

## Sea Turtles

Naomi Vondell

I remember first seeing the Caribbean at night. Millions of little fish swarming about my heels. A dark mass of sea turtles moving in the distance.

I remember the first time our eyes met. Your large, toned body. Your kind eyes that slanted backward and twinkled. The crinkles around them. I remember thinking, "He's hot, but he's out of my league." So I didn't think much about you.

I remember the way you looked at me across the dance floor. Like a hungry man looking forward to fine cuisine. You made a silent "who-hoo" with your lips and smiled. I remember smiling back because I didn't know what else to do.

I remember your French. "Je vais tomber." I answered, "Essaies de tomber sur quelque chose douce." Your eyes pierced through me in the dim street light.

I remember our first kiss. Slow, lingering warmth. Every taste bud. I remember your hands gripping the nape of my neck, pressing, claiming me. The stars glinted above the wind in the palms. We were the only two people in a hushed, glowing world. I rested my cheek against your chest.

I remember when you told me I was too interesting for you. That your feelings were too strong. That I'd struck the chord you didn't want heard.

I remember running down the beach. I remember the mass of black sea turtle moving beside me. Fear and an urge to survive. Despite you.

I remember our goodbye. I said all the right things. You seemed relieved. I remember smiling a forced smile. You gave me a long, slow look – and then looked resolutely away.

I remember seeing your picture on Facebook. I hadn't seen you for 18 years. Same crinkly blue eyes. Same sunny smile.

I remember your first message to me. "There is no way I could ever forget someone like you. And now, reading your profile, I can see that there was much more to you than I knew. So near and yet so far."

I remember the months, talking to you, baring my soul. My empty inbox.

I remember your Life Event: "Kalihari Engagement." You misspelled Kalahari. You had proposed to your perfect wife in the desert, under the stars.

I remember you dancing with her before a fairy-tale wedding pavilion. She was resting her cheek against your chest.