

SAPPHO'S SHORE – SAPPHIC LOVE STORIES

Amenah Awakens

Jules Hart

ABOUT SAPPHO'S SHORE

SOME ISLANDS CHANGE YOU.

Sappho's Shore is a collection of standalone Sapphic love stories set in and around Skala Eressos, on the Greek island of Lesbos — each a complete romance, each a different woman remade by the sun, the sea, the ghost of Sappho and the right person. The stories share a place and a single golden season, so a face you meet in one may drift through another; but every book stands entirely on its own, and they can be read and enjoyed in any order.

New here? Begin with *Salt and Spice* — the warmest, funniest doorway into the world.

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- *Salt and Spice*
- *Falling into Orbit* — coming soon
- *Under the Orange Tree* — coming soon
- *The Still Point* — coming soon
- *Sea Change* — coming soon
- *Ashfall* — coming soon

Spin-off

- *The Mortal Muse* — an alternate-history reimagining born from *Under the Orange Tree* — coming soon

Short Stories

- *Amenah Awakens* †
- *Free on the Shore* †

† *Free to the VIP Reader Club — see back of book to join.*

Amenah Awakens



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Thank you for respecting the work of the author.

*To all my fellow seekers who have found themselves in transition or on the
brink of a new life in recent years.*

AMENAH AWAKENS

SAPPHO'S SHORE — SAPPHIC LOVE STORIES

I have since learnt not to trust the moon when it sits low and full and the colour of a ripe peach. It hangs over the bay all innocence, pretending it is only there for the view. It is not. It is there to undo you.

That night I would have told you I felt perfectly ordinary. A little tired, perhaps—I'd been up since before dawn helping Mum in the kitchen, my cousin's wedding only days away—but otherwise as unremarkable as the warm sand under my feet. I was straight. I was spoken for. I was, I'd have sworn on it, entirely myself.

Reader, I knew nothing.

About twenty of us had gathered on the beach for the Summer Solstice. The air was still, the sea barely breathing, a hearty fire cracking on the sand.

It was the kind of gathering Skala Eressos does better than anywhere on earth. The fire threw its light up the beach, and beyond it the lights of the village climbed the hillside in a loose amber necklace.

Louisa—who ran the Chelonian, and who had a gift for collecting people—moved between the rugs topping up glasses with a retsina

nobody quite admitted to enjoying, a portable speaker at her feet drifting from smooth jazz to Melissa Etheridge. Someone had carried down a pot of Maria's gigantes, the big buttery beans she makes only in summer, and a tin of honeyed loukoumades that vanished before they were properly cool. The talk was the easy, overlapping talk of women who have known each other for years—or who have decided, in the space of a single evening, that they will.

I had grown up barely an hour's walk from this beach and still it could catch me like this—the sense that the island kept a door propped open that the rest of the world bolted shut. They say Sappho herself once sang on a headland not far from where we sat, three thousand summers ago, to girls whose names we have lost and whose feelings we have not. On a night like that you could almost believe she was still about, somewhere past the firelight, waiting to see who would fall in love before morning.

A scruffy little dog I knew well, called Free, trotted the perimeter of the firelight as though she'd been put in charge of the whole evening, accepting a chip here, a chin-scratch there, pausing now and then to stare out at the dark water as if she could see something the rest of us couldn't. Nobody seemed to own her. Everybody seemed to love her.

My life, up to that night, had a shape everyone approved of. There was the family taverna and Mum's kitchen and the wedding three days off, with its mountain of almonds to be sugared and its aunts to be placated. There was Marco—steady, kind, faintly boring, my boyfriend and my first—and the unspoken understanding that we'd be the next to stand beneath the flowers. He wasn't even there that night; he'd gone to Athens for an interview, and the truth was I hadn't missed him once. I had folded myself into the shape of that life so neatly, so willingly, that I'd mistaken the folding for happiness. I did not yet have the word for what I actually was. I only knew I was tired in a way that sleep never seemed to touch.

I'd been chatting to a couple of local girls I hadn't seen in days—we'd all been swallowed by the wedding plans—and was about to call

it a night when two figures came up from the dark line of the campsite behind the beach. They moved unhurried, two silhouettes against the lighter dark of the sea, and something in the way they handled themselves made half the fire go quiet without quite knowing why. It wasn't swagger. Swagger announces itself and asks to be admired. This was the opposite—a kind of unbothered economy, the walk of people who had long ago stopped performing for anyone, and were all the more watchable for it.

They were both quite androgynous looking. From their appearance alone I couldn't have guessed what they identified as—male, female or spaceship, to steal a self-imposed label from a couple of well-known filmmakers. I'd come to think differently about all that, later. For now I'll only say I've never trusted a label to do the work of a person. Me, I am Amenah. This Amenah. When you meet me, you get to know me and find out what makes me me.

When they reached the fire, I didn't know their names.

I did know that I could not take my eyes off the blonde. (See what I mean about trying to reduce someone's essence to a single label?)

I later learnt her name was Bea, and that she identified as cis female, lesbian, non-vegan, and liked to keep in shape. And, oh boy, was she in good shape.

Louisa gave them both one of her hearty hugs—she'd known Bea well, it turned out, from when she'd lived in the village years before—then handed them a spare rug and waved them in. By some conspiring twist of fate the only gap around the fire was right beside me, where I sat on a big beach towel with Katie, my good friend from university. I watched in nervous horror as the blonde and her friend made their way over.

Katie introduced herself and offered them a drink. Bea's friend, Digo, didn't drink; Bea graciously accepted a beer.

I am aware, telling it now, how little sense it makes—to be undone by a pair of hands. But there it is. Hers were brown and capable and unhurried, the veins moving like snakes across the bones in the firelight, the nails clipped short and clean, a thin white scar across one

knuckle whose history I wanted, absurdly and immediately, to know. They were hands that had clearly done things—hailed ropes, mended engines, held someone while she died. Beside them my own looked as though they'd never been asked to do anything harder than ice a wedding cake. I tucked them under my thighs, out of sight, as if they might give me away.

“Hi,” she said, with a smile that would melt ice cubes.

For a moment I thought I recognised something in the way she moved her lips. But that couldn't be. If I'd met her before, surely I'd remember.

“Hi,” I said, trying to still the nervous jitter rising in my stomach.

“Yiamas.” She held up her open can.

I knocked mine against it and, after the obligatory eye contact a ‘cheers’ requires to avoid seven years of bad sex, took a long pull—not because I was thirsty, but to avoid having to speak. Being tongue-tied was not something I usually suffered from. If anything, quite the opposite, especially when nervous.

Thankfully, Bea wasn't similarly afflicted.

She skipped the conventional openings entirely—no what-do-you-do, no how-long-have-you-lived-here—and asked instead how my parents were, what I'd wanted to be at nine years old, listening so intently I felt as though I were the only person on the planet.

It should have felt like an interrogation. Instead, it felt like being read aloud to from a book I hadn't known was about me.

Marco, bless him, had once introduced me at a party as “Amenah—she's, you know, the quiet one,” and I'd let him, because it was easier, and because I'd believed it.

Beside this stranger, at speed and to my considerable alarm, I was discovering that I was not remotely the quiet one. I had simply been waiting all my life for someone to ask the right questions.

And I couldn't shake the oddest feeling: that I already knew her. She felt familiar, like an old friend, and it seemed mutual.

At one point she took my hand and ran her thumb over the back of it in light, intimate strokes, then turned it over and began to massage

the palm. If you've ever had that done to you, you'll know it becomes impossible to concentrate; I lost track entirely of where the conversation went next.

I'm not sure how long we sat there, sealed in our own little bubble, oblivious to the world. It could have been hours or days. It lasted until Louisa came to pry us apart and herd the group down for a swim.

Of course, you know what that means... skinny-dipping.

Swimming naked under a full moon is practically a civic duty in Eressos; I'd done it a hundred times, with a hundred women, and thought nothing of it beyond the cold and the laughing and the undignified scramble back into a towel. It's one of the island's quieter miracles, the way it lets a body simply be a body—unjudged, unbothered, briefly handed back to itself.

Any other night I'd have been first in. But the thought of peeling off my clothes within sight of Bea had welded me to the sand. It was a new and thoroughly unwelcome sensation, this self-consciousness. I'd spent my whole life easy in my own skin, precisely because it had never once occurred to me that anyone might be looking at it the way I was, just then, looking at hers.

I was petrified—not just scared, but petrified like a fossil, frozen where I sat.

To strip off in front of her felt more daunting than competing in some ancient combat sport; which, incidentally, they also did naked, and from which one contestant usually didn't come home.

"You coming?" she asked, already peeling off those skin-tight jeans to reveal tanned, smooth, muscular thighs.

I couldn't stop my eyes raking over her like a hungry beast.

The sight of her darker nipples, pert in the cool night air, made me lick my lips. I realised I was staring. And so did she.

Caught, which mortified me further—and yet it took all my willpower to look away.

What was happening to me?

I wasn't even into women.

Had I wandered into the twilight zone—some alternative reality in

which the mere glimpse of a woman's breasts left me more excited than a tomcat on heat?

"Get a grip, Amenah," I whispered to myself.

"Pardon?" she said. She'd been watching me, waiting.

"Nothing—just talking myself into a cold swim," I lied.

She let it go.

"Come on," she said, with a jerk of her head towards the sea, and—mercifully—didn't linger. I watched her jog off to join the others.

I felt bereft the moment she'd gone, and only snapped out of it when she was halfway to the water. Then I undressed in an ungainly hurry, yanking my clothes off my much curvier body and grateful she hadn't stayed to watch.

I couldn't make myself run across the sand with all those eyes on me, so I grabbed my towel and ambled, aiming for casual, and dropped it as close to the water's edge as I could.

There was no hope of grace once I hit the pebbles.

I remembered Nico and me on this same beach a few summers back, so busy watching other bathers wobble and curse their way over that vicious stony border that we'd missed the sunset entirely.

Whatever dignity I had left would not survive the crossing.

The only way was fast.

I gritted my teeth, lunged into the shallows the instant I was sure I wouldn't scrape my chin or breasts along the bottom, and struck out, the cold sending a rush of adrenaline through me, towards the scattering of women already in the sea.

The trouble with a bright moon is that for all it illuminates, it also throws the darkest shadows.

With the moon behind everyone in the water, their faces stayed shrouded until they turned to the light—so I could barely tell whom I was swimming towards, let alone pick out Bea.

The cold took my breath and handed it back changed.

Where my arms broke the surface the water lit with tiny green sparks—the phosphorescence the old fishermen call the sea's own

moonlight—so that every stroke left a trail of cold fire fizzing behind me.

Above, the real moon; below, a thousand little ones scattering off my fingertips.

I've swum off that beach my whole life and never once felt I was swimming through something holy. I did then.

Ahead of me, Bea called out. "Come this way—there's a warm patch."

"For exactly that reason, I should probably stay away."

She laughed, and the sound sent a warm tingle up my spine.

"Seriously, I don't bite. And I had my little wee about where you are now."

I pulled a face and swam towards her with exaggerated vigour, as though fleeing some fearsome sea monster.

As I reached her she put out a hand; without thinking I grabbed it, and she pulled me in—close, so close I could feel her breath on my wet cheek.

"That's better," she said. "Warmer, if we huddle."

She laid a hand on my back and drew me closer still, until I lost count of the places we touched.

My brain drew a blank.

My breath caught.

I actually stopped breathing, terrified that if I filled my chest our breasts would meet.

Under the water her body was a furnace and a question at once.

Every place we touched—hip, thigh, the soft inside of a forearm—announced itself as though I'd only that moment been issued the relevant nerve endings.

The sea rocked us together and apart, together and apart, until I gave up the pretence of treading water and simply held on, certain that if I let go I'd either drown or float clean up to the moon, and genuinely unsure which I'd prefer.

"Are you cold?" she murmured in my ear, and a tremor went down my spine, my skin breaking out in goosebumps.

I shook my head too quickly and head-butted her.

Oh God. What was happening to me?

All the while I could feel her eyes on me in the dark, and knew my face—and probably my thoughts—were plain to her in the moonlight.

Before I could think of a way to defuse the moment, she leaned in and pressed her lips to mine.

At first it was chaste, gentle, her lips deliciously warm. Then an irresistible yearning to taste that sea-salt warmth took me. I parted my lips, and the kiss deepened until we were exploring each other's mouths like two hungry bears who'd found the honey.

Only when I'd emptied my lungs entirely—having forgotten, again, to breathe—were we forced apart. I was relieved to feel her chest heaving for air too.

She rested her forehead against mine while we recovered. "God," she said, "I've been wanting to do that for far too long."

The words landed oddly, like a key turning in a lock I hadn't known was there.

Far too long.

People don't say far too long about a stranger they met beside a fire two hours ago. Some saner, soberer part of me filed the phrase away for later.

The rest of me was busy committing the taste of her to memory—sea-salt and beer and something underneath that was simply, dizzyingly, her.

I pulled back, unsure I'd heard right, and laughed from nerves rather than amusement. "What do you mean?"

"You really don't recognise me, do you?" Her voice was gentle, almost encouraging.

I squinted into the shadows for her expression. "Where on earth would I have met you?"

I reached back to university—our classes weren't small, but I was certain that if she'd walked into a lecture I'd have noticed. "I'm sure I'd remember."

"I suppose I don't look much like I did back then." I could hear the smile in it.

I tilted my head, willing her to explain—though it was hard to concentrate, my whole body fixed on the small lazy circles she was tracing on my lower back.

My brain had gone into overdrive and then simply burnt out.

"Surely you couldn't have changed that much," I said.

A small huff escaped her—so adorable, even vulnerable, that I leaned in and stole another slow, warm kiss.

This time she was the one to pull away.

She cleared her throat.

"My full name is Bella." She dipped beneath the water, took hold of the backs of my thighs and lifted my legs around her waist.

I gave a surprised yelp and giggled like a teenager, looping my arms over her muscular shoulders, loving the warmth of her skin.

I cast about my memory for a 'Bella'—anyone who even slightly compared to this captivating, irresistible woman—and drew a blank. Search not found. I could picture the little white cursor blinking. "Nope," I said.

She nodded. I didn't understand why.

"Okay," she said. "Seems you're going to make me do it." And she turned us so that her face came fully into the silver light.

"The only Bella I ever knew was..." My words died as I watched her scowl and stick out her tongue—an expression that would have been comical, had it not matched, almost exactly, the one branded into my memory from years before. "...the class bully." It was out before I could stop it. A cold sweat washed over me.

Slowly, she nodded. A sorrowful smile crept across her face. "I am that Bella."

I don't remember how we got out of the water and back to the fire. I do remember struggling a half-dried, shaking body back into my jeans

while all I wanted was to stare at this apparition—Bea, Bella, whatever her name was—and how my brain refused to reconcile the snooty, arrogant, immaculately manicured bully who had tormented me for five years with the woman quietly pulling a T-shirt down over her well-defined abs by the firelight.

My hands wouldn't cooperate with the buttons.

Around us the party had loosened into its small hours—someone strumming a guitar a half-tone flat, two women asleep against each other under a shared coat, Louisa presiding over the embers like a contented general.

It should have felt ordinary, this scene I'd watched a dozen summers running.

Instead, everything had taken on an unbearable significance, as though the world had been quietly repainted overnight in colours one shade too bright, and I was the only one who could see it.

I could feel several women across the fire watching her hungrily as she stepped into her jeans and pulled them up in one swift, boyish movement, and a pang—part protectiveness, part predatory jealousy—gripped my gut.

I realised I wanted both to protect her and to take her to bed, and the two desires together floored me.

How could I want either?

I liked men.

And I had hated that childhood Bella with my whole heart.

With Bea sat back down, cross-legged on the rug, I noticed—dimly—that Digo and Katie had vanished. They'd slipped my mind entirely the moment she'd said hi.

Knowing I couldn't avoid her any longer, I sat on my towel beside her, tucking my own legs under me, and stared into the flames, buying time.

Where does one even go from here?

"I imagine it's a bit of a shock," she said. "I thought, earlier, you might have recognised me."

I could only shake my head, feebly.

"I thought you'd gone off to some posh finishing school in England." My voice came out shaky. "I thought you wanted the husband and the children and the posh wives' club."

Bea, to her credit, smiled at the blunder.

"I did go to London. My father did put me in a finishing school. Best thing he could have done, as it turned out."

I frowned and glanced at her.

"That's where I met Monica." A sad smile shaped her lips. "A remarkable woman. It's because of her that I finally found myself, and learnt to love the person I am."

It sounded like riddles, and even so a cramp of jealousy clutched at me. "Who's Monica? Where is she now?" The way she spoke, I half expected her to be sitting on the far side of the fire.

Bea lifted one sculpted hand and tapped her breastbone. "She lives in here now. She was my saviour, my lover and my friend."

"Was?"

"She died of typhoid, while we were backpacking in India during our gap—" she made quotation marks in the air, "—year."

"I'm sorry," I mumbled.

She nodded slowly, her fringe falling forward to hide her face.

She said it simply, the way people do once they've finished arguing with a fact and have only the carrying of it left. I thought of Monica then—a woman I'd never meet, dead on the far side of the world before I'd so much as guessed at this version of myself—and felt a strange tenderness towards her, this stranger who had loved the girl I was about to.

Grief, I would come to learn, is part of the furniture in Eressos.

Half the women around that fire had washed up here carrying someone.

The island never asks you to put them down.

It only asks you to make room for something new beside them.

"Anyway," she went on, "I decided to stay out there and keep travelling. I had hardly any money left, but I couldn't go back to my old life in England without her. Luckily India is cheap, and I learnt to

live on a couple of pounds a day. I took manual labour where I could find it.”

“Manual labour?” I laughed—the image of prissy Bella Papadopoulou, who in school had wept over a broken nail, roughing it, was more than I could hold in my head.

She smiled too. “Yes. I found it hard to believe myself, at first.”

When she didn’t go on, I asked, “When did you finally go back?”

She picked up her half-empty can. “I didn’t.” And took a swig.

My mind grappled with the barrage of irreconcilable information.

She told me how she’d drifted west and north and finally washed up here, the way so many of us do—meaning to stay a fortnight and somehow never quite booking the ferry home.

She’d found work pruning olives, crewing day-boats, mending the things other people broke.

“I kept waiting to feel like I was running away,” she said.

“Then one morning I realised I’d been running towards. I just hadn’t known the address.”

She held my eye a beat too long, and I understood—with the slow, sinking, marvellous certainty of a tide coming in—that I was somehow part of the address.

It should have frightened me. It didn’t.

“So,” I managed, “how did the Bella from school—the straight one, Larissa’s sidekick, the one with the famous notched bedpost—come to...” I didn’t know how to finish.

“Come to like women?”

I nodded.

“The truth?”

I nodded again.

“I always liked women.” She smiled. “The notches were a decoy.”

Of course. Of course, they were. I thought of the Bella I’d feared—the loud one, the cruel one, forever flanked by Larissa and her bedpost mythology—and saw it suddenly for what it was: a costume, worn so constantly it had begun to chafe.

She’d built a fortress of nastiness around a girl who liked girls, in a

town that would happily have eaten her alive for it, and she'd manned the walls alone for five years. The loneliest part was that it had worked.

Nobody had ever guessed. Least of all me—the very person, it turned out, she'd been guarding it all against.

She picked a pebble from the sand and flicked it into the fire. "In fact," she said, "as you've probably guessed by now, I had the most mortifying crush on you. The whole of school."

"Me?" My voice squeaked. "You hated me!"

She shook her head. "No. I was head over heels for you. It was Jac I hated."

"Jac? Why?"

She scoffed. "All right, 'hate' is too strong. It was more that I wanted to be Jac. I could see you liked her—I saw the way you looked at her—and I knew you were taken."

I shook my head. "No, no. Jac and I were only ever friends. Besides, I'm straight."

She arched an eyebrow. "Says the woman who just kissed and groped me in the sea." And laughed.

"I did no such thing." I slapped her arm, not too gently, deflecting my embarrassment; I hadn't had time to process the half of it. "You kissed me."

She looked at me then, her eyes reaching right into me, as if to touch my heart.

"And I'm glad I finally found the courage to," she said.

I felt the flush climb my face, the space by the fire suddenly far too small.

I'd turned back to the flames, hunting an escape, when her fingers brushed my temple and tucked one of my dark curls behind my ear.

I glanced up and was caught—a moth to firelight.

She'd turned fully towards me.

She leaned in, slowly, leaving me an out if I wanted it.

I didn't.

She pressed her lips to mine, and the world dissolved to a single point, where we met.

For a moment the whole beach tilted.

Bella Papadopoulou. The name detonated quietly behind my ribs, scattering fifteen years of certainty like startled birds.

The girl who had made my schooldays a slow siege; whose approval I'd despised myself for wanting; whom I had, on the very worst afternoons, prayed quite sincerely would move to another country.

She had.

And now she'd come back salt-wet and grinning, my legs around her waist in the moonlit sea—and I could not, for the life of me, find the hatred I'd kept polished and ready all these years.

I looked for it.

It simply wasn't where I'd left it.

That night, she took me back to her tent. I'm not sure what was more surreal: sleeping with a woman for the first time; doing so in a campsite with Digo a few centimetres away in their hammock; or the fact that prissy Bella Papadopoulou was, against all the laws of nature, camping.

What I do know is that the night undid me on every level.

By the grace of a seismic orgasm the like of which I'd never even imagined, I discovered at last what all the fuss about sex was for. I felt reborn—I met an Amenah I hadn't known existed. The whole thing felt like coming home; coming home to a celebration of one's own life, complete with fireworks and street bands and magic elixirs—a spiritual and carnal carnival.

What I remember, in pieces, is this: the rough cotton of the sleeping bag and the impossible softness of her mouth; the way she asked, first with her hands and then in words, whether I was sure—and meant it, and waited for the answer; the salt still on her skin from

the sea; Digo's hammock creaking once, somewhere unimaginably far away, and neither of us caring.

I remember laughing, and being shushed, and laughing again. And I remember the precise moment I stopped performing a single thing—stopped holding my stomach in, stopped narrating myself to myself—and simply was, in the dark, wanted, and astonished to find I wanted back.

The next morning, I woke to the smell of percolating coffee.

When I'd wrestled myself into some clothes and dragged my aching limbs out of the tent, I found Bea lifting two towels from a makeshift line strung between the branches of an adjacent tree. One of them I recognised; in my euphoria I'd quite forgotten the worldly matter of everything I'd carried down to the fire the night before.

Digo was nowhere to be seen—gone for a run, or a swim, or simply gone, in the unbothered way of people who sleep in hammocks—and the campsite had the soft, forgiven look even the scruffiest places wear at first light.

A goat bell clanked somewhere up the hill.

The sea did its enormous, patient breathing beyond the tamarisks.

I stood there in last night's jeans, my hair doing something architectural, and felt—of all the ridiculous things—shy. Not of what we'd done, but of how completely I had meant it.

She came over, set her hands on my hips and pulled me into a kiss.

"Swim, to freshen up?" she said, mouth close to my ear.

"If you do that again, we'll only end up back in the tent." I was half serious; some sex-starved, two-headed Cerberus had woken in me overnight. I nodded instead at the coffee pot, puffing gently on its little gas ring.

"Still brewing," she teased. "Everything in good time. Swim first, then coffee?"

I should, by every rule I'd ever lived by, have been panicking.

A few miles off my mother was already awake and counting sugared almonds; in three days I was to dance at a wedding as the kind of girl who'd soon want one of her own. And yet, standing barefoot in that quiet, coffee-scented morning, none of it could get a purchase on me. The panic kept arriving and finding nowhere to land, like a gull above a boat that has already pulled in its nets.

I nodded. She took my hand and led me down to the sea.

About halfway there she stripped off her shorts and T-shirt, and I followed, and as last night's heavy jeans dropped away I felt lighter—liberated, not merely undressed.

The sea was a different creature from the night before: pale and clear and almost warm, the colour the Aegean manages only at the very start of a day. Bea waded in ahead, unselfconscious as a seal, turned, and held out her hand. This time I did not lunge, or wobble, or apologise for my body.

I walked in, and I took it.

Behind us the little stove muttered its promise of coffee.

Up the beach Louisa was already awake and bellowing something cheerful and unrepeatable across the bay, and little Free from the fire had appointed herself lifeguard, tearing along the shallows and barking at the waves as though she'd personally arranged the sunrise and wanted the credit.

I floated on my back and let the island hold me up, and I thought: I belong to this. Not to Bea, necessarily—I was wise enough, even then, to suspect that some loves are a single bright season rather than a lifetime—but to this. To the women in the water. To the light on it. To whatever it was that had finally, after twenty-odd years of sleepwalking, woken me.

"Coffee," Bea said, her mouth against my ear. "Everything in good time."

And for the first time in my life, I believed her.



YOUR AWAKENING IS JUST BEGINNING ...

What happened to Amenah is how it begins for almost everyone who washes up on this beach—usually with rather less skinny-dipping, occasionally with rather more.

Sappho's Shore is a shelf of standalone Sapphic love stories set in and around Skala Eressos—each one a complete romance, each one a different woman discovering that the sun, the sea, the ghost of Sappho and the right person can remake a life.

If you'd like somewhere to begin, begin with **Salt and Spice**—the warmest, funniest doorway into the world. (Turn the page to find out more.)

Amenah Awakens is my gift to the VIP Reader Club. Members get more free stories, the first word on every new release, and the occasional postcard from wherever the writing has carried me. Come and join us at Jules-Hart.com.

Some islands change you.

— Jules Hart

ABOUT JULES HART



"She just reached in and put a string of lights around my heart...."

Jules Hart is the author of several award-winning novels and currently lives and writes in London while exploring the world and its stories.

"I aim to write lesbian love stories for women smart enough to want it all: compelling plots, emotional nuance, and prose that doesn't talk down. My fiction explores love and self-discovery with intelligent rigour and sensual depth. Off the page, I'm equally restless—climbing mountains, arguing books with friends in wild places, and maintaining a cordial co-existence with an opinionated cat. I write the romances I wanted to read: ambitious, sensual, and unapologetically mine."

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A wise author once said:

“Even though writing a book starts off as a solitary endeavour, to finish a book takes the dedication, hard work and kindness of a small but substantial army.”

So with that in mind, I’d very much like to thank my little army—my editorial team, my friends and family. I could not have done this without you.

Last but not least, thank you to my loyal readers. You are the reason I do this.