CHAPTER ONE

“Oh yeah baby, please don’t stop!”

Those were the words that kept replaying in my head as I sat on the other end of the couch facing my best friend. She was talking about something as I kept replaying the night before in my head from beginning to end. That man should be off limits because of who he is, but I couldn’t help myself. He’s just so delicious and sexy. I let out a sigh before I heard,

“River, are you listening? Did you hear anything I just said?”

“Huh?”

“Were you thinking about him again? Girl you got it bad.”

Susie said while shaking her head.

“I can’t help it, I’m addicted.”

I mumbled.

“I don’t know who this guy is, but he’s got you whipped.”

“Nah”

I said blushing.

“Who’s whipped?”

Rachel said walking in the room.

Rachel is Susie’s mom and like a second mom to me. Her and Susie had always been there for me ever since Susie and I had met in high school.

“River is whipped. She’s been seeing this guy for a while, and he seems to be all she can think about. I think she is in love.”

“I am not.”

I said blushing.

“Girl you can’t even focus when we are at work. You almost put lotion on a poodle this morning instead of shampoo.”

Susie said while bumping my arm playfully.

“Oh, dear that is bad.”

Rachel said while grabbing her suitcase.

I was about to say something when I heard,

“What’s bad?”

Turning around I saw Rachel’s boyfriend Emmett coming in from feeding the snakes in the garage. Emmett was a tall, muscular biker guy with a long dark beard and he and Rachel ran a reptile pet shop from their garage

“River is in love with this guy she has been seeing. She can’t focus on a conversation or at work.”

Rachel said while walking into her room.

“Oh, well sounds like a lucky guy.”

Emmett mumbled after stopping at the fridge to get a drink.

“Girl you need a break from this guy. Why don’t you come on vacation with us? What do you think mom?”

Susie said.

Before I could get a word out of my mouth to decline, I heard,

“Sure, she could most definitely use a vacation of pampering.”

“Uh, thanks you guys but I will be fine really.”

I said, hoping that would end the conversation.

“Oh, come on, the shop is closed for the weekend, and you don’t have any plans. Besides your boyfriend will be out of town anyway and the resort has a spa.”

“He’s not my boyfriend.”

“Mmhmm sure. Well sex mate then.”

Susie said while bumping my leg with her foot.

Knowing that Susie was not going to stop until I agreed to go, I told her

“fine”

and quickly changed the subject.

Talking about him to her was not something I felt comfortable with. I was going on vacation to a luxury resort in the mountains for three days with my best friend, her mom, stepsisters Bridget and Monica, little sister Dani, little brother Seth and Emmett. I was also going to be where the man that has my heart is going to be. What could possibly go wrong?

CHAPTER TWO

When I got back to my apartment later that afternoon I shut the door, went to my room and fell on my bed. Covering my head with my pillow I let out a frustrating scream and then lay there looking at the ceiling. I didn’t know how I was going to go on this trip and be able to keep my hands off him. Susie was right I was in love, but I couldn’t act on it because it would hurt too many people.

Him and I have been sneaking around for a few months. Beforehand I had always had the feeling that he had feelings for me, but I thought I was just going crazy. Then he started liking all my pictures on my Mybook page.

It started off innocent honestly, but that very first time at the hotel just outside the city limits was amazing. We had a connection that I can honestly say I had never felt before. Since that day a few months ago we have been seeing each other at least twice a week, but we talk every day. To have a connection like that and not be able to act on it like we want hurts like a bitch.

As I lie on my bed thinking about everything that could go wrong on this trip, I received a message.

**“Are you alone?”**

**“Yes”**

**“I’ll be over in a minute.”**

After seeing that message, I instantly got butterflies. I quickly shot up, stripped off my clothes and threw on my silky black nightgown and started getting out my clothes for the trip.

I took out two different bathing suits, three pairs of shorts, three tank tops and four pairs of underwear. It is always good to have an extra pair. I also threw my hairbrush, toothbrush, toothpaste and a pair of my comfy pajamas on the bed. I had just gotten my clothes in the bag when I heard a knock on my door. I put the bag down and walked to the door, I turned the knob and opened it to find him standing there looking so sexy.

“Hey there beautiful.”

He said while shutting the door and wrapping me in his arms.

Feeling his touch sent electricity all through my body. I looked into his dark brown eyes as he bent down to kiss me. As our lips touched and our kisses deepened, I felt his grip get tighter. I backed against the wall and looked up into his eyes.

“I missed you girl.”

“I missed you too.”

I said before going in for another kiss. As he flicked my lip with his tongue, I reached down to unbuckle his pants. Before I could get the last notch loose, he grabbed my hands.

“Oh, you missed me that much huh?”

I nodded as he pressed his muscular hairy chest into mine.

Smiling he took my hands in one of his, pinned me to the wall and started playing with my clit with the other hand. I let out a small moan because it felt so good. It made me want more. As his face inched closer to mine he slipped a finger inside of me, which made me instantly moan. I buried my face in his neck and bit him softly.

As he sped up with his finger I moaned louder in his neck. As I was about to cum, he stopped and looked me deep in the eyes.

“Do you love me River?”

He asked.

Quietly I responded,

“You know I do.”

As I let the words slip from my tongue, he quickly spun me around where I was facing the wall and kissed my neck while taking my gown off me. I looked over my shoulder and watched his pants hit the floor as my gown did. I turned back around and sat down on the edge of my bed.

I put my hand on his hard dick and slipped him in my mouth. I gently played with him with my tongue, hitting all the right spots, not stopping until he pulled my head back. I came up for air and slid back as he climbed on top of me.

I wrapped my arms around his neck and pulled him closer, twitching in excitement at the feeling of his tough hands going down my body and tightly grabbing my ass. I let out a load moan as he pulled my legs open and pushed inside of me, thrusting harder as I begged him not to stop.

After we were both satisfied, he rolled over beside of me out of breath. I smiled and took in his features. From his dark hair, dark brown eyes, thick black beard and his arm tattoos. I couldn’t help but love the sexy man beside of me.

The man should be off limits because of our twenty something year age difference and because he really wasn’t available, but I couldn’t help but crave him. Susie was right I was very addicted and if I got to be with him, I didn’t mind sharing and the secrets.

Looking at me he sighed,

“Are you sure about this trip?”

“Honestly, I’m not sure but you know Susie, if I would have declined, she would have kept pestering me until I accepted.”

“Yeah, that girl can be a pest sometimes. This is going to be difficult.”

He said while running his fingers through his hair.

“No kidding, not to mention she keeps asking questions about you. I hate having to lie to her.”

I said while laying my head on his chest.

“I know you do but she can’t know because baby I can’t give you up. The hardest part of this trip is going to be trying to keep my hands off you. Especially if you wear that purple bikini.”

He said sighing.

Hearing that I smiled but then something dawned on me. I looked into his eyes and asked,

“Do you love me?”

Smiling he bent down and pressed his lips against mine. I pushed him back and climbed on top of him.

“I’ll take that as a yes.”

I said while kissing him harder before letting out a small moan as he slid me on him and pressing on my hips while pushing himself into me hard.

As I started riding him, he yanked my head back and bit my neck, which made me moan loudly. I didn’t stop until we were both moaning, and my insides were numb and full of him.

Knowing that tonight would be the last night we would be together for a few days he stayed longer than normal. Lying with his arms around me, I whispered,

“I love you E.”

As I was starting to doze off, I felt his breath on my ear and I heard him whisper,

“You will always be mine; I can’t live without you River.”

CHAPTER THREE

As I watched her doze off in my arms, I couldn’t help but stare at her. I had known River for years and I had never expected to fall for her. Something had always made me want her, but I had always fought the urge. At least until I couldn’t anymore.

Looking at my watch I noticed that it was eleven and I knew that if I didn’t leave soon, I would be having to answer a lot of questions. Like always I had to force myself to get up and get dressed, I hated leaving her but for right now I had no other choice.

I walked over and kissed her forehead one last time and whispered in her ear,

“You will always be mine; I can’t live without you River.”

I really couldn’t live without her. I was in love with her just as much as she was with me. She could have any man in this world, but her heart belonged to me. I knew deep down I didn’t deserve it because I knew I could never give her what she deserved which is a loving husband and a family, but I just couldn’t let her go.

I opened the door, glanced one more time at her and walked out shutting the door quietly behind me...

When I woke up the next morning, I noticed that I was wrapped up in the blanket. I wasn’t sure what time E had left but I did remember falling asleep in his arms. I unwrapped myself and quickly went to the bathroom and turned on the shower. As the hot water came out, I stood under it letting the water seep into my skin.

I shut my eyes and tilted my head back dreading these next couple of days. How was I going to get through this trip? I could always back out but if I did then I would have to come up with some off the wall excuse and I couldn’t think of any that Susie would believe at that moment.

I quickly washed up and stepped out of the shower. I threw on a pair of cotton panties, a white bra, jeans and a cute red top. I brushed my red hair and put it up in a messy bun. Then I slid on a pair of flip flops and grabbed my bag to put in the car. I had just shut the car door when my phone started ringing.

“Hey girl, are you ready yet?”

Susie asked.

“As ready as I will ever be. I just put my bag in the car. I’m about to lock up and head over.”

“Good, we are taking your car. Mom figured that you may not want to ride in the van with everyone. So, her and Emmett are taking the van and I figured we could take your car or mine.”

Susie said.

“Sure, we can take my car, but you are driving. You know I hate driving long road trips.”

“Ok cool, see you in a bit.”

“See you in a bit.”

I said before hanging up.

I sighed and went to lock up my apartment before getting into my car. When I arrived at Susie’s house about twenty minutes later, I moved my bag from the back seat of the car to the trunk and Susie came out bringing two more bags.

“Dang Sue, do you really need two bags for a three-day trip?”

I asked putting them in the trunk.

“Of course not silly this other bag is Monica’s. She wants to ride with us, is that ok?”

“Sure, but you are still driving.”

I said while closing the trunk.

A few minutes later everyone started coming out of the house and loading up. Rachel, Emmett, Bridget, Seth and Dani all got into the van and Susie, Monica and I got into my car.

I climbed into the passenger seat and laid my seat back. The ride to the Blue Ridge Mountains was a four-hour drive so I was going to make myself comfy. As we pulled off and merged on to the interstate, I turned on the radio and laid back.

“Thank you for letting me ride with you guys. I really didn’t want to ride four hours all squished up in the van.”

Monica said.

“No problem, I totally understand.”

I said while feeling my phone vibrate.

I took out my phone and smiled it was a message from E.

“**Drive safe beautiful. I miss you already.”**

**“I miss you too.”**

I said before putting my phone away.

“I know that smile. You got a text.”

Susie said smiling.

“Yeah, so what.”

I shrugged.

“We haven’t even been gone a day and you are already getting messages.”

“He was just wishing us a safe trip.”

“Who are we talking about?”

Monica asked confused.

“The guy that River has been seeing.”

“Oh, what guy, I want details.”

“River has been seeing some guy for the past few months but won’t tell me who he is.”

“Oh River, I am so happy for you. What’s his name?”

“Good luck she won’t even tell me that much.”

Susie said.

Not really wanting to have this conversation, especially with Monica I quickly tried changing the subject.

“So, Monica, how have you been?”

“Oh no, stop trying to change the subject River. What’s wrong is it someone we know?”

Monica said eyeballing me.

“Is it someone we know? Hmm let me try and guess.”

Susie said.

Before I could stop myself, I blurted out,

“His name is E and that is all I am telling you.”

“E? hmm who do we know whose name starts with E?”

“Oh, come on Riv you have to tell us more than that. Like, when did you guys start talking and all that?”

Monica said looking content.

Knowing that I had said too much already and trying to figure out a way to end this discussion without exposing E, I thought about my next words carefully.

“Well, him and I have known each other for a while. I kind of always had a crush on him but never knew he had one on me until a few months ago when he started liking all my pics on my Mybook page. Anyway, one day I sent him a message asking how he was doing and asked him why he was liking all my pictures.”

“We are listening keep going.”

Monica said.

“He wrote me back saying that he had always liked me but had been afraid to tell me, and that had wanted me for a very long time.”

I said.

“Oh, why was he afraid?”

Monica asked.

“Because he is a little older than me and he doesn’t want to hurt anyone.”

I mumbled softly.

“Hey this is more than what I could get out of you. OK so he is a little older and his name starts with an E. It’s not our assistant manager Ethan, is it?

Susie asked.

“Oh god no! I wouldn’t touch that with a ten-foot pole.”

I said.

“Hmm, is it that Daniel guy that comes in every week from UPS?”

“No, it is not, Susie you can keep guessing but I am not telling you who he is. E is my secret and that is how it will stay.”

I said kind of annoyed.

After that the conversation ended and the rest of the trip to the resort remained silent. I think Susie could tell that I didn’t want to talk about it anymore because I turned the radio up loud.

CHAPTER FOUR

Shortly after three pm we started going through the Blue Ridge Mountains. The scenery was stunning. It was the start of fall so all the leaves were changing colors and falling, the air was crisp, and the sky was clear and sunny.

We continued going up the mountain for about another forty-five minutes then when we reached the top, we came to a stop at a giant resort that read, “La tromperie Resort.”

Reading the sign, I realized instantly it was French and in the back of my brain I was thinking “Oh, great” because La tromperie is French for deceit.

While Rachel and Emmett checked in, I quickly looked up the resort on my phone and found out that it once was mansion that burned down years ago because it was rumored to have gold built into the walls.

I didn’t get to read much more into it because soon Emmett and Rachel were back outside with information packets and room keys. Monica, Susie and I got out of my car, got our bags and locked the car back. I tossed the keys into my purse and walked over with the group while quickly making eye contact with E. I stood by Susie waiting for instructions.

“Okay everyone there are seven of us and three rooms. I need one volunteer to sleep in the same room with Dani and Seth.” Monica and Bridget looked at each other and did a rock, paper, scissors match.

“Ok Monica wins so Bridget you will be taking the room with the younger two, Rachel and I will be taking the master room and Susie, Monica and River you can have the room next to ours.”

Emmett said while handing out the keys with numbers on them. I sighed under my breath because I really did not want to be next to his and Rachels room. Not like I was going to be staying in the room anyways but the times that I were in the room I did not want to be next to them.

Susie handed me a map and a packet and then we each started heading to our rooms on the third floor. The master room was huge, it had a king-sized bed, with a gigantic bathroom that had a separate tub and shower.

Our room which was right next door was big also. It had two queen beds, a nice view of the mountains, a decent sized bathroom that had a normal shower/tub. A big flat screened tv, a round table and a mini fridge. The colors weren’t that bad either. The walls were purple, the carpet was gold, and the doors and windows were white. The sheets and pillows were also gold colored.

I looked at Monica and Susie,

“Well, it’s not that bad in here, so who is taking what bed?”

“I’ll sleep with Susie so you can have the other bed.”

Monica said.

I looked at Susie to make sure that was ok with her, and she nodded.

“Okay”

I said while sitting my bag down on the bed closest to the bathroom.

I sat down at the table and looked at the packet that was given to us that gave all the events, times and activities of things to do. I looked over the list and saw that breakfast is served in the dining area from seven until eleven, lunch is from noon until three then dinner is from seven until nine.

I flipped to the amenities page and started looking. There was a spa, three pool areas, arcade, rock climbing, fishing, a bar. The bar caught my attention because I would be hitting that place up.

Lastly there was a bowling alley. This place was nice and there were a lot of things to do to keep my mind distracted. Who knows maybe this vacation might not be a disaster? I was thinking about what to do first when I got a text from E.

**“Keeping my hands off of you is going to be impossible.”**

I smiled then a thought hit my mind.

**“With all these amenities, where there is a will there is a way.”**

“E texting you already?”

Susie asked.

“Maybe”

I said while blushing.

“Too bad he can’t join us.

Susie said with a smirk.

I gave her that are you serious look and she quickly changed the subject.

“Ok ladies so what are we going to do first?”

Susie asked.

“I don’t know about you two, but I am thinking about hitting one of the pools.”

Monica said.

Just then there was a knock on the door. Monica opened it and Rachel came in.

“Oh, it’s nice in here. You girls good? Emmett and I thought about heading down to the dining area to get something to eat.”

She said smiling.

“I’m fine, I’ll grab something later, I thought about maybe going for a hike or to the spa because it’s too early to hit the bar. Thanks though.”

I said.

“I’ll join you guys, are the other three coming to?”

Monica asked. Rachel nodded and she started out the door behind Rachel. I looked at Susie.

“Susie you can go if you are hungry, I’ll be fine. I am an adult remember.”

I said.

“Alright, if you’re sure. I feel like something is wrong that you aren’t telling me.”

“Susie I will be fine I just have a lot on my mind. Besides I will have my phone with me so if you get worried you can always text me.”

I said while giving her a soft hug.

Susie was my best friend but sometimes she worried too much. Truth be told I was a little hungry, but I didn’t want to go eat right now with everyone. I wanted to be alone to take a breather and sort out in my head and how I was not going to expose E.

After Susie left, I laid back on the bed. I calmed my overactive brain down and let out a breath. I told myself that I was here to relax and that I was going to try and keep my distance, enjoy the next two days and go with the flow.

CHAPTER FIVE

After resting for a bit in the bed I got up and looked at the time. It was almost six thirty and I was starting to get hungry. I grabbed my purse and headed down to the dining area. When I reached the doors, a nice hostess greeted me.

“Hello, welcome to La tromperie Resort. My name is Sharie may I ask how many is in your party?”

“Oh, my party is already here. I waited back for a bit. I actually see them over there.”

I pointed through the window at Susie and Sharie smiled and ushered for me to follow her. When I reached the table, everyone smiled, I took a seat beside Susie.

“So, you did decide to join us?”

Rachel asked.

“Yeah, sorry I just needed to relax for a minute.”

I said. It was somewhat the truth but not the entire truth.

“No need to apologize, I know you have a lot going on in your life right now.”

Rachel said.

I smiled at her and ordered a steak and shrimp plate with mashed sweet potatoes and a glass of sweet tea to drink. To my surprise it arrived very quick.

The waiter sat my food down and looked at me. Then he said,

“Mam I just have to say that you are looking very beautiful this evening.”

I smiled and said,

“Thank you.”

I glanced over at E and noticed that he was giving the waiter the evil eye. I tried not to chuckle and started sipping my drink.

After the waiter left, I cut the steak and took a bite and I suddenly realized how hungry I was. The steak was cooked perfectly, and the shrimp was good and crunchy. The sweet potatoes were also covered in brown sugar and pecans. It was some of the best food that I have ever tasted. I slowly ate my food, simmering every bite.

I had just taken my last bite when I heard Emmett speak.

“So, what is everyone thinking so far?”

“This place is great; Dani and I are thinking about going to the arcade after we eat.”

Seth said loudly.

“What about you girls?”

“After dinner, I’m going to the hot tub by the big pool.”

Monica said.

“I’m thinking about doing the same unless River wants to go bowling.”

“Sure, Susie we can go bowling, I’ll hit the bar later.”

I said.

“Why do you want to go to the bar so bad?”

“Well, I can’t go hiking in the dark and maybe I just want a drink”

I said to Susie.

“Dang Riv you got it that bad? That you need a drink?”

I rolled my eyes at Susie and was about to speak when someone started clinking a glass.

Everyone looked around and noticed that a well-dressed man was trying to get everyone’s attention.

“Excuse me everyone, sorry for the interruption but can I have your eyes up here please?”

The man got everyone’s attention before he continued.

“I came here this weekend to the mountains with my wonderful girlfriend for her birthday and I would like to give her a special surprise. My darling Iza we have been together for five years now, I was wondering if you would accept this ring and marry me?”

The tall, well-dressed, blonde-haired man said while looking at a long blonde-haired woman in front of him.

“Yes, yes my dear Frank, I will marry you.”

The woman said while wiping a tear from her eye.

Everyone clapped and the couple kissed. Watching that I felt a small nag at my heart but pushed it away.

“Well, that was sweet.”

Rachel said while sipping on her drink.

I nodded and went back to eating my sweet potato. Glancing at E, I noticed a small frown. A few minutes later dessert was served, and it was double chocolate chip cheesecake. Well so far at least the food was great at this place.

I had just taken my last bite of my cheesecake when my phone started ringing. It was a spam call, so I hit the ignore button.

“Is it lover boy?”

Susie said teasing.

“No just spam.”

I said while putting my phone back in my purse.

“Mmhmm sure.”

Susie said with a smile. I looked up at E who was smiling to himself.

“So, River, you and this guy are really serious huh?”

Rachel asked.

“I guess so. I mean I really care about him a lot.”

I said softly while blushing.

“Well, I hope it works out for you two. Who knows if it’s that serious maybe it will be you that gets proposed to next?”

Not knowing what to say I let out a sigh and stood up.

“I’m not feeling so well. I will see you guys later.”

Turning around to leave I heard Rachel say,

“What did I say wrong?”

“Nothing mom, E is just a secret to River. I’m not sure who he is but I do know that he means a lot to her.”

As I heard those words come out of Susie’s mouth, I tried my best to fight back tears. If only she realized how much that man meant to me and how much mine and her friendship meant. Why did love have to be so cruel?

CHAPTER SIX

After leaving the dining hall I found myself in the bar. The bar was in a good-sized room with about twenty tables and the drinking selection was very good. I sat down at the bar and ordered a Blue Lagoon. It was one of my favorite cocktails and it consisted of rum, blue curacao, pineapple and lime juice.

As I sit there sipping on my drink, I thought about the events that happened at dinner and Rachel’s comments. If only she knew that the man that I was so in love with was the man that was sitting right, there beside her. If only she knew that I did long to marry him and be his only one. But we kept our secret because we didn’t want anyone hurt. I quickly downed my first drink and asked the bartender to fix me another and to keep them coming. I wanted to drink away the pain and jealousy I was feeling at that moment.

I was on my third round when the well-dressed man from the dining room came in. He saw me drinking alone and quickly sat down beside me. I studied his features and seen that he wasn’t that bad looking. He was tall, with sandy blonde hair and blue eyes.

“Hello, what is a gal like you doing in a place like this?”

He asked.

“I have a lot on my mind. Shouldn’t you be celebrating your engagement with your fiancé?”

I asked.

“She isn’t feeling well and went to lie down. I figured I would come grab a drink for a bit.

He said with a smile.

My name is Frank.”

“River.”

I said.

“Nice name, so River what could possibly be on your mind to make you drink the way that you are?”

I don’t know what came over me to make me want to share my problems with a complete stranger. I guess it was the third glass of alcohol, but I found myself pouring everything out to this man. Including who E was. I had just finished when Frank responded with,

“Oh, I see. That is quite a bind you have gotten yourself into.”

I was about to respond when I heard my name really loud. I looked over my shoulder and found E running toward me with a worried look on his face. He grabbed a hold of my shoulder and looked from me to Frank and back to all three of the empty glasses that were sitting in front of me.

“River, I figured you would be here. Everyone was starting to get worried because it’s almost midnight and no one has heard from you.”

“I’m fine E, I’m a grown woman. No need to worry.”

I said feeling very drunk.

“Riv you are drunk and upset and I know you are upset because of the way you left dinner. You’re also talking to umm, who are you?”

E asked while looking at Frank.

“Frank, I just came in for a drink and sat down beside this lovely lady. You must be E? Ms. River here is very upset and was just telling me about her troubles.”

Frank said nicely.

“Uh, what did she tell you? She’s drunk she doesn’t know what she is saying.”

“No worries, man, you secret is safe with me. Just get her to bed because she definitely needs rest.”

“Excuse me, I am perfectly fine. I’ll get myself to bed when I am ready.”

I yelled.

E just looked at me.

“No, you are coming with me now Missy.”

E said while grabbing my hand and pulling me up out of my seat.

“Excuse me, but you are not my dad, and I will do what I want.”

I said while pulling my hand away.

E was obviously irritated at me because before I could say anything else he picked me up bridal style and put my head against his chest. I took in his scent and listened to his heartbeat while tears slowly slipped from my eyes.

Walking to the elevator E said,

“Baby girl you had me worried. I’m so sorry about the events that happened tonight but you didn’t need to go get drunk. River if anything happened to you, I don’t know what I would do.”

As I listened to the words that came from his mouth, I suddenly felt calm and found myself drifting off to sleep. I was in his arms where I felt comfortable and where I wanted to be.

I was so worried when River stormed out of dinner like she did. I knew Rachel had struck a nerve. She had also struck a nerve with me. I hate seeing River in pain it makes me hurt and feel like a dumbass.

When I found her sitting in the bar talking to the guy beside her, I instantly got a little jealous. I was worried that he was trying to get into her pants although I had no right to be jealous. When I realized how drunk she was and saw that she had drank three tall glasses of whatever she had been drinking and when he mentioned my name and that she had been spilling her guts all I could think about was how bad she must be hurting.

I knew she wouldn’t spill our secret sober, so I didn’t really let it bother me, but I did wonder what exactly she told the guy. I walked back to the room and knocked on the door for someone to open.

Rachel opened with a gasp which is what I figured would happen.

“My gosh, River. What happened?”

“Ssh Rachel, she’s asleep. I found her in the bar extremely drunk to the point she couldn’t stand so I picked her up and carried her. She passed out in my arms.”

“Poor girl, I didn’t mean to upset her. I know she has a lot going on, but I really didn’t think she was that upset.”

“It’s fine, I guess she has a lot on her mind that she doesn’t want to talk about. I’m going to go put her to bed. I’ll be back.”

I said while carrying her to the other room.

Monica and Susie were still out so I gently laid River down on the bed that was hers. I covered her up like I normally do and kissed her lips softly. She smelled like rum and lime which let me know what she had drank.

“I’m so sorry River. I should have never let you come on this trip. I blame myself for your pain.”

I whispered to her.

I quietly stood up, walked to the door and shut it behind me. I knew the sacrifices she made because of her love for me. I just wished I could make the same ones. River is an amazing woman, and she deserves so much better than me but all she wanted was me. Yet she had to share me.

I went into the bathroom, shut the door and turned the shower on full blast. As the steam flooded the bathroom I stood against the back of the shower with only River on my mind.

CHAPTER SEVEN

When I woke up, I realized I was back in the room in the bed. However, I had no idea how I had gotten back. The last thing I remembered was being in the bar. I had just ordered my third drink. I sat up but had quickly wished I hadn’t. The sun was shining through the blinds and my head was pounding. I slowly pushed myself up off the bed and headed toward the bathroom.

When I got to the bathroom I quickly undressed and stepped into the hot shower. The steam from the water felt great on my back. I leaned my head back and shut my eyes. The hot shower was exactly what I needed to wake up. I washed my hair and myself up, turned off the water, wrapped myself in a towel and stepped out.

I dried off and opened the bathroom door just a bit. I saw that Monica and Susie were still asleep, so I walked over to my stuff, grabbed my bag and headed back to the bathroom. I threw on my purple bikini and my red dress with multicolored flowers over it.

I looked at the time and noticed it was almost ten. I did feel a little hungry, so I decided to go get breakfast. I grabbed my phone, my purse, the room key and headed down to the dining area. When I got there, I sat down and ordered some French toast with a glass of milk.

As I sat waiting on my food, I sent Susie a quick message letting her know where I was so she wouldn’t get worried. I then sat there trying to remember the events from last night when I heard a voice from behind me.

“Well don’t you look extremely beautiful this morning.”

Knowing the voice immediately I smiled and looked up to see E and his dark brown eyes looking at me.

“Hey good looking. Care to join me?”

“You know it. We have ten minutes to ourselves”

E said while sitting down next to me.

As he sat down, he grabbed my hand and like normal I felt what felt like a bolt of electricity run through my body.

“How are you feeling this morning? You had a rough night last night.”

“Better after that hot shower I took before coming down. I really don’t remember much about last night. The last thing I remember is ordering my third drink.”

“Well, when I found you at the bar around midnight you were hammered and had been talking to some guy named Frank. You wanted to catch an attitude with me, so I picked you up in my arms and carried you back to the room.”

E said sighing.

“Oh wow, I’m sorry E. I had a lot running through my mind and Rachel didn’t help any. I’m just wanting you so bad right now.”

He was about to say something when my food arrived, and Susie and the gang walked through the door. E quickly dropped my hand and grabbed the menu. I picked up my fork and cut into my breakfast.

“Good morning, River. Aren’t you looking spiffy this morning?”

“Thanks Rach, sorry about last night, I honestly don’t remember much about what happened.”

“It’s ok honey, I know you have a lot on your mind. That’s why I booked all of us girls a spa session in a couple of hours.”

I nodded and continued eating my breakfast. When I got through eating, I pretended my phone was ringing and asked to be excused. I told them that I would meet them at the spa and left. As I stood at the elevator, I felt a hand on my back. I knew that touch instantly so I smiled.

“Yes?”

“I want you too River, I can’t stay away from you. I found the basement this morning when I was trying to get you off my mind so I could sleep. Meet me down there in two hours. I’ll text you how to get there.”

“Alright”

“Oh, and Rachel said meet her at the spa in thirty minutes.”

I turned to face E and nodded. Then I stepped into the elevator. As the doors closed, I watched E sit back down at the table while looking at me. He looked so fine in his white biker shirt and shorts.

I stood against the back of the elevator and closed my eyes. I really didn’t want to go to the spa, but I figured I could use a nice massage. I also didn’t want Rachel or Susie to think that I was trying to avoid them.

As I reached the floor that the Spa was on, I exited the elevator and ran into Frank and Iza. Frank spotted me and stopped.

“Good morning, River are you feeling better?”

“Yes, thank you. I’m actually glad I ran into you. I wanted to apologize for what happened last night. Normally I don’t get that drunk in public.”

“No problem, I promise that your secret is safe with me.”

Frank said with a wink.

“Did I miss something?”

Iza asked while looking at me.

“I ran into River last night at the bar and she was very upset and had a little too much to drink.”

Frank said while looking at Iza.

I smiled and was about to say something when Susie ran up to me.

“Hey, you’re here, you ready to go get pampered.”

Susie asked while grabbing my arm and pulling me toward the spa.

I waved goodbye to Frank and Iza and turned to go into the spa with Susie, Rachel, Bridget and Monica. When I went through the doors, I instantly felt relaxed. There was a small fountain in the middle of the room and tables everywhere. The walls were a mint green color, and the floor was marble. In the back corner was a bamboo tree. Soft relaxing music was also playing.

“We are the party of five for the spa special.”

Rachel said to a woman behind the counter.

The woman smiled and motioned for us to follow her.

“Here at the resort spa, we have multiple stations. We have the tanning bed, massages, mud baths, facials and lastly the manicure and pedicure section. You may pick and choose. I hope you enjoy your time here at the spa.”

The woman said before walking back to the counter.

I didn’t want to spend too much time in here because I was anxious to meet up with E. I looked at Susie and asked her where she wanted to start first?

“How about we start with the mud facial and while that sits, we can get a massage?”

“Sure, that sounds relaxing.”

I said while following her to the facial station.

“Welcome what can I help you two ladies with today?”

The worker asked.

“We would like a mud facial and a massage please.”

Susie said smiling.

“Sure thing. My name is Ashlee, and I will be assisting today along with my salon trainee Lola. Is that, ok?”

Ashlee asked while pointing to a short black-haired woman who looked like she was maybe eighteen.

Susie and I nodded and went to the changing room to put on our robes. The changing room had four stalls and each stall had a bamboo plant in it. It was very relaxing. I slipped off my flipflops, my dress and my bathing suit. Then I slipped on my robe and tied it. I put my dress on a hanger and my phone in my bag and stepped out of the changing room.

I waited on Susie and then we went back to the station and sat down in our chairs that were next to each other. I titled my head back resting my neck and closed my eyes.

“Isn’t this relaxing? This should ease whatever is on your mind.”

Susie said.

“I don’t know Susie I have a lot on my mind.”

I said while Lola slid cucumbers over my eyes and began washing my face.

“Riv, you know you can tell me anything. I am your best friend. I was really worried about you last night. Especially when I heard that Emmett brought you in passed out.”

“Susie I am fine really. No need to worry. There is just so much you don’t understand.”

“Girl I have known you how long? You are not ok. As for not understanding try me. I’m here to listen not to criticize.”

I sighed as Lola began putting the mud mask on my face.

“It’s just Susie I am so in love with him, and I want so much but I know I can’t have it.”

“Why not? If you and this guy are happy?”

“Because he’s not really available.”

I mumbled.

“What do you mean he’s not available? Do you mean he is married?”

“No, no, he isn’t married. He just has a serious girlfriend and kids.”

“Oh, I see. So, you’re basically the mistress?”

“Kind of, except we talk every day, and he comes to my place a couple nights a week. I want so much with him. I wish I could be his only one, but we don’t want anyone getting hurt. Also, his kids are the same age I am.”

I said sighing.

“Well girl the way I look at it is if he really loves you then he will choose you and give you everything you deserve. You should know that you can’t make everyone happy. If not, then you may want to move on. You deserve better.”

“If only it were that simple Susie.”

I said while standing up and removing my robe before laying down on the massage table.

As Ashlee started my massage my tension automatically relaxed. She started with my neck and went all the way down to my toes. The warm oils felt so good on my skin.

As Ashlee massaged my back, I literally felt everything that had been on my mind float away.

When she was finished with the massage, she washed the mud off my face. I went back to the changing room feeling like a new woman. My skin was literally glowing. I got dressed again and grabbed my things.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I told Susie that I would meet her at the pool later and left. I checked my phone and found a message from E. I read over it and smiled. He had found the basement and we would finally get a moment together. As I started the direction that he sent me I started getting butterflies in my chest like always.

I was already on the first floor thankfully, so I followed the main floor all the way to the main hallway. As I was going down the hall I ran into a tall, dark-haired man who looked to be in his late forties. He gave me an evil glare and kept walking.

I shrugged it off and kept walking. I found the basement at the end of the hall because of the big B above it. I stopped looked to the left to make sure no one was coming and turned the knob. I stepped in and shut the door behind me. I look around and saw E standing on the second flight of stairs waiting on me.

“Hello good looking.”

I said smiling.

E gave me a big smile and I stepped down the first flight of stairs over to him. He gently pushed me against the brick wall and kissed me deeply. Finally, I was getting what I longed for.

E wrapped his hand in my hair and kissed me deeper. I wrapped my hands around his waist and pulled him into me. I could feel his big bulge through his pants. As I put my hand on his bulge, he playfully bit my lip and looked me in the eyes.

“Tell me how bad you want it baby.”

He whispered.

“Very bad.”

I said softly.

I unbuttoned his pants and slid down his zipper. As I started playing with him, he buried his face in my neck and kissed it softly. He pulled off my dress and threw it on the floor. He saw that I was wearing his favorite bikini and his eyes get darker with excitement.

As I pulled his pants down, he pulled my bottoms down and slowly lifted me up against the wall. I wrapped my legs around his waist while looking him in the eyes. He cradled me in his strong arms so I wouldn’t fall and slowly pushed into me. I let out a small moan and arched my back a bit.

My moan seemed to turn him on because in an instant his gentleness went to very hard thrusting. I tried to contain my moan as his hard dick thrusted against my clit but with each thrust, I only got wetter, and I couldn’t control myself.

It felt so good that I dug my nails into his back and started moaning his name loudly. Instead of moaning E his full name came out of my mouth. “Emmett Eugene!” As I started to get louder, he quickly shoved his lips against mine.

As I tasted his tongue, I dug my nails deeper into his back. As he was about to cum, he lifted his lips from mine and moved his mouth down to my neck. I laid my head back and moaned loudly as he thrust one last time and finally busted.

As he slid out of me and released me to the floor. I fell to my knees gasping for breath. I hadn’t had it that good in a while. He slid down beside me, and we sat there with our backs against the wall both trying to breathe.

I slid my bottoms and dress back on and looked at him. I wiped the sweat from his forehead and kissed him softly. I loved this man so much.

E stood up and pulled me up with him. With his hand in mine, he kissed me again. When we pulled apart, he was about to say something when we heard a cough. We looked up and above us by the door was the man that I had saw in the hallway earlier.

“Oh, please don’t mind me. Please continue that was quite a show. I got a free porn show without having to pay for it.”

Reacting with instincts E quickly pushed into me to shield me.

“Hey man who are you and what are you doing here?”

E asked angrily.

“Don’t mind me, what are you two doing here?”

The man asked.

I spoke up quietly.

“Umm we are just leaving.”

I said while trying to make my way past him.

“Oh no sweetheart you two aren’t going anywhere.”

The man said while blocking our exit and walking toward us.

“Stop, don’t you dare come any closer. Look the best thing is to let us go.”

E said while pushing me behind him.

“I could, but what would be the fun in that? I suggest you two keep walking down.”

“How about no, now move out of the way before someone gets hurt.”

As E went to go push the man away so we could get back up the stairs the man pulled out a gun and pointed it at me. I instantly froze in fear.

“If you value this beautiful woman’s life you will do as I say now move it.”

Fearing for us both I motioned for E to do as the man said and we continued downstairs to the basement. What I figured would be dark was well lit and I could hear other voices as we reached the last step.

“Hey, it’s about time you got here, Iza and I were about to start the heist without you.”

The voice said and I instantly knew who the voice belonged to.

“Sorry I ran into these two at the top of the stairway putting on a show. It was kind of nice to watch.”

The man said while pushing E and I forward.

As I looked around, I saw a lot of antiques, gold blocks and a door that led to what seemed to be a tunnel.

“Nice to see you again River.”

Frank said.

“You know this girl, Frank?”

“Yeah, I ran into her at the bar last night. She was a little drunk and spilled her heart out about Mr. E here. These two are having an affair behind her best friends back who happens to be E’s stepdaughter.”

“Oh, how juicy.”

The man said with a smile.

“Look man, just let us go. We know nothing and won’t say nothing.”

E said.

“The name isn’t man it’s Andre and sorry I can’t do that you have seen too much.”

CHAPTER NINE

“Please we won’t say anything.”

I said.

Andre rolled his eyes and started twirling his gun in the air.

“Frank tie them up while I figure out what to do with them.”

Andre said while pointing the gun at us.

“Come on Andre is that necessary? They won’t say anything. These two just wanted some privacy to themselves.”

Frank said.

“If you don’t shut up and do what I say I will shoot both of them then you.”

Andre said.

Frank sighed and grabbed two pairs of handcuffs and motioned for us to go to the corner. Frank handcuffed me and E together then took the other sides and hooked us to two pipes in the corner.

“I’m really sorry about this you two if it were up to me, I’d just let you go.”

Frank said before walking away.

“I’m so sorry River. All I wanted to do was protect you and now I have gotten us both into trouble.”

E said while looking at me.

“E it isn’t your fault. You didn’t know the basement was already occupied.”

I said quietly.

“You’re right. I should have known better in the first place. If only I didn’t love you so much.”

As I heard those words, I felt excitement and my heart breaking at the same time. He said he loved me but the way he said it made him sound like he wasn’t happy to be in love with me. I was about to say something when I heard Andre shout.

“Will you two shut it over there, I am trying to concentrate.”

Iza came over and took both our phones and my purse. She threw our things on the table in the middle of the room and walked back over to the guys. I got quiet to focus on what they were saying.

“Ok so far we have all these antique paintings and a few gold nuggets. We know that the money and the rest of the gold is behind this steel safe however we have no way to open it without getting caught. What we need is some way to get the key to the safe.”

Andre said.

“Well, we could always use those two.”

Iza said while pointing.

“Forget it we aren’t helping you rob this place. We aren’t criminals.”

I said loudly.

“I said shut it.”

Andre said while smiling.

“Come on Andre just let them go. They aren’t in this. Stop worrying about them and let’s get this done.”

Frank said.

“Frank shut it, or you will die first. I am not giving up on this. Everything this resort has belongs to my family. My family was forced off this land because of the gold that was buried in my family home. Iza and I were stripped of our birthright, and I intend to get what is mine.”

“I’m just saying, other than sneaking around these two are innocent. No one has to get hurt.”

“ENOUGH”

Andre said while pulling the trigger and shooting Frank.

Frank fell to the ground with a loud thud. I turned my head and buried my head into E’s shirt. E tried his best to comfort me and hide my face from the horrific sight of Frank’s corpse by telling me that everything was going to be ok and that we would get out of this.

“Now big brother why did you have to go do that? We were supposed to be getting married.”

Iza said looking hurt.

“Do you want to die too baby sister? You know I never liked him anyway. Out of all your past boyfriends he was the worst. He was too kind and always wanted to do the right thing.”

“You are too obsessed with revenge Frank. You could have killed him later. Now these two have already seen too much.”

“Your right Iza. They have saw too much. Oh well I guess they will die together.”

Frank said while holding the gun up to us.

“Wait, Wait, please don’t kill River. If you are going to kill anyone kill me. Better yet if you let us go, we will help you. Just don’t hurt River.”

E said loudly.

“Aww how sweet. You would do anything to save your mistress. Even give up your own life. Alright I will take you up on your offer. You help us and I will let you two live. If not, I will kill the girl after exposing your secret.”

Andre said with a smirk.

Iza uncuffed me and pushed me forward. I glanced back at E who was still handcuffed.

“Now River, you are going to help me get the key to this safe. Here is how we are going to do that. Tonight, while everyone is at dinner we are going to go and distract everyone while Iza sneaks into the main office and gets the key to the safe. As insurance she is going to take E here along with her.”

“How am I going to help you distract everyone?”

I asked.

“Well darling don’t you recognize your secret lover Mr. E?”

Andre smiled.

“What if I refuse?”

I asked.

“Well then I will kill your man right in front of you and expose your secret. To show that I mean business.”

BANG!

“EMMETT!!”

I shouted as Andre’s shot pierced him in the shoulder.

I quickly ran over to E and squatted down in front of him holding my hand against the hole in his shoulder that was pouring blood.

“Oh, don’t worry it’s just a flesh wound, so you were saying?”

“Fine! but don’t you think for one minute you are getting any of this.”

I said angrily.

“Don’t worry I saw enough earlier to satisfy me.

Andre snickered.

As I kept pressure on E’s wound, I glared at Andre. E was turning pale and was losing a lot of blood.

“Fine, I will help you under one condition. Help him, he is losing a lot of blood and turning pale. Please, I will do whatever you want just don’t let him die.”

I said with tears flowing down my cheek.

“As you wish my love, Iza get Mr. Emmett here cleaned up. Don’t let him die, you know where the first aid kit is.”

I watched as Iza unbuckled the handcuffs and pulled E over to the other side of the room. She sat him down and began cleaning his shoulder. She pulled the bullet out, put some ointment on his shoulder and began to patch up the area. I stared in amazement.

“My dear sister was a nurse for a hospital before she got fired because of Frank.”

“It wasn’t Franks fault Andre. I can’t help I fell in love with a patient. You know love happens in mysterious ways.”

“I don’t care Iza. Now shut it.”

Iza mumbled and continued working on E.

“So, what do you want from me?”

I asked calmly.

“Ok my dear here is the plan first you are going to tell me everything about you and E. How you met, where you guys are from, details that people will believe and then you are going to go back to your room, act like everything is totally normal, get ready for dinner then meet me at the dining hall doors. Oh, and if you really want to save E then we are going to have to put on a very good performance.”

I nodded in agreement and left after kissing E and assuring him that everything would be ok.

CHAPTER TEN

When I got back to the room I quickly ran to the sower and wet my hair to act like I had been at the pool. I stripped out of my dress and bathing suit and wrapped myself in a towel. I had been gone for three hours and dinner was in an hour. As I let the steam from the shower fill the room, I thought about what to do. I could go along with the plan and risk being exposed or I could go to the cops and still get exposed or worse put E and me in more danger.

As I heard the door shut in the main room, I shut the shower off and got my panic under control. I opened the door and stepped out. Susie was sitting there on the bed.

“Hey, there you are, where have you been?”

“I was umm in the hot tub by the big pool.”

I said without hesitation.

“When because I just left from there and I didn’t see you there earlier?”

Susie asked questioningly.

“After I left the spa. I went to the hot tub. Then I got a phone call, so I took the call and then decided to come get a shower.”

I said sounding irritated.

“Oh, ok, it’s just I haven’t seen much of you this trip. This is our last day here and I wanted to spend it with you.”

Susie said.

“I’m sorry Susie, I haven’t been avoiding you I swear. It’s just I have a lot going on right now and E has decided he wants to come over and join us for dinner tonight so I’m just a little nervous.”

I said while gritting my teeth.

“Really? He is coming here. Tonight? So, I finally get to meet him?

Susie asked excited.

Forcing a smile, I nodded. I really did not want to go through with this plan, but I had to protect Emmett at all costs.

“Well, we have to find you something extra special to wear. Oh, by the way have you seen Emmett? We can’t find him anywhere.”

“No, I haven’t seen him since breakfast.”

I lied.

“Hmm, well he has to be here somewhere. Anyway, back to you. Let’s see what you have that is sexy.”

Susie said while walking over to my bag.

I walked over to her and was about to say that all I had brought was shorts when there was a knock on the door. I opened the door to find one of the hotel workers holding a large bag over his shoulder.

“Are you Ms. River?”

He asked softly.

“Yes”

“I was instructed to give you this, have a nice evening madam.”

I took the bag and closed the door. I laid the bag on the bed and instantly felt nervous. Looking at Susie I opened the note that was attached.

***“Wear this tonight. See you at dinner.***

***Yours Truly, E.***

“OOO what is it?”

Susie asked.

I opened the bag and we both gasped. In the bag was a long glittery red and silver evening dress. I took it out of the bag and instantly filled with rage. Even though this dress was extremely beautiful and very expensive I would only be wearing it because I was being black mailed into doing so.

“Susie can I be alone a minute?”

I asked.

“Sure, man Riv you are lucky. I wish I had a man that would buy me things like that.”

I gave her a crooked smiled and headed to the bathroom with the dress. I shut the bathroom door behind me and hung the dress up on the back.

I punched the wall in frustration because I knew what I had to do even though I didn’t want to do it. I would rather be exposed then pretend like Andre was E. But I had to think about Emmett. It wasn’t just about me. His life was at stake too.

Without another thought I threw the towel on the floor, grabbed the dress and slipped it on. I put my hair into a bun and did my make up. Then I took a breath and opened the door.

I sat down on the bed and put the black dress heels that came with it on, grabbed my purse and went out into the main room. Rachel and Susie were waiting on me.

“Wow River you look absolutely stunning!”

Susie said with envy.

I smiled and was about to say thank you when my phone went off. I opened the message and read,

**“Showtime, make it good or else.”**

I put my phone away and looked at Susie who was staring at me.

“What’s wrong River? You look like you are about to cry?”

“Just nervous, I guess. Have you guys still not heard from Emmett?”

I asked.

“No, and I am starting to get worried.”

Rachel said while putting her phone in her purse and standing up.

“Maybe he will meet us at dinner.”

Susie said.

“You two go on down without me. I will meet you guys down there.”

“Alright, Oh I am so excited to finally meet the famous E.”

Susie said while walking out the door.

I looked at my phone and responded to the number that just messaged me.

**“I’m headed down now.”**

I took a breath, stood up, and walked out of the door.

As I walked down the hall to the elevator, I could feel myself getting nervous. I tried pushing what could go wrong out of my mind. This was something that I had to do.

I had just stepped into the elevator when a hand stopped the door from closing and a man stepped in.

“Well, don’t you look lovely.”

“Save it, I am only doing this to protect E. If it were only me that you were black mailing, then I wouldn’t care what happens but it’s not. You are also threatening the love of my life.”

I said snappy.

“Hey watch it. Don’t snap at me. If you cooperate it will all be over soon and you and E will be reunited. But I have to ask do you honestly think he will ever choose you over his family?”

Not being able to respond due to the door opening. I hid my anger, put on a fake smile and intertwined my arm with Andre’s while stepping out of the elevator.

I do have to admit though the man did look very handsome. He was wearing a black and white suit. His black hair was combed nicely, and his dark green eyes had a glowish tint to it like a cat. He was the type of man that a woman would fall for in a heartbeat but not this woman.

We walked to the dining room doors, and I instantly spotted Susie and the gang. Susie spotted me and ran up to us.

“Oh, my River he is handsome. I see how you fell in love with him.”

Susie said with a little drool coming from the end of her mouth.

“Well thank you, Susie. I’m flattered. And you must be Rachel?”

Andre said while talking to Rachel.

“Yes, and you must be the famous mystery man?”

“Yes mam, guilty as charged. My name is Emanuel Younts, but you can call me E.”

Andre said while shaking Rachel’s hand.

“Nice to meet you E. Well, let’s all go in shall we. I’m about to starve.”

After everyone else went in Andre held the door open for me.

“After you, my princess.”

I glared at him and went in. He walked in after me with a smile on his face.

We went to one of the big tables in the back and Andre held my chair for me as I sat down. He sat down beside me and grabbed my hand.

“You are very beautiful tonight, River. I’m so glad I was able to join you.”

At the same time everyone gushed except for Seth who stuck out his tongue.

I smiled at Andre and began looking at the menu. When the waitress got to the table, she took everyone’s orders then asked what I would like.

“I would like a glass of Verdi wine with the lamb, mashed sweet potatoes and green beans. What would you like my love?”

“I’ll take the same and can you just bring the wine bottle. I figure my princess here is going to need it tonight.”

Andre said while handing the woman a one-hundred-dollar bill.

“Yes sir, it will be right out.”

The waitress said while walking away.

We all sat in silence for a few minutes when Rachel started a conversation.

“So E, how did you and River meet?”

“Well, I came to her work one day with my golden retriever and it was love at first sight. I fell so hard for her that later that day I had my secretary find her Mybook page. I sent her a message on Mybook, and we started talking for a few months. Then I took her on a date and well we have been going strong since.”

He said while opening the bottle of wine that was just brought to the table

“Aww that’s so sweet. So, you live near Thomasville then?”

“No mam, the backside of Lexington actually, toward Statesville.”

Thankfully after that the food came and everyone got quiet to eat. I was almost done when Andre’s phone started to ring. He took the call and after a couple of seconds hung up.

“I’m sorry you guys, there is an issue at home with my daughter and I am going to have to go. It was nice meeting you all. River why don’t you walk me out?”

I sighed and made myself look sad before standing up and following him to the door. After leaving the dining room I stopped.

“Did they get the key? Will you release E now and leave us alone?”

“Patience River, you did good and made it very believable. Meet me in the basement in an hour.”

Andre whispered in my ear.

Before he turned and walked away, he kissed my cheek and smiled. I walked back to my table feeling disgusted. I sat down and pour me another glass of wine calmly. I had just started eating again when Rachel started talking.

“Well, he is a gentleman River. You are lucky. I honestly expected someone totally different.”

“Aww, River you are so lucky. He seems to really care about you.”

Susie squealed.

“Yeah”

Bridget and Monica agreed.

Dani and Seth really didn’t care. They were too busy eating their desserts. I smiled at them and mumbled a thank you and finished my food. As eight pm approached I asked to be excused, grabbed my purse and left. I told them that I wasn’t feeling very well which at that time I wasn’t.

Before heading to the basement, I went back to the room, pulled out a sheet of paper and wrote Susie a letter explaining everything. I explained the truth about Emmett and I and why Andre was pretending to be him. I apologized for everything and explained how I never wanted anyone to get hurt. By the time I was done the letter was three pages long. I laid the letter on her pillow with a sticky note that said,

“READ IF I AM NOT BACK. -RIVER”

When I got to the basement door, I opened it and started down the staircase. I didn’t bother changing because I honestly didn’t expect to make it out of this situation alive. Once I reached the bottom step, I saw E handcuffed to the wall again. Bloodier than what he was the first time.

“What the hell is going on? What happened to E?”

I shouted.

“Don’t worry cupcake he will be fine. He tried double crossing Iza in the main office and she punched him in the face.”

“Stop calling me flirty names. I am not your girl, and I never will be. I did my part now let us go.”

I said huffy.

“Now what kind of fun would that be? I mean you sold me being E so well. Why can’t we continue?”

“Because you aren’t me?”

E yelled from the wall.

“Too bad, you are really beautiful River. Iza take her back to the wall.”

Andre said while opening the safe.

Iza grabbed me by the shoulder, and I started to head back toward the wall until I noticed Andre’s back was turned. Once I noticed that he was solely focused on the safe and its contents I turned the tables on Iza.

I quickly grabbed her hand, spun her around and punched her in the face knocking her on her ass. I grabbed a handful of her hair and dragged her over to where E was. I handcuffed her to the pipe where she was going to put me and stuck a dirty cloth in her mouth for a gag.

E noticed what I had done and smiled. I quickly undid the handcuffs and set him free he fell to the ground with a thump. Seeing him soaked in blood from being hit in the face I cried softly.

“Don’t cry River, I’ll be alright. Right now I need you to get out of here and go get help. I’ll deal with Andre.”

“I am not leaving you E. You are too weak to stand up against him. I will not let you die protecting me.”

I said while kissing him softly.

“River you really do look beautiful tonight. I am so sorry about all of this. I love you River Fawn I just want you to know that no matter what happens I love you.”

I smiled and kissed him again. I stood up looking around the room. I was determined not to let Andre escape. I grabbed a broken copper pipe and a knife off the table and started toward the safe.

He had his back turned to me and was emptying the safe. I held the pipe up and knocked him over the head. He fell to the floor holding his head and cussing. When he looked up and saw it was I that had hit him he lunged at me knocking the pipe and knife from my hand.

Andre landed on top of me, and I hit the concrete floor with a loud thud. It knocked the wind out of me, and I couldn’t breathe. As I struggled to get him off me E came up behind him with his pocketknife and stabbed it in Andre’s shoulder. Andrea wailed out in pain and E ran over to help me up.

As E was helping me stand, I noticed that my head was bleeding and that I felt dizzy. As E started to turn to help me up the stairs I yelled because Andre was charging at us with a knife. E blocked me and when he did, he got stabbed in the same spot that he had been shot in earlier. His wound reopened and blood started gushing from it.

E pushed me to the floor with force accidently. As I hit the concrete floor, I couldn’t say anything because I began losing consciousness. The last thing I saw before everything went black was E standing over Andre.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

When I regained consciousness, I found myself no longer in the basement but in an ambulance. When the EMT saw that I was awake she rushed to me.

“Easy there, you have been in an accident and have a really bad gash on the back of your head and probably a concussion. You are going to need stitches.”

I was safe and I should have been thankful but all I could manage to say in a whisper was,

“E, where’s E?”

“Ssh. You lay back now. He is fine, he is in the other ambulance. You two are safe now. The two that had you in the basement have been taken into custody. You can relax now.”

I sighed in relief and closed my eyes.

When I woke up, I was in the hospital and E was by my bedside holding my hand. He was wearing a clean shirt and his shoulder was wrapped up. I whispered his name and he looked up at me with relief in his eyes.

“River, you’re awake. Thank God, you are going to be ok. It’s all over now.”

“What happened?”

I asked.

“After Andre charged at us and you got knocked out, I wrestled the knife from his hand and just started knocking his lights out. I’m not sure what gave me the strength but soon after cops came running down the stairs. Two of them had to pull me off Andre and then two more helped me get you to the paramedics. Apparently, Susie got your note and called the police.”

“Susie”

I said.

I knew she was probably really upset with me and that I had probably lost my best friend forever. Fearing that I had, a tear trickled down my face. E lifted his hand and wiped the tear from my eye.

“Don’t worry about Susie or anything right now we will discuss all that later. You just focus on getting better because I need you River. I can’t live without you. I love you.

Hearing those words, I smiled. I rested my head back on the pillow and shut my eyes. Knowing that I had E beside me and that he was okay was all that mattered to me.

Ten months later I stood in the church nursery looking out of the window as Susie helped me get into my wedding dress. Today was the day that I had been dreaming of all my life. Who knew it would happen after that disastrous vacation?

Susie forgave me and E because she understood everything after she read the note and we both explained it. Rachel on the other hand was highly upset and heartbroken about E and I and refused to speak to me which was to be expected.

Bridget and Monica didn’t like the fact of their father and I being together, but they accepted it. They only wanted their dad to be happy and they were also totally in love with their new little brother. After I finished getting ready Susie and Monica came up to me and asked me if I was ready?

I smiled, grabbed my bouquet of roses and after the music started playing when the doors opened, I started down the aisle to the biker, the snake man, the man that had stolen my heart, that gave me a child and the man that I would love and cherish for the rest of my life all thanks to the disastrous vacation we went through.