

"I'm sorry." the text flashes across Leah's cell phone screen amidst a family discussion of who would walk the dog. Leah's heart clenches as she reads it, her breath catches in her chest.

"I need to make a call, it's Amy," she says to Gavin, and he nods with that look of resignation he has come to wear during an Amy emergency. Leah walks into the garden phoning her sister. It rings for a few moments before Amy's drunken voice slurs a hello.

"What's happened?" asks Leah.

"I'm okay," slurs Amy, her voice unnaturally shrill. "I'm going to take a walk and I'm okay."

"You don't sound okay," Leah's heart is racing, the familiar sensation of the adrenaline response swamping her thin frame. She takes a deep breath.

"What have you taken Amy? And where is Delta?"

"I just took my meds and some other pills and stuff," her voice trails off as if she is not talking directly into the phone. "And vodka and Delta is having a lovely time at her Dad's and she is fine with him and Lisa, The perfect and lovely Lisa..."

"I'm coming over."

"You don't need to do that, I don't want you to do that, I'm going to go..."

Leah hears a thud and the sound of the phone bouncing to the floor. Her heart is tight in her chest, she walks inside calling Amy's name into the phone with increasing urgency. Shoving her feet into her sneakers she grabs her keys, her purse and a jacket hanging near the backdoor. She waves over her boys' heads at Gavin. He nods, no explanation needed. Sadly, this all too familiar response to Amy's calls is part of their family routine.

Leah dials 111 on the handsfree. It's a twenty-minute drive to Amy's house and the property borders a lake, a lake Amy often talks about wading into like it's a perfectly valid option for a thirty-eight-year-old mother of one. For a moment an image of Amy's pale, bloated and lifeless body floats before her eyes and she flexes her fingers as they clasp the steering wheel. She forces out a breath through her lips and drags her hand through her practical bob, she feels a hot rush rising from her stomach and tries to push it away with another deep breath. Emergency services answer,

"Ambulance please," she says.

The conversation that follows is like a well-rehearsed routine as Leah details her sister's address, the previous suicide attempts and medication details. She remains polite. She knows from experience that the emergency response team switch off to emotion, she must remain calm.

She pulls into the driveway ten minutes later, it's already dark and the ambulance pulls in behind her slowly and without fanfare as if there is no urgency at all.

"I'm her sister," says Leah quickly, establishing some authority over the scene.

"She's dropped her phone, I'm not sure where she is."

"Do you have a key?" asks the paramedic.

Leah nods as she walks to the door key in hand, inserting it into the heavy lock, it swings open into the still house. Leah moves from room to room turning on lights and giving each room a cursory search, she can tell Amy's not here, it feels empty. The paramedic comes out from the laundry with Amy's phone in his hand.

"Is this hers? he asks.

"Yes."

They open the back door from the laundry and walk into the back yard, it slopes down to the water's edge. Leah's heart rate increases.

The paramedics move quickly now scanning the water's edge. Leah stands frozen, her silhouette casting a strange elongated shadow across the backyard, she hears Delta's swing gently creaking in the breeze. Leah can't make herself move any closer to the lake and what it might hold. Her feet are cemented to the dewy grass, she feels a loose piece of skin on her lip and worries it with her teeth.

"Over here." calls the male paramedic and his female partner runs over to where he is hunched over by the neighbour's upturned rowboat. Leah turns her body slowly, a rushing sound in her ears.

"She's breathing," he calls. Leah's breath leaves her in a rush and she sways slightly, her feet still anchored to the ground. Not today then.

The paramedics speak gently to Amy strapping her to the gurney, inserting an IV and loading her into the ambulance. A police car pulls up outside as the ambulance doors are closing. A constable asks Leah the usual questions which Leah answers in her measured way. She drives to the hospital calling her father on the way. His confused voice and unfailing concern increases Leah's anger as she pictures him sitting on the side of his bed fumbling to answer his cell phone

in the dark. She makes the usual calls that put her life on hold as she navigates the convoluted hospital parking building, coming to rest in a familiar parking bay.

Leah stares at the coloured line running through the flannel blanket of the hospital bed, everything is worn and harshly lit, from the black marks on the floor to the scuffed plastic cup on the side table. She had discarded the archaic Reader's Digest hours ago and her cell phone is at eight per cent. Her eyelids feel heavy and her shoulders drawn tight with the kind of zinging stress that cannot be massaged away. She needs ibuprofen but after a thorough search of her purse, she finds an empty packet and knows Gavin has helped himself to it again.

Amy snores softly, her mouth open against the starched sheet of the hospital pillow, her mascara has run from the corner of her eyes like a parody of the KISS poster that had hung for years on their bedroom wall. Leah feels nothing when she looks at her, not anger, not fear for her safety, just emptiness. It's finally happened she thinks to herself. I'm empty, the well has run dry.

With the typical lack of decorum that exists in a hospital, the curtain is briskly drawn back and Leah is startled out of her daze. Amy doesn't stir which doesn't deter the nurse who starts speaking to her and shining a torch in her eyes.

"She'll have a bit of a headache I suspect," she says cheerfully.

"Yes I expect so," says Leah unconsciously mimicking the vernacular of the nurse.

Amy's eyes open and a frown creases her pale forehead, her eyes bleary, she rubs her face with the hand trailing with the lure and IV.

"Careful," says Leah, quickly slipping into professional mode. "You need to keep your drip in."

"What happened?"

Leah stares at Amy for a long moment.

"You mean after the pills and the drink? Well, your heart rate slowed down to a dangerous level, you collapsed and hit your head and then we found you at the lake's edge. Is that what you mean?"

Amy pushes herself to be a little more upright, turning her body slightly away from Leah.

"I can't remember," she says.

Leah feels a flash of anger spread across her chest and stain her cheeks.

"You never remember," she says quietly, and *I can never forget.*

"Where's Dad?"

"He's gone to find coffee. You know he can't stand hospitals since Mum."

"I didn't expect you to come over, you know, you don't have to be pissy with me." Amy's temper flares as it always does when she feels vulnerable.

"Oh sure, I should have finished dinner and watched Netflix. What did you think I would do?!"

Leah's voice is harsh in the cubicle and as the curtains shift she suddenly remembers the busy A & E, the nurses, and the other patients and reels herself in, she takes a breath forcibly calming herself.

"Do you want some water?"

Amy nods and Leah holds the cup to her. Amy takes the cup with a shaky hand, sipping the lukewarm water and leaning back with a sigh.

"You almost died in the ambulance," Leah says quietly.

Amy closes her eyes. Their father's hand gently pulls back the curtain with a tentativeness at odds with the former briskness of the nurse.

"You're awake," he says with forced cheerfulness, his hands clutching the coffees tightly.

"I didn't get you a coffee....I didn't know..." He puts them down on the tray over the bed.

"How about I just duck out and get another. I'll be right back," He starts to maneuver himself out of the tiny cubicle again, taking care not to bump the bed. He stops himself as if realising it would be bad form to simply escape and clumsily places a tanned hand over Amy's blanket-covered knee.

"I'm glad you're feeling better poppet," he says, his eyes filling he leaves quickly. Leah sighs. She looks at Amy,

"Now what?" she asks.

Amy's eyes fill with tears, she stretches her small hand out toward Leah. Leah's hand meets it almost of its own volition. Amy's hand is so familiar with her little scar and the shape of her nails as familiar as Leah's own. She squeezes.

"Don't give up on me," Amy says.

It is much later when the idea comes to Leah, she is lying on Delta's unicorn duvet looking at a rainbow clock reading 6 am when the seed of an idea begins to grow in her mind. After leaving the hospital at 2 am Leah had returned to Amy's house to pack her a bag. She had laid down on her niece's bed for a moment, falling asleep almost instantly.

She had dreamt all night that she was running and woke with a heavy physical exhaustion and a wired mind. The events of the last few years had been playing through her mind like the trailer of a made for TV drama. The pills, the tears, the vomit, the alcohol-fuelled rages. It has to stop. They have to do something different. They would both pack a bag and leave, go somewhere completely new, where no one knows them. Where Amy could discover that life was worth living again.

She calls her father first thing.

"Dad can you put Amy on?" she asks. She can hear Amy complaining before she comes on the phone.

"Promise me you will do something for me," Leah says.

"What? Is this an intervention? God Leah, you know I hate that stuff."

"It is and it isn't. Just hear me out. You and me, we go away somewhere, away from everything and we figure it out." Leah is aware of something in her own voice, almost a fanaticism, and she tries to tone it down.

"Somewhere nice Amy, a surf retreat."

"You hate the sea."

"I don't hate the sea, I just don't like to swim with creatures I can't see. But I will do it, we can both do it. It will be just what we need."

"So the wonder daughter rescues screw up Amy is that it?" Amy bristles.

"Amy, have you got a better plan?" There's a long pause at the end of the phone, Leah can hear someone offer Amy the orange hospital cordial Leah knows she hates.

"No, I guess not. Okay then. Will there be cocktails?"

"Yes, virgin ones."

"God save me," says Amy.

The resort is like slipping into a luxurious bath floating with fragrant flowers. Luxury exudes from the walls, the dark wooden floors and the staff who move gracefully amongst them. Leah can feel the tropical heat seeping into her bones, it's restorative. Amy too is energised.

"Did you see the fruit at breakfast?" Leah asks. "It was like an art arrangement."

"Yeah, I did, it was nice," says Amy. "Although my Mojito tasted like grass."

"It was a green smoothie Amy."

"Exactly."

Leah shakes her head, she knows Amy's joking but her alcohol consumption is the elephant in the room. Leah wonders if her slight restlessness is withdrawal symptoms.

Amy has wrapped a colourful sarong over her swimsuit. With her long dark hair, she looks exotic, Leah can't help but feel self-conscious in her Kathmandu shorts and sports tee. Fashion has never come naturally to her, she feels like she's all sharp angles compared to Amy's soft curves.

The sisters head to the beach for their first surf lesson. Ever since Leah was a child she has been petrified of swimming in the sea. It's as if the JAWS movies imprinted on her psyche. She had tried and failed to stop googling shark statistics for Bali, and found that it's not only sharks that she should worry about but stingrays, stonefish, sea lice, crabs and orcas. Leah would have preferred a chlorinated swimming pool any day.

Amy knows her well enough to see she's freaking out. She smiles at Leah.

"This was your idea, remember?"

"Yeah I know, I don't know what I was thinking," Leah says.

The instructor with his tanned skin and long dark hair does help to ease Leah's nerves. Amy brightens considerably when she meets him, arching an eyebrow and fanning herself dramatically.

They are in a class with four other women: an American, a Canadian and two Australians. Leah knows immediately that Amy is not going to get along with them. She keeps giving Leah pointed looks whenever the American woman speaks. Leah tries not to catch her eye.

After their brief safety lesson they paddle out, the sun is warm on Leah's back and she tries to breathe in the moment. Amy grins and for a moment Leah is reminded of all of the time they spent together as kids, Amy always convincing Leah to go along with her crazy ideas. Leah feels light-hearted and her eyes fill with tears. Amy starts singing the theme tune to Baywatch and Leah laughs. For so long their interactions have been a kind of belligerent banter as Leah tries to

find ways to check up on her and Amy resists her clumsy attempts. It's a relief for Leah to just be.

The sea is incredibly clear. Leah is distracted enough trying to master a new skill that she forgets to keep up with her regular visual checks for sea life. Amy throws herself into it without fear of failure and manages to stand up a few times on her board. She does a victory cry when she stands for a full fifteen seconds, her fist in the air, head thrown back laughing and Leah tries to imprint this image as if it will fall through her fingers like the warm Bali sand.

Leah is clumsier in her attempts. Repeating aloud the instructions she wills her body to follow the sequence to surfing success. When she finally stands Amy laughs in delight and a smile stretches across the salty skin on Leah's face. As they paddle in Leah thinks of Gavin and the boys, they would love this. But if they were here she would have been recording and applauding their successes rather than her own, perhaps she would have stayed on the shore.

"That was amazing," Leah says as they walk back to the resort. "You looked so happy, I haven't seen you that happy in so long," Leah smiles at Amy, touching her arm as they walk.

"Don't spoil it, Leah, you haven't cured me with one afternoon of surfing. What I really want now are some beers," Amy increases her pace as Leah struggles to contain the hurt.

"I was just saying it was fun."

"No you weren't, you were assessing my mental health as you always do. Shall I fill out a daily scale of one to ten Leah, so that you don't have to keep finding ways to ask?"

Leah falls back. Amy's right. Stupidly she had thought that Amy was doing better. Leah sits down on a pool chair she can't face sharing a room with Amy when she's like this. She leans back and closes her eyes not wanting to catch the eye of another guest.

Leah stayed at the pool until the evening began to cool then headed back to their room. Amy was dressed and sitting on the bed,

"Shall we dine out tonight?" she asks when Leah enters.

"Sure," said Leah, taking the olive branch and entering the bathroom.

They were dropped at the restaurant by one of the resort staff. Outdoor candles lit the path to their table and Leah was enthralled. Even Amy, who had travelled extensively through Asia, was impressed with the setting.

"Any drinks?" asked the waitress,

"A Tiger beer please," says Amy with a touch of defiance in her voice.

"One for me too," says Leah quietly.

The menu is extensive and they laugh at their attempts to pronounce the dishes. Leah keeps asking the waitress if she is saying it correctly. Amy orders using the numbers that run alongside the options.

The drinks arrive and Amy swigs hers straight from the bottle, leaning back as if in rapture.

Leah pours hers into a glass leaving it to the side and pouring them both water.

"No thanks," says Amy. "I've had enough water to hydrate me for the rest of my stay."

Leah sighs and cautiously sips her own beer.

"Lighten up Leah, it's just a beer,"

"I didn't say anything," Leah straightens her cutlery.

"It's what you don't say."

Leah gives her a look containing all the hurt she still carries from their conversation poolside.

"Oh for God Sakes can we just have some fun?" Amy asks.

Leah looks around the restaurant at the little details she missed coming in. Her eyes settle on a group of small statues decorated with flowers and candles.

"Delta and the boys would love this," she says. Amy says nothing. Leah unfolds her napkin from under her glass and places it over her lap. Their entree arrives and the waitress breaks the tension with her graceful movements. Amy orders another beer.

"Cheers," she says holding her bottle to Leah. Leah meets it reluctantly with her own.

"Did you see that American woman fawning over our instructor? I heard her telling him about her new Audi, I mean seriously, she's the one who looks like she's had a wax and polish."

Leah smiles into her glass.

"He is gorgeous," Leah says. "His name is Cody, surely that makes him a nineties baby?"

They speculate for a little longer on the instructor's age and experience. Amy taking this down a tangent that has Leah laughing genuinely for the first time that evening.

The mains arrive and Amy orders a bottle of wine. Leah busies herself moving the food dishes around the table.

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Oh just say it, I can't handle this wounded puppy thing you have going on. I never promised I wouldn't drink Leah."

"You said you wanted to make a change, can't you try just a couple of days without alcohol? Is it that hard?"

Amy fills the beer glass with wine. Leah's lips tighten.

"Maybe you have to do the hard thing Amy, we both know you can't continue the way you have been."

"So I stop drinking and my life just gets miraculously better is that it?"

"Well, it might help."

"No it won't help, my life is shit, drinking makes it better."

"It's not better. You're ruining your health."

"Oh don't start with your health spiel, I just don't care okay? I don't want to live to be a hundred, I want to have a good time now."

"But you're not having a good time are you?"

Amy says nothing. She picks up her fork.

"Well this is fun," she says leaning back from the food and looking around at the other diners then leaning toward Leah. "You know you don't know everything. Just because you're a nurse you think that gives you the right to lecture people about their decisions. It's just like with Mum all over again." Amy drains her glass.

"What is that supposed to mean? This has nothing at all to do with Mum."

"It does though, it's just the same. You'd been gone for years and you just swept in and took over. Mum didn't even want to do all of that crap you made her do, you railroaded her into it."

"The crap? You mean the chemo and her meds? She needed that Amy!"

"We were doing just fine before you came and took over."

"If by doing fine you mean your pink crystals and homeopathic remedies it's lucky I came back when I did." Leah places her palms down on the table, leaning in.

"It was what she wanted and you never even asked her." spat Amy.

"She was terminal, there was nothing we could have done that would have stopped her dying!"

"I guess we'll never know."

"Oh for God Sake! I wish I could live in your dream world, Amy!"

"You should try drinking more then."

Leah pushes herself away, leaving the barely touched food. She just stops herself from paying the bill as she passes the front desk.

Amy sits back in her chair and summons the waitress with a wave of her hand.

They settle into an armed truce amongst a backdrop of yoga and surfing. As the days pass Leah can sense that Amy is getting antsy, complaining that there is a lack of things to do, that the other women are irritating, the staff moronic. She complains that the food has begun to taste the same, she is sick of fruit, she has too much time to think. Leah tries to inject some observations of gratitude. Amy responds by putting her sneakers on and powerwalking the perimeter of the resort every day, like a prisoner plotting an escape route.

On their final day, Amy is buoyant. She convinces Leah to attempt one of the surf spots for advanced surfers. They paddle out, the water here is deeper and Leah notes the rocks at the side of the bay that could harbour all kinds of creatures. The waves look manageable but they need to paddle a long way out to get behind the breakers. Only three of them had come out to this spot, the American woman and the instructor remain on the shore waxing their boards. Amy doesn't want to wait.

"Amy this is far enough, I'm not going any further,"

"Relax Leah, it's the same water no matter the depth. There are no fences for the sea life you know."

"That's not helping."

"Sorry, sorry. You will be fine." They both sit on their boards, legs dangling in the water. The waves seem to have deserted them.

"I can't even see the bottom."

"That's probably a good thing."

"Amy stop it! You're enjoying this."

"Well, it is nice to see you experiencing some emotion, yes."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

Amy sighs. "Nothing," she looks to the shore for a moment before turning back to Leah, "it's just that you're always so in control it's good to see that you're human like the rest of us."

"I'm not in control! I'm exhausted! You display enough emotion for all of us."

"Oh please, don't use me as an excuse for your buttoned-up life, take some ownership." Amy is scathing.

"Take some ownership?! Seriously? Dad and I have no choice but to take ownership while you check out with your pills and your booze!"

"Oh don't bring Dad into this, we both know you're his perfect daughter, never screwing up, always doing the right thing. It's pathetic. I have no desire to compete with you, Leah." Amy paddles away.

Leah looks down at her freckled leg, her toes appear white under the water, she can see something floating like a piece of tissue, except, it's connected to something—a long tentacle. Horror washes over Leah like a cold shower, she draws her legs up quickly shrieking in disgust.

"What is it?"

"I think it's a jellyfish! Oh my God! It's a purple jellyfish. They're poisonous!"

"Where?" Amy looks around the sea behind them.

"Leah, stay very still," her voice is calm but there's a tremor of something in it. Leah turns carefully looking at the water enclosing the back of her board. What she sees makes her break out in a cold sweat, her eyes rolling in terror. She pulls her knees closer to her chest gripping her board. There are dozens of purple jellyfish under them, Amy has pulled her legs under her, she kneels paddling over to reach Leah's board, she holds them together. Leah closes her eyes.

"It's okay, it's okay." Amy's soft voice is speaking to her and Leah can barely hear it above the rushing in her ears. "They can't hurt us if we just stay on our boards, we'll be fine." Leah trembles, her mind rushing over the statistics she has read. There are deadly box jellyfish. She remembers reading an article about tourists being stung by purple jellyfish, but can't remember if their stings are fatal. Her breath isn't flowing normally. Her vision starts to fade, her hands clench at her sides no longer able to hold the board.

"Leah we will be fine, you're fine, try to breathe."

"I can't breathe, I can't! You don't understand!"

Amy reaches out to touch Leah's shoulder "Does your chest hurt?" she asks softly. "Are your fingers numb? I do understand. Amy's hand rubs Leah's trembling arm. "This won't kill you, you won't stop breathing it just feels like you will."

"Is this what you feel? When you have anxiety? One of your attacks?"

"Yes. This will pass, just breathe in and out, that's all you've got to do. I will keep you on the board." Amy spreads her leg across Leah's board, stabilising them both. The water remains as flat as a lake, the absence of waves now the only thing keeping them from the bloom of deadly jellyfish.

Amy puts her fingers in her mouth and gives a piercing whistle alerting the instructor to their predicament. He looks up taking in the situation. He waves and runs up the beach pulling out the small inflatable raft and dragging it to the water's edge. Leah continues to breathe in shallow breaths.

"See I told Mum that whistle would come in handy one day," Amy grins, "Ladylike or not it gets the job done." Leah smiles through her tears. She doesn't respond as the instructor approaches them, transferring them carefully to the boat. Leah sits and lets the flirtatious banter between the two of them wash over her.

As the plane descends into Auckland airport Amy reaches her hand over to clasp Leah's. Leah squeezes it back without hesitation. Amy never initiates physical contact.

"Whatever happens Leah I'll always be grateful for this, that you did this for me, okay? Thank you."

Leah pauses for a moment a small frown on her face. "Is this a thank you and goodbye?" she asks tentatively.

Amy sighs. "It's a heartfelt thank you, Leah. Live in the moment okay? I'm feeling one of those moments of gratitude that you bang on about."

Leah smiles, they both look at each other for a moment before Amy breaks eye contact.

"Well that's enough of the mushy stuff," she says pulling out her phone and flouting the rules by turning it on. Leah turns away, catching the eye of the passenger across the aisle and giving a small smile of apology.

As they disembark Leah can see her boys standing with her Dad and Gavin. Delta is holding a pink and yellow helium balloon emblazoned with the words "It's a girl." Leah and Amy juggle

armfuls of duty-free gifts as they embrace each one of them in turn. Amy raises an eyebrow at her father as Delta gives her the balloon.

"It's the one she wanted," laughs their father. "She insisted."

The children's chatter fills the awkward silence as they wait by the carousel for their bags. Their father details the weather patterns of the last week and the consequent effect on every vegetable group in his garden. He seems unable to stop talking, surreptitiously checking Amy, taking in her tan and the bags beneath her eyes. He squeezes Leah's shoulder a few times, "Your home," he says. "Well done."

"It's good to see you," says Gavin quietly in Leah's ear, his warm breath reminding her of home. Leah nods emphatically, her throat too full to speak. Her hands keep reaching out to smooth her boy's hair, taking in all of the little changes that have occurred during her week away. She wants to check their teeth to see if they've been brushing properly but restrains herself. Suddenly she feels exhausted.

"Let's get you girls home then," says her Dad.

Amy doesn't say much, allowing herself to be swept along with the family group with a detached smile firmly in place. Leah, who has spent the last week gauging her every mood can see that she's overwhelmed by it all.

As they go to separate into two cars Leah embraces Amy who returns the hug half-heartedly.

"I'll check in with you soon okay?"

"Sure," Amy says, not meeting Leah's eye. "Although I expect you'll be busy with your boys and I'm just going to go home and have a sleep anyway."

Leah's eyes fall on Delta for a moment who hasn't seen her mother for over a week.

As they leave the airport her boy's questions fill the car demanding her attention, but Leah finds herself watching Amy's car long after it fades from her view.

Leah sits in the shade of the pohutukawa looking out at the waves breaking on the beach. The boys and Delta are jumping into them laughing and shrieking as they are repeatedly knocked to the sand. Leah tries not to think of the sea life they are swimming amongst. Even though the jellyfish incident was almost a year ago, she has decided that surfing will never be for her.

She smiles as Delta cartwheels along the water's edge. She's such a happy child, like a sunflower turning toward anyone who will show her some light, and some love. Delta's face lights up and she looks over her shoulder to see Amy coming down the beach. Her long dress blows against

her legs outlining her silhouette. With her dark hair streaming behind her, she looks like some kind of sea gypsy swathed in sarongs.

Amy turns and reaches back to take the hand of Cody, their Bali surf instructor. They walk to where Leah is sitting on the plaid car rug.

"I didn't realise how windy it is." says Amy, "Those kids must be freezing. Lucky I wrapped this little piglet up tightly." She loosens the sarong slightly from around her baby's face, he lays mouth open against her chest, his little cheeks flushed pink, eyelids fluttering.

Leah leans over to run her finger along his cheek and they both look down at him as his lips move in his sleep. "Perfect darling," Leah says.

"You wouldn't have said that at 3 am this morning." laughs Cody as he looks at the baby with love clearly written across his face.

"You two were fast asleep when Delta and I snuck out to make breakfast." teases Amy. "I have evidence." She pulls her phone from her pocket and shows Leah the latest in a long line of baby and Cody pics.

When Leah had first received the phone call from Amy after the late-night supermarket pregnancy test, she had spent hours talking over the implications with Gareth. They mulled over their worries and concerns. How could Amy manage a baby? Leah was still reeling from the news that the night of the jellyfish incident had resulted in a one night encounter between Amy and their surf instructor.

Convinced that this latest drama in Amy's life would be the final straw, they started making contingency plans. Family meetings were spent emptying coffee pots as they discussed what on earth to do. Cody had surprised them all when he turned up in Auckland, ready to 'make a go of it'. Moving his backpack and his surfboards into Amy's lakeside home and winning the heart of first Delta and then incredibly Amy's too. His relaxed and easy nature seemed to act as a balm to Amy's demons. He had quietly and firmly insisted on an alcohol-free plan for the pregnancy, supporting Amy at doctors, homeopaths, acupuncturist visits and whatever else Amy felt she needed to embrace the pregnancy.

Gradually as Amy had seemed to soften, she was a little bit less angry with everyone, including Leah. Delta came out of her shell and for a while they had all thought her balloon at the airport had been prophetic, speculating on possible baby girl names, until little Ocean was born. For the first time, Leah remembered, Amy seemed calm and at peace.

"She's not ready for a relationship," Leah frets, laying next to Gavin that night. "Let alone a baby. What happens when she decides she doesn't want to play happy families and this all goes to custard. What then?"

"Whether this lasts or it doesn't there's nothing you can do about it," says Gavin, as pragmatic as ever. Leah sighs, knowing this is true.

"Maybe she just needs someone in her life that doesn't see her as a problem to solve," Gavin says quietly. "Cody told me that when he saw her out on her board, fingers in her mouth, whistling for help, he thought she was the strongest and most exciting woman he had ever seen."

Leah reflects on that for a moment thinking of how she had sat paralysed by fear in the bottom of the rescue boat.

"I feel selfish saying this," says Leah into the darkness.

"Hmmm?"

"I feel like there's another person now to share the load of it-- the Amy burden. I'm so relieved. I think I'm a little bit in love with Cody myself."

"I think that's gratitude you're feeling," says Gavin.

"No," says Leah with a smile in her voice. "I think it's love."

"Take that back," says Gavin with a growl, rolling towards her and gathering her in his arms. Leah laughs as her teasing has the desired effect, and for a long while they both forget about Amy completely.
