

as well. What they had in their lungs was all they had between life and death.

The yacht suddenly settled as Harlowe felt the swell recede. Frantically, they both kicked in an effort to break free. Harlowe figured they had about eight or nine seconds before the next wave would send them into the rock jetty. Nine seconds after that another wave would crush them into toothpicks. Nine seconds after that he was done counting forever. They had to get out now!

Leucadia felt the urgency in his movements. She tried to help Harlowe, but she was weakening rapidly. It was all she could do to hold on to him while he pushed and clawed their way out. He moved a beam away, and then a cot or mattress thudded against his face. There was so much debris and blackness he had no idea if they were making progress or if they were heading toward the bottom when they should be going up. It was all a wild guess. Leucadia lost her grip once, and Harlowe reached out and miraculously found her forearm and yanked her to his side. He swore to himself that he would never lose her again.

Then he saw it.

Light!

Maybe it was a hole. Maybe he was hallucinating. But if it was real, it was their way out.

He stroked with one arm, kicking with all that was in him, the powerful thrusts of his black rocket fins driving them upward. The light became brighter and brighter until suddenly they broke the surface.

His first breath could have filled a dirigible. But they had only a heartbeat before he dove them deep again to avoid the next wave that struck. Down they went, Harlowe holding on to the damsel with both arms as they tumbled inside the swirling mass. He felt the rough edge of a granite rock rub against his back. He was that close. All that was left was to kick and hope.

He opened his eyes and watched a surge of bubbles going sideways. His mind told him that was wrong. Up was ninety degrees the other way. But bubbles didn't lie. Neither did gravity. His mind was playing tricks on him. It was being coy and deceitful. He went ninety degrees right and found the surface again. As he did, he lifted her face—the face of a goddess—out of the water.

He shook her. She wasn't breathing. Inside the channel, as they were, the rocks were only a few yards away. Harlowe winced. The yacht had been shattered into a billion pieces. He knew they were headed for the same fate if he didn't get him and his goddess outside the breakers in the next few moments.

He kicked again with all that he had.

He kicked to save *her* life.

Up the steep wall of a giant they went. Up. Up. Way up the wall. The top of the crest broke over their heads but he managed to push them through, out the back side, and into the next trough before they were sucked back over the curl. Between the troughs he fed her air. By the time he had kicked them over the worst of it, they were far enough outside where he could give her a steady, rhythmic flow of air in the open water without getting pummeled again by a breaking wave. After a couple of quick pumps to her stomach, she coughed up an ocean and opened her eyes. She kept staring up at the sky, wondering if she was among the living.

"You're okay now," Harlowe said to the goddess calmly.

She touched the side of his face tentatively, testing to see if he was real or not. His dark, sun-tipped hair was a glistening mass of clinging strands that gracefully framed his boyish face. From there her hands slid along his strong neck and powerful broad shoulders to his chiseled arms that held her steady in the choppy waters where they floated together, touching and feeling each other's warmth.

"Thank you," she said.

Harlowe said nothing. His focus was only on her. He checked her eyes to make sure they were lucid and clear.

Then she asked, "Are you taken?"

Harlowe replied with a boyish smile, mesmerized by her deep green, faceted eyes. They were the most extraordinary eyes he had ever seen. Clear, intelligent, yet fearless and steady. He brushed back her long blond hair with a gentle hand so he could see her better. Her face was beautiful and flawless. He wondered if he were stuck in a dream and she would vaporize in his arms the moment he awakened.

As if she felt the same wonder, Leucadia drifted closer to him, their bodies touching as they rose and fell over the rolling troughs. For the moment they were the only ones in the ocean. Alone. No need to talk. No need to rush. Make every moment count. Make every moment theirs with hands held securely onto each other . . . forever.

She took in his strong warmth and the scent of the sea and musk, and laid her head comfortably against his broad chest as though they were one, like they had always been and always would be. Resting peacefully, she cooed, "Gamadin . . ."