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The publisher has set limits on how much of this ebook you may print or copy. See details. {{ format_drm_information.format_name }} unrestricted {{ format_drm_information.format_name }} {{format_drm_information.page_percent}}% pages every day{{format_drm_information.interval}} days {{ format_drm_information.format_name }} off {{ read_aloud_information.format_name }} on {{ read_aloud_information.format_name }} off "Do you mean to tell me that you have not actually fornicated yet?" Dear God, Felicity. I lunge across the beach in an attempt to clap a hand over her mouth, and miss entirely. She is farther down the beach than I thought. The heavy copy of Don Quixote she dug up from a bookstore in Oia that's sitting on my chest tumbles to the ground with a dull flump. Felicity, unimpressed by my pounce, retrieves my book, shakes the sand out from between its pages, then returns it to me with a disapproving scowl, as if I am the one behaving inappropriately by dropping a book, when it's she who is shouting about my sex life. Oh please. They're too far out to hear. Her eyes flit across the bay, where two dark heads are poking up from the surf—Ebrahim and Percy, treading water while they wait for Georgie to finish his scramble up the side of the cliff, then leap off and join them in the ocean. She leans back against a piece of driftwood, letting her copy of Paradise Lost fall closed on one finger. You're certainly taking your time. It's only been a month. "Only? She arches an eyebrow. My regret that I even toed this subject with her intensifies. I expected that once you and Percy were in agreement about living in sin, you would lean hard into it." Over the waves, I hear a loud whoop of delight, and Felicity and I both look up as Georgie leaps with his knees pulled up to his chest. The water throws the sun's reflection into my eyes before I can see his splash, and I hold Don Quixote up as a shield. In spite of our mouth in Santorini, as a lad raised beneath the dishwasher-gray skies of England, I was not prepared for just how hot the weather can be, nor how quickly the bastard sun burns me. I'm also still adjusting to sand perpetually in my shoes and the hems of my trousers, and the murderous havoc these rough, hilly streets have wreaked on my calves—there's not yet been a day I haven't risen from my bed stiff as an old man. Though I could live happily forever on this diet of Cyclades beaches and domed roofs bluer than the sky and grapefruits picked from our courtyard for breakfast, halved and salted and spraying sticky juice that stays on my fingers all day. With the scheduled departure of the Eleftheria delayed, first by a buyer for their cargo in Crete, then by a repair to the mizzenmast after a storm on the return journey cracked it, Felicity, Percy, and I have been treated to far more of a holiday here than originally anticipated. Though a single addition to this Paradise could vastly improve it. Well, I was certainly ready to shake sheets straightaway, I say, falling backward onto the beach again and letting the book rest open over my eyes. But Percy's a bit of a proper young lady, turns out. What do you mean by that? Felicity asks. If that's meant to be an insult, it's in poor taste. I laugh. To whom? You're hardly a proper young lady. There are many ways to be proper, you know. And don't do that. She snatches the book off my eyes, and I recoil with a caw of surprise. You'll break the spine. You're supposed to be reading it, not using it as a visor. It keeps the sun from my eyes. If the sun is in your eyes, move into the shade. I squint at her. But I like the sun. Fine. She sets Don Quixote carefully upon the log behind her, then brushes her hands off on her skirt. See if Percy loves you when you're red as a cherry. Percy would love me if I were green and purple. I have to resist the urge to reach up and scratch the space where my right ear used to be. The burns there have begun to heal into scars, so I've started experimenting with a variety of increasingly creative ways to hide this uninvited alteration to my face. Though short of adopting some sort of masked vigilante persona, it's beginning to feel futile to do anything other than simply learn to live with the way I now look. It has been a not insignificant adjustment. I'm still shy around mirrors—even very polished cutlery can be disarming. Still catch myself wondering why noise in a crowd is so hard to pick apart. Still go to push my hair behind my ear and get an unpleasant lurch over finding it absent, nothing left but raised marks in furious red. Dear God, in spite of the grapefruits, this deaf, sexless month has been an eternity. So what's Percy done that's got your breeches twisted? Felicity asks, Paradise Lost once again open as though to prove just how little she cares about this conversation, but it's her dragging it out again, not me. Nothing—that's the problem. I flip over onto my stomach, elbows buried in the sand. "He's never done anything. With anyone. And he's more tentative about it now than he was when he was tipsy in Venice. Should have seized that opportunity." A soft wind snakes off the water, and Felicity claps a hand to the back of her floppy hat to keep it from blowing away. "Now, that makes you sound like a pig." "He wasn't very tipsy—just enough to feel brave about getting a hand down my breeches More titles and copies may be available to you. Sign in to see the full collection. x