Lovereading.co.uk

Sexy Shorts for the Beach

A Collection of Short Stories

Published by Accent Press

Extract

All text is copyright of the author

Click here to buy this book and read more

This opening extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

Sea, Sand and Socks

Fran Tracey

I'd been excited at first when Rob called suggesting a beach for our next rendezvous.

'And maybe the sea too, if the waves aren't too crashing.' I paused. 'And there's no jelly fish.' It had been ages since we'd met up and I felt like a kiss and a cuddle, plus extras, of course. And I'd been missing Rob, although that's not the kind of thing we talked about.

'Can't believe we haven't thought of it before. *From Here to Eternity* is one of my favourite films.' His voice sounded excited.

That was something I didn't know about Rob, I realised. His favourite films. It was only the last time we met, punting on the river, that I discovered Italian was his favourite food. The punt had reminded him of the gondolas in Venice. We'd pondered on the erotic possibilities of sharing a bowl of spaghetti and one thought had led to another. The punt rocked dangerously for the next half hour, and we got tangled in weeds at the river's edge.

'You can be Deborah Kerr, I'll be Burt Lancaster,' he said. So of course I assumed that it'd be an exotic destination. The Caribbean? Somewhere with golden sands and warm, crystal clear water lapping at our entwined feet. The Canaries would do. I'd have to try and get a couple of weeks off work. We usually did this a bit last minute, Rob and me.

'How about Norfolk?' Rob whispered. 'We had great family holidays there when I was a kid. Fantastic beaches.'

Something else I didn't know about Rob. Where he spent his childhood holidays. Why hadn't his Mum and Dad thought to take him to Barbados? I paused for a moment.

'But won't it be freezing cold?'

'Maybe. But we'll keep each other warm.' I could hear the smile in his voice. 'Where's your sense of adventure? You've never been reluctant before. It was you who suggested the pub garden in Devon.'

'Yes, and who could have predicted Morris dancers would appear at our crucial moment. The sound of their bells drowned us out, though. Did you ever get all those rose thorns out of…?'

'Got to dash,' he interrupted. 'Perkins is approaching, face like thunder. See you Saturday. Ten o'clock. King's Cross. Ticket hall.'

The phone line went dead. I was too busy at work to worry about the venue too much right then. I was engrossed in untangling some creative accounting when the phone rang again. Probably Rob with a change of heart. Telling me to book leave and meet him at Heathrow instead. Pack your bikini with the ties at the side and the easy to undo clasp, he'd say. Well he would if he knew I'd bought one for this very purpose last year.

'Sally, it's me.' My friend Nicole spoke in her best hushed tone.

'Hello me.'

'Are you free on Saturday? I've got a lawyer for you this time. Called Tim. Still, he can't help his name. Very sexy according to Liz. But then she's married to Mike so what would she know about sexy? He's worth a packet. Don't want to still be single when you hit thirty, now, do you?'

'Don't I?'

Nicole was always trying to set me up with rich and attractive losers. The kind of men who talk non-stop about their possessions and achievements. Not like Rob. He may not be as suave and sophisticated as Nicole's blind dates, but he was sexy, in a quirky, scruffy kind of way. And very bendy. And I'm hardly movie star material, just an ordinary girl with a less than ordinary hobby. And Rob never boasts, he's just kind and fun. Perfect boyfriend material, if we weren't so hooked on our current arrangement. And, yes, I did want to be single at thirty if you call the occasional erotic encounter in unusual outdoor

places, with a man you've known forever but not too well, being single. I was quite happy with what Nicole would call "my situation", thank you very much.

'I think you're scared of commitment,' Nicole said smugly, not for the first time. Having my cake and eating it was what I called it. Though sometimes, just sometimes, I did wonder what Rob did on a cold Wednesday evening in November. Watched TV? Rang his mum?

'Sorry, Nicole, I'm busy this weekend.'

'Not your dirty weekend man again? Aren't you getting on a bit for all that shenanigans, Sally? Exposing yourself in multi-storey car parks. Getting caught by the police.' I wish I'd never told Nicole about Rob. Or about the police and me and Rob, in what I called the multi-storey car park misunderstanding.

'The police didn't catch us, I've told you. One of them just shone their torch in, but we kept very still on the back seat and they went away. And anyway, this time it'll be on a beach. When did you and Ben last make love on a beach?'

'Last summer, if you must know. On St.Lucia. Every day for a fortnight. And in the sea too.'

I put the phone down. I liked Nicole. I just wished she wouldn't try and organise my love life. And deep down I was a bit envious of couples who made love every day for a fortnight and still had someone to share the cleaning with. Maybe I was missing out. I might never even find out where Rob shopped, or if he bought organic.

It had all begun long ago when we were in the sixth form. Raging hormones at the end of term disco led to our first fumble. I blame 'A' level English too. All those repressed Victorian heroines like Jane Eyre and dark brooding heroes like Heathcliff. Rob wasn't so sure. He did biology and said it was definitely the hormones.

'Though I do wonder what Jane Eyre would have been like once her stays were released and she was ravished by Rochester,' he'd said.

Whatever it was, seeing Rob saunter down the corridor to double Maths on a Thursday morning made my stomach flip. And he still has that effect on me. When he rushes up to meet me at the train station, my heart flutters. Biology I guess.

The school football pitch was our first venue. Between the goalposts. Not that either of us were football fans. Quite the opposite in fact. But that's where we found ourselves after a little too much spiked punch. We were fairly timid that time. Let's say the ball didn't cross the line. Then term ended, we lived a few miles apart and didn't see each other over the summer. Somehow we never got round to it in the upper sixth. We were too chock full of teenage embarrassment.

After 'A' levels we went off to different universities, me to study Maths – well English had never been my strong point – Rob to study Economics. Our next encounter was at the first school reunion. This time we went a little further. A bit more vodka in the punch and a few years of experience at university helped fuel us. We made our way onto the roof of one of the prefab buildings at our old school and I wouldn't have been surprised if traces of asbestos were left on my backside. But it was fun. After that night we went our separate ways, promising to keep in touch. I became an accountant, Rob a salesman in a ball-bearing factory. With careers like these our main chance of having fun and thrills was through our erotic encounters. So we kept in touch, meeting every few months. It was a kind of stress relief. And we got to know each other a little bit better each time too.

'I used to spend my pocket money on superheroes comics and some kind of sherbet that blew your head off,' reminisced Rob.

So it's not as sordid as people might think. Neither of us had a significant other, and we'd agreed that if either of us met someone we would like to settle down with, the other would bow out gracefully. Sex in suburbia forever for the lucky person who found themselves in a permanent relationship. The horror

of this is at least partly what made our arrangement so attractive.

I don't know what Miss Pickles, our 'A' level English teacher, would've thought if she'd known what naughtiness was inspired by our set books. She'd never thought either of us showed much flair for understanding the finer points of our nation's rich literary heritage.

"Robert Jones, would you like to share with the class what you and Sally Bredon find quite so amusing about Cleopatra and the asp," she would ask in a waspish tone.

No, Miss Pickles would not have understood. Mind you, neither of us had been much good at history either, but we managed to visit a few historic buildings, like a Scottish castle. I found being ravished on the ramparts with the promise I could pour boiling oil on my enemies (where were you when I needed you, Miss Pickles?) a real turn on.

I enjoyed dressing the part too. Long velvet dress and cape for the castle, and no knickers for authenticity of course. Floaty cotton gypsy skirt for the field of corn. But if Rob thought I'd be stripping to my bikini on the beach in Norfolk, in February, he had another think coming. He'd have to enjoy finding the real me under the many layers I'd be wearing, though he was certainly not peeling them all off.

On Saturday we made it to the beach by mid-afternoon, not long before dusk. A gale was blowing. We walked in silence. Rob casually draped his arm around my shoulder. I nestled snugly into his chest. I was cold. I wondered if we looked like those people you see on the cover of holiday brochures. Like real lovers in a real relationship. Only with lots more clothes on.

'You must've been stressed to suggest this,' I muttered. 'Is Perkins putting on the pressure?'

'Not exactly. I've been missing you. We haven't met for months.' He looked at his feet. I was a little taken aback. This was new. My stomach gambolled.

'But we often don't meet for months.'

'I know, but,' his voice faded. 'I thought this time we could talk a bit. More than just about our favourite things.' He smiled. 'We could take a different leaf from Julie Andrew's songbook next time, you know, climb every mountain, then have a quickie at the peak? Bet she and the captain never made love amongst the edelweiss. But I know you like having your back caressed, but not your toes touched, that you've read *Jane Eyre*, you understand quadratic equations, and that's about it,' Rob said, all in a rush.

'I can tell you I like the feel of warm sand between my toes and collecting exotic shells. Well, I would if I ever got the chance. Sand dunes, couch grass and biting gale force winds, that I can take or leave.' Rob pulled away from me a little.

'I thought we could be private here,' he said.

When had he ever worried about being private before? We'd made love in some pretty public places. There was the ghost train at the fair last year. And the tunnel of love. There'd been foreplay on the waltzers too. Then there was the bandstand in the park, not whilst the band was in full swing, of course.

'I'd been hoping we could stop over somewhere,' his voice faded into the wind. We'd never stopped over. Not together anyway. Not that I hadn't thought about it. Of course I had. And recently the thought occurred more often.

'I've provisionally booked us into the King's Arms, in town. Their website said it had some of the biggest four posters in England. I thought we could pretend we were back at the castle. Only indoors. And with the comfort of twenty-first century central heating.' He grinned. 'But without the dungeon, I'm afraid.'

He'd got me there. The castle had been our best encounter yet. I changed the subject, but not without a pang of fear. Was Nicole right? Was I too hooked on my fantasies? Worried that if we got to know each other too well it might all fall apart and I would never see him again?

'So where's the best spot here, then? Let's get started. And if you think I'm getting naked like in the ancient forest you can

think again. A few twigs and spiders have nothing on this. No sex without socks, I'm afraid.'

'I was ten when I was here last,' he protested, 'how would I know what was the best spot?' But he led me into the dunes and shook out the tartan rug we'd bought at the castle as a souvenir in the gift shop on our way out. It still held memories. Rob was on to a winner now, and he knew it. The tartan rug always made me feel in need of a cuddle. Trouble was every time he threw it into the air the wind whipped it away. I giggled.

'Let's try without it,' I suggested. 'It's not like we're not protected by many layers of clothing, now, is it?'

Or so I thought. Silly me. I'd forgotten how sand works its way into every little crevice. But as soon as Rob kissed me the wind seemed to drop. I tugged his shirt from the waistband of his trousers and held him close to me, massaging his back. He flinched.

'Good grief, Sally, you could've warmed your hands. At least I blew into mine before tackling your bra.'

'Whose idea was Norfolk? In February?' I said sharply.

'OK, fair point. But make sure those hands of yours are good and warm before you undo my belt. You're not getting those blocks of ice into my boxers, that's for sure.'

I don't know why this time it felt different, but it did. Less rushed, more like we were a proper couple, not two people who just happened to meet to exercise their pent-up lust every few months. Well, it did until the only other person in Norfolk mad enough to leave the warmth of their home decided to let their dog off its lead in the sand dune next to us. The dog nosed its way right up to Rob's nether regions and let out a distressed yelp. Not the rabbit it had been hoping to find, obviously.

'Come on, Jake. Get a move on. I need a pint,' shouted its owner.

The dog sauntered off. It probably wasn't the first time it had stumbled across love in the dunes, but I bet it was usually rabbits involved.

Alone again, we threw the rug over ourselves for protection from the stinging rain that had just begun. We lay on our backs watching the darkening sky, sharing a companionable silence. This was new, too. Usually we made our way back to the train station fairly quickly. I looked at Rob. It was like being on our hundredth date. It was nice.

'I don't know how much longer I can carry on with this, Sally.'

My stomach flipped and I gulped. This was the moment I had been dreading. Rob had brought me here for our swansong. If he'd got a girlfriend, someone to share cleaning the bathroom with before making love in the shower, and it wasn't me, I wasn't sure now how I'd cope. I stared even harder at the sky, trying to make stars appear from behind the dense clouds.

'Apart from anything else, I'm running out of ideas of places to go.'

'Me too, to be honest,' I replied. I shuddered, not least at the thought of Nicole organising my dates from now on.

Rob squirmed in the sand a bit. I wondered if a crab had surfaced and nipped him. He looked as though he was going to say something, then thought better of it. I wanted him to speak, but dreaded what he would say. He cleared his throat.

'Maybe we could try somewhere indoors next time,' he whispered. 'Perhaps you'd like to come to my place for a change. We don't have to stick to the bed. There's a nice big kitchen table.'

His place. I didn't even know if he had a flat or a house.

'It's not a palace. Just a little terraced place in the town centre. You'd be welcome any time.'

We both looked up at the sky again, avoiding each other's gaze.

'I suppose there's no reason why I can't,' I tried to sound nonchalant. 'Next time. In a couple of months? Do you have a garden?' Please say sooner, I begged silently.

'I was wondering about sometime next week.' He turned to me and kissed my nose. 'I've even got a shed,' he added.

I didn't hesitate.

'I'd like to see you sooner, too. Maybe you can play me your favourite music.'

'Of course.' He pulled out a bottle of champagne from his rucksack, and we lingered in the dunes, making love again, slowly this time. We stayed over in The King's Arms too.

And that's what led us here. I smiled as I heard the registrar's voice say:

'And I would like to thank you all on behalf of Sally and Rob for sharing their double celebration today, their marriage and the birth of their daughter Scarlett Sandy Jones.'

No one but Nicole raised an eyebrow at Scarlett's name. I'd finally discovered Rob's favourite film is *Gone with the Wind.* We're honeymooning in North Carolina. Scarlett is coming with us, but one night we'll have a babysitter and I will wear the tightest stays and biggest crinoline imaginable, and Rob will wear a cravat. And he'll have fun finding out what good Southern girls wear under all those layers of lace and frills.