

Story #1 in the *Run, Girl, Run!* series

# PAULA STEEL

SUN  
SEA  
SAND

MURDER  
MYSTERY  
SUSPENSE



BEACH  
LOVER

# BEACH LOVER

*A sexy short story with suspense,  
twists, turns, murder and mystery*

Paula Steel

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PART OF THE ***RUN,  
GIRL, RUN!*** SERIES  
OF KINDLE STORIES

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# BEACH LOVER

A woman sits alone at a beachfront bar table. She is attractive, thirty-something. A sun hat shades her face, dark glasses hide her eyes. Jewelry glints in the sun when she moves, at neck, wrist and fingers.

She looks affluent and at ease. A peach chiffon cover-up hangs from her shoulders, draping itself elegantly over her bikini-clad body. A *Gucci Thiara* bag nestles under the table. Beneath her chair, a pair of strappy red *Choos* lie, one atop the other, reclining in the shade.

She's chosen her usual table; right at the edge of the bar's terrace, where it slides into the beach, so that her feet can play in the sand. She lazily pushes her toes in, planting herself. Her scarlet toenails disappear like little burrowing animals.

The afternoon sun slides further down the cloudless sky. The angled light now bounces off the wavelets out to sea; dazzling slivers, like paparazzi flashes. She dips her head to shield her eyes.

The woman has angled her chair to pick up the last of the rays, while anticipating the cooling touch of the sea, which has been making advances towards her, wave by incoming wave; gently, cautiously, like a shy, would-be lover.

## BEACH LOVER

A soft breeze frays the surface of the water. The hem of her long, elegant, beach cover-up moves gently. Small waves shed their white tufts as they approach her, like taking off a hat prior to a bow. Each successive wavelet dares to slide closer to her toes, then retreats shyly, accompanied by the popping noises of tiny bubbles – little gasps of air – and the sigh of rolling sand grains. The next wave, she is sure, will bring a rush of deliciously cold water to bathe her feet.

A long-legged shadow falls across her. She glances up, annoyed; her idyllic moment disturbed.

‘Might you want some company, perhaps,’ says a voice.

She shivers as the sea finally kisses the edge of her feet. A slightly younger woman is standing over her. From the chair, she looks the newcomer up and down. The sea nuzzles at her buried toes, but too late; it has lost her.

She hesitates for just a second, then nods to the younger woman who, with a white lace-gloved hand, pulls a chair from under the table and sits so that they now face the sea together.

There’s a chilled bottle of green-tinged white wine, neck draped in a napkin, lying at an angle in an ice bucket standing on three metal legs next to them.

A tall, thin glass of wine sits on the table, within easy reach of the first woman. Water droplets cling precariously to the outside. As the newcomer sits, jostling the table slightly, a drop breaks free. It traces a rivulet down the flute of the glass, then the stem, running fast, as if sensing danger and trying to escape. It lands trapped on the table.

‘*Garçon*,’ says the older woman lightly, with a half-wave of her hand. It’s the kind of place where you don’t have to shout or gesture much to be served. He appears at her side, already holding a second glass.

He places the flute in front of the younger woman, reaches for the linen-draped bottle, wipes it with a practised twist and pours, careful not to let the bottle drip onto either the customers or the tablecloth.

One more bottle later and the seduction is complete, though it is not clear who has seduced whom. The two women walk slowly along the beach, shoes in hand, exchanging versions of themselves in carefully-chosen stories.

The sand along the crescent beach has been shimmeringly hot all day, casting up heat haze in the distance, forming ghostly mirages of people moving on the beach, like dead beach lovers trying to rejoin the living. But the air is cooling, the ghosts banished, as the afternoon shifts to early evening.

Strings of lights coil up the trunks of trees outside the cafes and bars that hug the beach. The lights begin to blink on, tree by tree, like stars coming out, but in stages, a constellation at a time.

Later that night, at her nearby villa, the older woman lies back on her cool sheets, French doors open, curtains wafting inward in the oleander-scented breeze from her garden, as the younger woman goes down on her.

She feels her new lover slide her hands up her body to touch her breasts and notices, with not unpleasant surprise, that the fingertips are hard and ridged, as if calloused.

\* \* \*

It's been a long hitch-hike down through France. But he is finally here, the sun-soaked south, where everything around him – beachfront bars, yachts, people – seems to drip with wealth.

He frowns against the sunlight, causing a bead of sweat to run from his forehead down his nose, where it hangs at the tip for a moment. He squints along the coast, wipes his nose with a flick of a finger.

His friends had tried to dissuade him. But, what did they know? They didn't have his natural attributes and they lacked imagination. So, they couldn't see that this was his obvious, in fact his only possible choice for a fulfilling career. And a thrilling one.

He was simply terrible at every job he had tried. But it had never bothered him. Today was the first day of a glorious future doing the one thing he knew he was made to do.

Scouting along the beach earlier, he found the perfect place to stash his heavy backpack. He's used the bathroom of a beach bar to change into his gigolo pants – cool white, of course – and palm-tree covered gigolo shirt, buttons open discreetly (he thinks) to his navel.

He decides not to leave any of his money in his big bag as he carefully stashes it in the rocky alcove he found earlier at the secluded end of the beach. He covers the bag with rocks and driftwood.

He folds and buttons one thousand euros into the back left pocket of his white trousers. Then the remaining eight hundred of his seed money is buttoned equally securely into the other back pocket.

He pats both bulging wads, smiles with satisfaction and looks up the beach towards the seafront tables; the bars and restaurants of this little piece of paradise in the South of France.

Evening is settling in. The seafront is lighting up. He rubs his hands together and dons his fake Ray-Bans. Time to go a-gigoloing.

\* \* \*

It doesn't take him long. He looks down at the woman sitting at the beachfront bar. She's basking in the last rays of the day's sun, gazing seaward (he presumes) behind her large, expensive-looking shades, a glass of white wine on the table at her side.

She's wearing a peach-coloured wafty thing over her bikini. She's hot, he thinks: great figure; that's an unexpected bonus.

'Excuse me. *Excusez-moi*,' he says.

She looks up to find him beaming dazzlingly down at her. She takes her initial thought - preparing to say 'get lost' in French - and parks it just before it reaches her lips. He's gorgeous.

'*Parlez-vous Anglais?*' he says, with hands on hips and a gormless grin that struggles hard but fails to push the handsome off his face.

'Yes, pretty well. I'm English,' she says.

'Brilliant,' he says, hands held out either side, palms-up, then returned to his hips, gormless grin still plastered across his beautiful face. 'Because that was the last of my French. May I ...?'

He puts a hand on the back of a chair and makes to pull it out from under the table, pausing to seek her permission.

For anyone else, her reply would have been an amused shake of the head. But she spots an interesting bulge in his white chinos. And he looks divine. This might be fun, she thinks. And he could come in useful. She nods. He sits.

Later that night, in the villa, just down the road from the beachside bar, he lies back on her cool sheets, moonlight coming in through the windows to create a tableau of shifting shadows and silhouettes.

The flower-scented breeze makes the curtains billow and dance slightly in the open French windows.

'What's that flower smell?' he says.

'Oleander,' she says.

'Beautiful,' he says, idiot-happy. 'Smells delicious, like ... ripe peaches.' He sniffs again. 'Or apricots, maybe.'

'You're easily fooled,' she says, smiling at the naive boy. 'Some flowers you can eat. Try that with Oleander and it'll kill you. It's beautiful, but poisonous.'

She goes down on him. Her hands slide up his chest. He notices, with vague surprise, that the ends of her fingers are rough and calloused.

\* \* \*

The next morning he wakes to the sun slanting in. Riviera birds cheep and chirrup in the bushes outside the still-open French windows. He can see a cloudless blue sky.

He blinks and looks to his left. She is gone.

'Coffee?' comes a call from the kitchen.

He gets up, pads through the luxurious bedroom and follows the sound of the voice to a cool, bright, designer kitchen. He perches himself on a stool at a kitchen island, where she is pouring two small cups of coffee from a *cafetiere*.

She glances up. 'I should have said put something on first.'

He notices she is dressed as if about to go out; slacks and blouse, light scarf tied at her neck, make up all done, sun hat and shades waiting on the work surface.

'Well, I thought we could go back to bed for a bit,' he grins at her; his foolish, sunny grin.

'No chance, handsome. I'm off out. And you need to throw on your clothes and be gone too. I've got to lock up.'

After his coffee, he reluctantly dons his clothes back in the bedroom as she washes up in the kitchen. He pats the two reassuring bulges at the back of his trousers. Then he makes his move. It's time to present the bill.

'I hope you had a wonderful night?' he asks from the doorway to the kitchen, dazzling smile permafised to his face.

She smiles back at him from the sink, appreciating his long, lean body framed in the doorway, a tousled mop of blonde hair surrounding his angelic face.

He doesn't even have to ask the next question, it turns out.

She reaches for her expensive-looking bag on the island counter, next to the big sun hat. She opens it and takes out first a one-hundred euro note and then a second matching note.

She gathers up hat, glasses and bag in one hand, walks purposefully over to him and, as she passes, pushes the two crumpled notes down into a front chino pocket. 'Come on then,' she says. 'Out.'

She slams and locks the front door, having closed up the side doors already.

From the villa's entrance, shielded from the road by trellises of oleander, jasmine and hibiscus, she points him the short distance back to the promenade, past a small row of similar villas, via the same road they had come the previous night.

She doesn't join him. Instead, she confuses him with the *bises* - kissing one cheek then the other - which she has to guide him through, like a dance teacher pressing the other's body into the right position. Then she sees him off with a gentle shove.

As he walks out through the front gate, she walks around to the back of the house and slips, unseen, through a gate at the end of the garden onto a quiet lane.

His grin is, if it were possible, even broader than usual as he strolls back towards the beach to retrieve his bag.



‘What a first night! Result!’ he says to himself.

He can’t stop himself wishing a sunny ‘*Bonjour!*’ to everyone he passes. He waves ecstatically to an elderly couple in their front garden. ‘*Bonjour!*’ he shouts delightedly to them as if he’s known them forever. They look up from their weeding, confused.

He accosts fishermen and tourists alike with his shining bonhomie, scattering ‘*Bonjours*’ with a raised hand, like shiny-wrapped gifts of celebration thrown into the crowd by a passing monarch. The effect is a ripple of amusement and momentary attention that follows in the wake of his majestic passage along the seafront. He is triumphant. He is exultant.

He can’t wait to write and tell his friends, once he’s found an internet cafe or a wi-fi spot at a bar. For a second, he wishes he had some pictures on his phone he could show them as proof. He frowns. That would be a tacky thing to do. That would be the old him, the boy, not the sophisticated lover man he has become. A *lurver* man, he thinks, delighted with himself.

He gets to the little mound of pebbles and branches and finds his bag untouched beneath. He rescues it, then reaches into his front trouser pocket and takes out the two bills. He undoes one of the bulging back pockets and extracts the 800 euros. This will even up his butt profile nicely, he thinks.

And he looks. And he stares. And he looks again at the folded-up pieces of newspaper, covered in French print, that he has just extracted from his safely-buttoned pocket.

In a panic now, he scrabbles for the button on his other back pocket and pulls out ... ten more folded strips of French newspaper, shaped into euro note size. His face falls. For the first time, as long as he or anyone else who knows him can remember, the smile has been wiped from his beautiful face.

‘She gave me back my own two hundred euros,’ he says slowly, staring at the two crumpled notes in one hand.

He turns and begins to hurry back up the beach towards the villa.

\* \* \*

When he gets there, he slows. The house is surrounded by police cars, lights flashing. There’s yellow and black tape tied like ribbon across the main entrance and the side doors. A policeman guards the front.

The boy shouts up the steps to the villa entrance, ‘What’s happened here?’

The police officer gazes imperiously down at him from the porch and says, in carefully-enunciated English, ‘A murder, young man, a murder. Now get lost. Back to the other tourists.’

He is too shocked to move. The policeman plants his feet more firmly, resting his hand on the gun at his hip. He says, more aggressive now, 'Go on. *Vas t'en. Foutre le camp!*'

Trying not to look too hasty, the boy retreats obediently. He turns and walks briskly back to the seafront to retrieve his bag. Two hundred euros. That should be just enough to get the hell out of this country and back home before they can find out they need to question him.

\* \* \*

On the Eurostar train heading north, she glances in the open *Gucci* handbag (cost new: 30,000 euros, she discovered when she had *Googled* it) at the unexpected last minute addition to her funds, harvested like late fruit from the bulges she had noticed in his trousers last night

There they are, the *millefeuille* edges of 1,600 extra euros, after she'd given him 200 back, because she'd thought it would be fun to do so. She didn't need this money. But she enjoyed acquiring it, turning the tables on him, imagining his face when he reached into his back pockets and found the cut-up paper. It was too delicious an opportunity to let pass. She smirks, pleased with this icing on the cake.

She sits back in her first-class seat, and does a quick inventory, relishing the newfound security as she mentally lists what she has acquired, as if running her hands and eyes over it for real.

She has the jewelry and small pieces of expensive art from the villa in her hand luggage, plus pickings from other villas already stashed in the bank.

Add to that the *Jimmy Choos* on her feet and the designer brands in her suitcase - lucky she was the same size as her last conquest - and both her immediate aims have been met. The savings pot to pay for the plastic surgery and her travelling wardrobe are now, respectively, plump and chic beyond measure.

About now they'll be discovering the body in the spare room; the owner of the last villa she took over. But I'm long gone, she thinks. And, of course, I left no fingerprints.

The old people next door or the people at the bar or passers-by are likely to remember the beautiful young man she picked up last night. He was turning a lot of heads as they walked from bar to villa. And she had sent him back the same way, alone, the next morning.

Where he was so noticeable, she had made sure she was not. Not as herself, that is. At the beachside bar in the late afternoon yesterday, the waiter had called her by the name of the French woman whom she had picked up the night before and whose clothes she was wearing; the real owner of the villa who was, as the waiter said her name, already dead.

Amazing how little most men notice when looking at a woman.

Same beach clothes, same dark glasses and sun hat, similar hair, height and figure and, as far as the *garçon* was concerned, that added up to the local woman who liked to drink cold white wine by the sea and tipped him handsomely.

Being fluent in French had helped her little masquerade. Plus some opportunistic misdirection with the help of the beautiful boy. It'll be him they're looking for now.

The train continues its journey northwards.

She gazes out the window at the passing countryside.

Yes, she thinks, pleased with herself; choosing to try her luck as a female *gigolo*, working her way along the towns of the French Riviera, was an inspired decision.

*Gigolette*, she thinks, is the word for the female version. Whatever. She's non-binary enough not to care about the label.

A large grin of both satisfaction and anticipation spreads across her face.

Now she's got enough money for the surgery in Switzerland. Then she'll be able to return to England and turn the tables on the predator – the *other* predator, she corrects herself – who has pursued her since she was a child.

Time for the hunted to become the hunter.

**Author's note:** But, to make sense of all that, dear reader, you'll need to dip into the other stories in this *Run, Girl, Run!* series, all featuring the same girl on the run, though she's hard to spot sometimes. You can find them on the links below.

**Author's request:** It would help me and others if you would rate this story? Just [click here](#) then scroll down to 'Customer Reviews' and click on the Write a Customer Review button to give it 1–5 stars, whichever you feel it deserves. If you want to add a few words to your review to share what you thought of the story, even more helpful. Thank you, if so! Paula Steel [Paulasteel2020@gmail.com](mailto:Paulasteel2020@gmail.com)

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