

HERE COMES THE SUN

Where the sand begins, the strawberry blonde slams out of Here Comes The Sun, and, strappy heels dangling from her hand, walks towards the wash of water, her eyes fixed on the sea.

No recognition of the goats munching sea grapes, the guinea fowl shrieking among the shorebirds, or the brindled mongrel named Itchy Mon and his two mutt friends, sniffing after her perfume, which makes them piss on a mimosa tree; not so much as a glance at the mounds of faded pink conch shells that mark the graves of fishermen, men who once fished shark at night from this beach—Shark Beach, don't be telling the tourists that, me son—a tug of war with the sea by the blaze of driftwood bonfires, a rotted goat head for bait, anchor chain leader.

82 The living get no more notice than the dead: Coco Mon whose machete whittles green coconuts down to the water without spilling a drop, a Charles Atlas with skin the color of squid ink who walks on his hands, a man of straw with a shadow for a face clonking a steel drum, lilting Here Comes the Sun, and the dancing graybeard wearing a hula skirt of octopus, conducting with a trident spear.

She passes them all, and stops at a towel-sized patch of sand—not that she has a towel—drops her heels, drops to her knees, unbuttons her white cotton blouse, slips it off.

Her lacy white bra exposes less than a bikini top. Still, Hector, tall for his age, a high school kid who wants to go to the States and play for the Chicago Bulls, has witnessed a legend: I was there, mon, the day this blanc lady comes to the beach and takes off her clothes.

Constellations of freckles under each bra strap, and freckles along her thighs when she squirms off her black skirt. No thong, but her white panties are very bright in the sunlight.

She folds the blouse on top of the skirt, weights them with the flimsy shoes, and stretches out on the bare, hot sand. Either she's totally oblivious or good at pretending no one is sneaking a look from behind dark glasses. Once, Italians showed up and went topless, but that's different. She doesn't seem like an exhibitionist so much as a woman out of time. No time to buy a swimsuit or even a towel despite the free port streets lined with shops.

Maybe she came for a quickie divorce and has a plane to catch back to somewhere under the snow. Maybe she's dumping some cheat she once worshipped in the way she dropped to her knees before the sea. Or maybe a man who loved her too much is letting her go; maybe it has become unbearable for him when business associates learn how casually she takes off her clothes.

If it was you, would you—perhaps you already have—hail a flamingo-pink Here Comes The Sun taxi and find your way to where you could be a stranger again, on a nameless beach on the native side of the island. Would the sound in your mind be the lap of the sea, or a scream like a guinea fowl, over and over and louder even, or an old man playing the pans: Here Comes the Sun.

No one asks. She wouldn't answer anyway.

But she must feel them staring, because she lifts her head, and her eyes meet the eye stalks of a dozen ghost crabs waltzing around her body.

Hey, it's all right.