again.



Dear cherished readers,

I extend my heartfelt thanks for diving into the first two chapters of my book. Your engagement means the world to me. Taking the time to embark on this storytelling journey is a blessing, and I'm genuinely grateful for your presence.

As you venture into the unfolding chapters, I would be honored to hear your thoughts, questions, and opinions. Your feedback is incredibly valuable—it not only fuels my creativity but also helps shape the narrative in meaningful ways.

Let's make this storytelling experience a collaborative one. Drop a comment, share your impressions, and let's build this world together. Your input is a vital part of this journey, and I can't wait to read what you think.

Thank you for being a part of this adventure. Please take the time to fill out this feedback form here, you can remain anonymous if you wish.

<https://zarriasimmons.com/redemption-in-the-harbor>

Warm regards,

Zarria Simmons