

## Prologue

*Four months earlier*  
*St. Lucia*

“SO THIS IS WHERE YOU snuck off to.”

The deliciously deep voice greeted Morgan Morrison as her head broke the surface of the heated water. Opening her eyes, she looked up to find River Brand standing above her at the edge of the resort’s indoor pool.

The sight of him kicked her pulse into overdrive.

“I didn’t sneak off,” she retorted, swiping water off her face. “I wanted to go for a swim after dinner. Didn’t realize I had to make an announcement.”

River’s dark eyes glinted with amusement. “Touché.”

As he dropped to a lazy crouch before her, the fabric of his khaki pants pulled taut over his hard, muscular thighs. When she caught herself staring at his crotch, she had to forcibly drag her gaze back up to his face—which was no hardship because his face was absolutely breathtaking.

She watched as his thickly lashed eyes slid over her wet hair and bare shoulders before lowering to her breasts. The heat of his gaze made her nipples harden beneath her white bikini top. Resisting the urge to throw her arms over her chest, she sank lower into the warm water, pathetically trying to hide herself.

The corners of his mouth twitched. “You’re a good swimmer,” he observed.

“Thanks.”

“How’s the water?”

“Wet,” she quipped.

He chuckled, a husky sound that made her shiver. “Mind if I join you?”

Hell, yeah, she minded! But she didn’t own this pool, so she couldn’t exactly keep him out of it. Not that she wouldn’t try.

“Actually, I was just about to lea—”

“Please don’t.”

Morgan stilled, staring up at him.

“Stay,” he cajoled, looking into her eyes.

“I—”

“C’mon. Just keep me company.”

Morgan swallowed tightly. She couldn’t look away as he pushed to his feet and peeled off his shirt, revealing a bare chest that was...wow. Just *wow*.

His shoulders were strong and ridiculously broad. His biceps were powerful, his arms roped with thick muscle. The cuts between his chiseled abs were deep enough for her to run her tongue through them. A trail of black hair started at his navel and tapered down to disappear inside his pants, teasing her imagination. As if that weren’t sexy enough, he had that mouthwatering Adonis belt that turned female brains to pure mush—two deep grooves that ran from his pelvis down toward his groin.

*Holy hell*, Morgan thought, feeling hot and breathless.

Although River's body was honed to perfection, he didn't have the muscle-bound look of some gym rat who spent all his spare time pumping iron. He looked like the working man he was—the kind of man who was most comfortable in coveralls and work boots, who made no apologies for the grease under his fingernails. A man who was naturally rugged and strong. Primitively male.

As he reached for the zipper of his pants, Morgan panicked and blurted, "Shouldn't you go put on some swim trunks?"

"I could." He paused, his eyes glinting wickedly. "Is that what you want?"

Morgan stared at his hand resting on his zipper, then unconsciously licked her lips and feigned a careless shrug. "Doesn't matter to me."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive." But she turned away, because watching him strip down to his underwear was way more temptation than she could handle.

Holding her breath, she listened to the slide of his zipper and the soft rustle of fabric as he removed his pants. She squeezed her eyes shut, struggling not to visualize those long, muscular legs or that thick bulge at his groin.

Moments later, he slipped into the pool with barely a sound. Just knowing he was in the water with her sent a rush of goose bumps racing across her skin.

When she turned around, he was right there. So close.

Too close.

She swallowed hard and took a step backward, putting space between them.

An amused gleam filled his eyes, but all he said was, "The water feels good."

"It's heated," Morgan murmured distractedly. She was trying like hell not to stare at his rock-hard chest, at the droplets of water glistening on his delicious dark skin.

She was crazy for staying in that pool with him. She had a boyfriend waiting for her back home in Chicago. A boyfriend who was good for her. Safe. Dependable. Everything she needed.

River, on the other hand, was trouble. Serious trouble. If she had any sense at all, she'd bid him goodnight and get as far away from there as possible. Like, right now.

But she didn't move. She...couldn't.

"Morgan."

She lifted her eyes to meet his dark gaze. "Yes?"

"Your sister just married my brother, so that means you and I are probably going to be seeing a lot of each other from now on."

Her mouth went dry at the prospect. "What's your point?"

"My point," he said gently, "is that I don't want you to be uncomfortable around me."

"I'm not." The lie rose automatically—and was shot down just as quickly by the look he gave her.

She blushed and glanced around the glass-enclosed pool, at the setting sun angling down through the roof to cast shimmering reflections on the surface of the water.

"Look at me, Morgan."

Reluctantly she returned her gaze to River's face, waiting for him to speak...afraid of what he might say.

“I think it’s no secret that I’m attracted to you,” he murmured, low and husky.

The muscles of her belly quivered in response. “I’m attracted to you too,” she whispered, surprising herself.

His eyes flared, pupils darkening. Her admission had surprised him as well.

As he opened his mouth to respond, she shook her head and added, “I’m attracted to you, but I’m not going to do anything about it. I can’t. I...I have a boyfriend.”

River stared into her eyes so intently she almost forgot to breathe. “How long have you been dating him?”

The question caught her off guard. “Why are you asking me that?”

“Because I’d like to know.”

Morgan wanted to tell him that it was none of his business, that it didn’t matter how long she’d been in a relationship.

But then he shifted closer to her, and her brain short-circuited. Feeling flustered, she swallowed convulsively and dropped her eyes to his chest.

His glorious, seriously ripped chest.

She ached to touch him, to run her hands all over him and absorb the heat and texture of his skin. When his flat dark nipples tightened under her hungry gaze, she raised her eyes to his.

The raw need she saw there triggered a responsive rush of heat between her thighs. Suddenly she was hyperaware of her exposed skin, of the warm water lapping gently at her body. She could feel her willpower dissolving faster than the steam rising from the pool.

Holding her gaze, River moved even closer until his bare chest was nearly touching hers, sensitizing her nipples to the point of sheer torture.

She stared into his eyes, her heart pounding wildly. Her internal warning system was going berserk, sounding the alarm for her to pull away, to stop this madness before it went too far.

But as River lowered his mouth onto hers, she could only close her eyes and surrender....