



*Caribbean Blue*  
*Dahlia Rose*

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DAHLIA ROSE

# Caribbean Blue

a novella of erotic romance by

DAHLIA ROSE

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# Chapter One

The sky was a deep blue, one of the deepest blues he had ever seen. Gem Air landed and taxied down the small runway at Grantley Adams International Airport in Barbados. The smiling stewardess ushered the passengers off the steel bird, and each of them stepped out into the sunlight. Elijah Connors was one of those passengers, and when he stepped into the clean, bright sunshine of the island, he put his sunglasses on against the glare. He thought better of it and took them off again. He didn't want the darkness of the lenses to spoil the beauty of the island.

He looked around as he walked across the tarmac to the central building of the airport. The palm trees waved in the cool breeze, and the exotic smells of the isle filled his nostrils.

*Yeah, I made a good decision to visit here,* he thought as he entered the customs line. Being a cop in Philadelphia was tough, and he was burned out. An old friend who'd relocated to Barbados had encouraged him to come down for a vacation, and Eli decided to take him up on the offer.

He went through the mandatory procedures of the island pretty quickly, and soon he was stepping into the sunshine once again. Even though he was inland he heard the waves crashing against the beach. Looking around, he caught sight of his longtime friend and his host for the next two weeks. A grin broke out on his face while he crossed the street.

"Hey, guy! So now I see why you left Philly!" Eli grabbed his friend's hand, then on impulse embraced him. He hadn't seen Mick since he retired from the police force and moved here to marry his sweetheart.

"Well, Eli, you're as pale as ever. Philly in November must be cold as shit." Mick grinned and slapped Eli's back. "Come on, get in the car and let's go to the house."

"Where is this house, anyway?"

"You'll see, buddy. You'll see."

Mick's house turned out to be right on the cliffs in St. Lucy parish. Limestone steps led down to the white sandy beach, where waves with foamy caps lapped at the sand.

"Now this is a house, Mick! Wanna adopt me?"

Mick laughed. "The wife won't let me."

As they walked up the gravel walkway a woman with dark bronze skin walked out to greet them. She wrapped her arms around Mick's waist and kissed him full on the lips.

"You got your friend safely, then?" Her accent was thick and distinctly of the islands.

"Sure. His plane landed on time, babe," Mick replied with a smile. "This is Elijah Connors. Eli, this is my wife, Jewel."

Eli could see the love in Mick's eyes for his new wife and felt a pang of something deep inside. "Very nice to meet you, Jewel. I love your home, and Mick won't adopt me."

She laughed. "Maybe after we have a few of our own you can be our next child. Or maybe you'll like the island so much you won't leave. Stranger things have happened."

"It's a nice thought, but I have work in Philly and I only have a two-week vacation."

"Hmmm, we shall see," Jewel said, with a hint of mystery that made Eli curious. "Come on inside and have some mango juice. I made lunch. Then you can go explore if you like or rest in your room."

"Thank God it's lunchtime!" Mick rubbed his hands together while the three of them walked into the house.

"I can see you still love your stomach," Eli joked.

Lunch turned out to be fried fish and big thick potato wedges. Maybe it was the weather or the fresh air, but Eli ate the delicious food like he had been starving for weeks. Even Mick's teasing did not deter him. Sleepy after the big meal, he went up to the room Jewel had made up for him. A bed with a wispy mosquito net stood in the middle of a perfectly white room. Wicker furniture complemented the island décor. He opened the French doors that led outside to the cliff and the steps leading down to the beach, then laid down and looked out to the horizon and felt his entire body relax. He needed this more than he'd realized. Outside the doors, the sea made a lulling sound that blended with the sounds of tropical birds calling out to each other and the breeze going

through the lush vegetation of the island. Another sound was mixed in with the island's own brand of music.

*What is that singing?* Eli passed it off as his imagination until he heard it again, and this time laughter accompanied it. He sat up and looked toward the open doors. He heard the tinkling laughter again, like water babbling across rocks, and he smiled at the infectious sound. Curious to see who it came from, he stepped out onto the verandah and looked down to the beach. He saw no one on the sand, yet the laughter and another line of what he assumed was an island song came to his ears.

*I have to know where that is coming from.* He started down the steps that led to the beach. Each step brought the melody louder to his ears and it began to captivate his senses. He was reminded of the Greek myths where men's ships were led onto the rocks by the sensual Sirens' songs. He reached the rocks that made the wall of the cliff and looked around to the other side of the beach. Still no one came into sight. Where was the singer who charmed him with her tempting song?

He walked farther down the sand and found another set of rocks. He let his fingers trail around the damp stone as he walked. The surf came up and the warm water washed around his feet. That alone made him want to take a swim. But not now—he was so close to discovering where the voice was coming from.

*There she is.* Eli stared at the beauty in front of him and his breath caught in his throat. Her hair was long, tight curls of black flowing down to her waist. Her skin glowed from being kissed by the sun, but her eyes were only a few shades darker than the sand at their feet. Around her neck was the smooth body of a snake, and she held its flat head in her hands. She sang a few lines of the same song to her pet, waiting silently as if she was listening to the snake talk before laughing out loud, throwing her head back and letting the sound flow from her. He had never seen anything so unrestrained and free.

"Hi there. I like your song. What's it called?"

She swirled around to face Eli, and it was then he saw the full beauty of her oval face. The side view did not do her justice. He walked over to her slowly because her green eyes were filled with wariness. She began to leave, but somehow Eli didn't want her to.

"Hey, hey, don't go! I won't hurt you. I just heard you singing, that's all." He kept his voice gentle, hoping she wouldn't be afraid to stay.

"I was singing to Columbus."

Eli wanted to roll his eyes in pleasure as her voice washed over him like the waves on her bare feet. "Columbus is your pet?" he asked, referring to the nine-foot yellow boa she had around her neck.

"We take care of each other. He's not my pet."

"What were you singing to him?"

"A song I was taught as a child. It's about mermaids that come on land to play with mortals and make hibiscus crowns." She looked around as if she heard something that Eli could not hear. "I have to go now. Goodbye."

"Hey wait! Don't go!" But she dashed off between the rocks and trees and was out of sight before Eli knew it. He went after her; the urge to follow her was far too great to resist.

He heard her tinkling laughter from behind a tree, and when he looked behind it, she ran behind the large trunk of another tree laden with fruit. A grin broke out on his face. Each time he looked around a tree, she was already gone and peeking from the one right next to it.

"So, what's this game we're playing?" Eli asked.

"Who says we're playing a game? I go, you follow. I can't seem to lose you," she said with merriment dancing in her eyes.

He moved again and she twisted quickly, evading his hand as it barely missed her arm. "What's your name, island girl?"

"And why should I tell you?"

*Shoot, just missed her!* He leaned against the tree trunk and laughed softly. He was having too much fun playing with this unknown woman. He felt like a teenage boy again.

"Tired?" Her head came around right above his shoulder and Eli was staring into her beautiful eyes.

"I'm an old man. I can't go running through the jungle chasing a strange woman."

"I left, you followed, so where is the chase? You aged rather well, old man. How old are you anyway since you call yourself old?"

"I'm thirty-five, so I have to be much older than you. I'd say you're about eighteen."

"You flatter me with the compliment, but I'm closer to thirty. Twenty-eight, to be exact."

"Are you going to tell me your name, island girl?" Eli cajoled softly. This was one of the best conversations he'd ever had.



"Questions, questions. I'll tell you next time...maybe," she replied. She touched him on the nose with one finger before she scrambled up and ran off.

Eli watched her go with a huge grin spread across his face. She was amazing, moving as if her feet never touched the ground. Eli didn't know who she was, but he swore he had just met one of the mermaids she was singing about coming to play on the island.

## Chapter Two

Two days later, Eli was still thinking about the girl he'd met on the beach. Sitting across from Mick and Jewel at the breakfast table, he pushed his eggs around on the plate.

"Homesick already?" Mick asked after watching him for a few minutes.

"What? Oh no, not at all!" Eli replied. "I'm loving it here."

On that point he was telling the truth. He had spent the past two days at the beach on jet skis and on a catamaran out in the crystal blue water. Mick had given him a fishing pole, and in the evenings he sat on the jetty with his legs dangling over the edge. His fishing line was in the water, but he didn't care if he caught a thing. Watching the sun set where the ocean met the sky was breathtaking. He slept like a rock each night. The only thing was, he could not get the girl out of his mind. He had looked for her over and over, but she never came back.

"Have you guys ever seen a girl with dark long hair along this beach? She has a snake with her."

"No, never seen her." Mick shrugged and went back to his food.

Eli caught a look in Jewel's eyes before she could cast them back down to her plate. "What about you, Jewel, ever seen her?"

"I've never seen such a girl on this beach, Eli," Jewel answered. "But the way you described her reminds me of a legend of the island."

"Here we go, another legend of the island," Mick teased and was rewarded with a slap on the back of his head by his wife.

Eli grinned, knowing that if anyone had tried that with Mick when he was a cop in Philly, they would be picking their teeth up from the floor. His friend had mellowed out since his move to the blissful peace of the island. "What is the legend about, Jewel?"

She sat forward with her fingers entwined under her chin and her tone took on a hint of mystery like a true storyteller. "It is said here on the island lives a small tribe of people named the Bagueu. They live in the hidden caves and gullies around the island and have found it easy to

move around without being seen. Their leader is a witch doctor who has given them all the gift of magic. These women cannot have children. Because of this they wait until a family sleeps at night and then they put the whole household under a spell. They steal babies from the family and take them to where they live to raise them as their own. The children are never seen again."

"What else?" Intrigued in spite of himself, Eli waited for Jewel to finish her tale.

"There was one family that came here for a vacation. They were originally from the island but they'd moved to New York. They visited the island regularly so their children wouldn't forget where they came from. This visit they had a new baby, a little girl who had hair like a crow's wing and eyes just as dark. Somehow the leader of the tribe saw her and wanted her for his own daughter. He watched her night and day and then one night he put the family under a spell in their guest house and stole the baby away. The next morning the whole family searched the island. The police and so many people wanted to help that they lost count of how many volunteers searched for the child.

"They said a storm came in and you could hear her mother screaming her daughter's name over the howling of the wind, but they never found her. The family left the island months later, brokenhearted at losing their child, and vowing never to return. That was twenty-two years ago, and to this day some say they see a young woman with dark eyes and a snake around her neck roaming the island as she pleases. When anyone tries to talk with her, she runs away and the island helps her hide."

At the end of her story Jewel sat back in her chair. Eli could see she believed every word of it, but he saw it as only an old wives' tale. Somehow, though, something in the story made the hair on the back of his neck stand on end and gave him goose bumps along his arms. Was she the girl he'd seen on the beach? It was too much of a coincidence.

"Can't she weave a great yarn? I swear, I should take her to Philly and put her in O'Malley's to tell her stories." Mick took up Jewel's hand and kissed it softly.

In return, she swatted him affectionately. "Be gone with you both. I have to clean up and get to work."

As she walked over to the sink, Eli had to ask one more question. "Jewel, what was the name of the baby that was stolen?"

Jewel looked at him with steady eyes. "I could never forget that name from the time I first heard it growing up. Her name was Alison." She went back to cleaning up the dishes.

Eli kissed her on the cheek and thanked her for breakfast. He went back upstairs and lay across the bed looking out to the ocean. His thoughts ran in circles from the story to the girl he'd seen. Could she have been his imagination? He wouldn't know unless he saw her again—if he ever saw her again.

\* \* \* \*

It was late afternoon before he got to be alone for a walk on the beach. When Mick had moved here, he became head of security for one of the biggest hotel casinos on the island. So while Jewel was off at her job as a nurse at the local hospital, Eli went to the hotel with Mick, who he could tell was trying to steer him into taking a job there. Eli had to admit the idea of staying on the island had become more and more pleasant in only two days. He could see himself working in the various hotel chains and coming home to a balcony that overlooked the water. That was what Mick had offered him: a suite in the hotel to live in just as long as Eli became Mick's second in command. He'd known Mick inviting him down to Barbados had an ulterior motive behind it. It wasn't a bad one.

The shadows were growing longer when Eli looked back and saw that he'd walked farther than he had expected to go. *That's what you get for letting your mind wander.* He didn't mind too much as he turned to head back. His gaze caught a flash of something moving in the clump of trees farther up the sand. He thought it was a trick of light until he saw the flash of blue that was out of place in the lush green trees. Following his instinct to always investigate, he walked cautiously up to the grove. Eli stepped between the low-hanging branches and the flower-filled vines that hung all around. He saw it again, and this time the black hair that went with it, and his heart leapt with excitement.

*It's her!*

"Hey, come back!" he called, racing after Alison. All he got in response was her tinkling giggle as he moved into the grove. It seemed every leaf, branch, and vine wanted to get in his way or slap at him as he tried to reach her. But Eli was not going to be deterred. He kept moving, even though the deeper he went, the thicker the vegetation became. He finally came to a clearing where wildflowers grew in vibrant colors. He looked around at the fruit-laden trees as all their different exotic scents

assaulted his senses. In his whole life Eli could say he had never seen such beauty nestled in one place. Yet when the girl stepped out into the clearing from the other side of the trees, he felt the splendor around him pale in comparison to her.

She walked slowly up to him, her white dress blowing in the breeze. In her hair she wore one of the flowers that seemed to dance at her feet as she walked by. Finally, she stood in front of him, even more beautiful than he remembered. Eli felt as if his breath caught in his lungs when she looked up at him. She reached up and softly traced his lips before moving in closer to him. Eli made a sound of pleasure in his throat as her lips touched his. He wrapped his arms around her, not caring that he did not know who she was. He was drowning in her exotic taste as his tongue slipped into her mouth and he felt her body mold to him. Eli was lost. She pulled away and smiled a radiant smile before turning and walking back to one of the trees. She sat there and looked over at him as if expecting him to follow. Eli obliged and sat next to her, stroking his hand over her hair as if to convince himself she was real. She smelled like papayas and passion fruit, and Eli had the urge to touch his lips to her shoulders and taste her skin.

"Who are you?" he finally asked when he could find his voice.

"My name is Alison."

"You're the girl from the story and the legend of the Baqueu!"

She laughed softly. "They still tell that story? You shouldn't believe everything you hear."

He grinned at her. "Well, you have to admit, with your name, how elusive you are. For a while there I thought you couldn't speak."

"I assure you I can speak very well, both English and French."

"So why all the mystery? Where are you from?" He had to ask; the cop in him, after all, loved the mystery around this.

"Some of the story is true. I am from the Baqueu tribe but—" He opened his mouth to speak but she held up a finger for silence and he promptly closed his mouth. "I was not stolen away from my parents. We believe the land is our mother, and that is where we stay."

"Okay, so you live here?" He gestured to the grove around him.

"I live many places, everywhere and anywhere on the island. Some places I walk, most islanders are scared to go or have never seen. This is by far one of my favorites, and my own special place," Alison said with a beaming smile. "What is your name?" Her accent was thick and sexy as hell, and Eli felt his cock harden in response.

"My name—I'm Elijah Connors. Eli."

"Elijah Connors. I like your name."

"Thank you, and I like yours, Alison. Now, why did you kiss me?"

"Because I desired to kiss you, Elijah. I think I desire to do it again, but not right now. Before I do that I am going to show you the island that no one else gets to see." She stood up and extended her hand. He got up and brushed off his backside before enclosing her hand in his big one.

"So where is your snake?" he asked casually.

She brushed vines out of their way and they began walking back to the beach. "He's around here somewhere. He comes and goes as he pleases."

Eli watched as Alison walked into the surf and her dress became wet and clingy. He felt his body harden once again when he could make out her nipples and the secret curves of her body.

"Are you coming, Elijah?" she called to him before she dove into the surf.

"You bet your ass," he muttered before he ran down the beach. He dived into the warm water, following her through the white-capped waves. He felt a thrill of excitement as the water enveloped him. This adventure was just beginning.

## Chapter Three

They swam a distance out into the crystal blue water. Eli was tall, but his toes barely touched the sandy bottom of the sea. When he looked back to the beach he couldn't believe how far they had swum. Alison faced him with a wide smile while her lithe body treaded the water gracefully.

Eli looked back to the sandy shore and then to her smiling face. "So, where are we going again?"

She glided through the water and wound her arms around his neck. "Are you unsure of going with me, Elijah?"

Her body being so close to him was giving him delicious sensations and very dirty thoughts. "No. Right now I'd follow you anywhere, but humor me anyway."

"We are going down," she replied simply.

"Down? Down where?"

"Take a breath, Elijah."

He took a deep breath, understanding her meaning. Her lips met his and Alison pulled them both under the water. Eli opened his eyes and saw fish in arrays of vibrant colors swim past him. The coral waved in the underwater currents. Astounding as it was, Eli knew none of the beauty he had seen on the island could compare to what was under the Caribbean Sea.

Alison took his hand and they began to swim under the water toward the opening of a cave. At first Eli focused on the graceful movements of her strong legs and on the sheer fabric of her dress as it undulated behind her in the water. He could already feel his lungs begging for a breath of air as they went into the mouth of an underwater rock formation. She began to swim upward and he followed quickly, desperate to take a breath. The two of them broke the surface of the water together, Eli gasping for breath so loudly he heard it echo off the wall of the cave.

"Where are we?" he asked, looking around. The cave was amazingly dry. He knew that part of it had to be on the surface of the island somewhere, but apparently the only way to get to it was from underwater.

"It's another one of my favorite places."

Eli watched Alison swim over to the edge of the pool and pull herself up onto the cave floor. He followed suit, and soon he was looking around. The walls were alive with coral that looked like live flowers. He reached out to touch one, but it pulled back into the crack in the rock that it was growing from, hiding from him. He gave a short laugh as he and the coral played a game of hide and seek before it finally let him caress its soft petals. It felt like velvet, and when it wrapped one of its tiny tendrils around his finger, he gasped in wonder.

"What is this place called?" he asked when she came over to him and handed him a towel.

"It is the Animal Flower Cave." Alison explained, "It used to be a tourist attraction long ago, but they closed it because it became unstable and the entrance from the island collapsed in on itself."

"How did you find it and the coral? They hide and then come out when they don't feel threatened."

Alison laughed, and the husky tone filled him with pleasure once again. "I found it long ago when I was a child. I remember going on a school trip to the cave before it collapsed and I knew there I had to be another opening, so I found it." He watched as she reached out to caress the same flower he was playing with. It curled around her fingers, and then as she moved her hand it seemed to imitate her movements. "It was called the Animal Flower Cave because the coral in here can live on both land and water, and some say they have the basic characteristics of animals."

"What do you say about it?" Eli could tell by just listening to her speak that she had a vast knowledge of the underwater world she seemed to love.

"I say they're correct. The coral here can feel pain, sense danger or the intent to harm. See how he curls around your fingers? He knows you will not try to pluck him from his home."

"How do you know it's a he?" Eli teased.

"Because of the colors. The female of this coral type have deeper red at the ends."

"How do you know all this stuff, Alison?"



"Because I live here and I love the water, plus I'm a marine biologist at the university here on the island."

Eli knew he must have been wearing an expression of pure shock on his face, because Alison broke out laughing.

"Did I ruin the mystique for you, Eli? The girl from the Baqeu tribe stolen at birth, who lives alone in the gullies and caves of the island?"

"No...no. I mean, why do people assume that legend is real?"

She wiped tears of mirth from her eyes. "Like I said before, do not believe everything you hear. I'm from the tribe, yes, but I went to school and college in America." She extended her hands. "My people and I feel very comfortable among the sea life and in the gullies of the island, but these are not our only homes. Some of us are doctors, lawyers, teachers, and we come back to this connection whenever we can." She looked at him with dark eyes. "So, Elijah Connors, have I ruined the myth for you?"

"Far from it. I think I'm more intrigued than ever," he replied softly.

"Come, then." She held out her hand and led him back into the cave. He looked around as they passed a file cabinet and a few chairs, a small desk with a kerosene lamp on it, and then in the farthest corner near the rock wall, a cot where she could sleep.

"How did you get all this stuff down here?"

"I did it bit by bit with waterproof containers and the help of my brothers. I'm keeping track of the coral, the climate changes, and poachers' effects on this ecosystem."

"Do you bring a lot of people down here?" he asked, sitting down on the cot. He watched as she lit the few lamps she had sitting around.

"By people, do you mean guys?" she asked in an amused tone. "No. No one knows about this place but my brothers."

"Then why me, Alison?"

She walked over and stood between his legs. She took his hands and placed them on her hips. "Why do you think, Elijah?" With those words she let her lips roam his softly, and Eli was lost.

Maybe it was the exotic cave filled with unimaginable wonders, or the woman standing in front of him, but Eli felt as if he was in some kind of fantasy from which he did not want to escape. Alison had the taste of mango and coconuts, and as her tongue slipped inside his mouth, he could not stifle a moan of pleasure. His hands moved from her hips to trace the curve of her back. He lifted her easily onto his lap. Alison gasped at the intimate connection. Eli was already hard and throbbing in

his damp shorts. She wrapped her legs around his waist and pressed herself against his hardness. Eli groaned and took control of the kiss, burying his fingers in the thick tresses of her hair and devouring her lips.

He tore his mouth away from hers. "Alison, I have never wanted someone this much, this quickly."

She looked into his eyes. "Then take me, Elijah. I want you, too."

Her hands roamed over the strong contours of shoulders. Her touch enflamed him; each caress was like fire against his skin. He gathered up the hem of her dress and pulled it up over her head, freeing her from the confines of the damp material. He filled his hands with the smooth globes of her breasts and watched as she arched into his palms.

"You like how my hands feel on you," he murmured with assuredness in his voice. "The way I caress your skin and touch you like this."

"Yes, yes I do, Elijah," she whispered.

His eyes widened in surprise as she pushed him back against the soft sheets on the cot. She climbed off him and flashed him a quick smile before pulling his swim trunks off. His cock was already hard when she settled on her knees between his legs. Eli watched as her hand ran down his body and caressed his chest, then moved slowly to the part of his body that ached to be inside her. When she took his cock in her grasp and fondled him, his breath hissed out. Eli's hips moved each time she stroked his hard length. Their eyes connected and he knew she was watching pleasure cross his face from her touch alone. Her lips descended and wrapped around the head of his cock, and a low moan left his lips. She took him deeper into her mouth and Eli thought he could die from the bliss her lips and hands were creating. He couldn't stand it any longer—he pulled her roughly against his chest and claimed her lips in a hunger-filled kiss. He slipped his hand between their bodies. He found her slick and moist and slid two fingers deep inside her. Her body bucked against him and she cried out at the instant rush of pleasure.

She sat up on his thighs and took his fingers deeper. He spread his legs so that her thighs were wider around his and he could watch himself use his fingers to please her. Her back was arched in pleasure and her head tilted back until he could feel her hair caress his legs.

"Ride my fingers, baby," he coaxed her softly. "Take them deep, sweetheart, oh yes, like that." His thumb circled the sensitive nub of flesh between the pink folds of her pussy.

He watched her body rise and fall, the way her thighs clenched as her body took his digits inside. Each time her body moved, he watched her glistening wetness drip down his fingers. Her lips were parted and tiny moans escaped.

"I'm going to come, Elijah." Her exotic accent and the way she said his name drove him wild. He pressed deeper inside her and used his other hand to pinch her upturned nipples, sending her spiraling to orgasm. He did not wait for her to catch her breath. Watching her come had built him to a frantic state. The need to bury his cock inside her went beyond reason. He pulled her down on his waiting shaft, and the feel of her hot slick pussy enclosing his engorged cock wrung a harsh cry from his lips. The sheer pleasure of it almost sent him into his own orgasm. He gritted his teeth as Alison began to move. Her body writhed and slid down on his cock over and over again. She was in the throes of her own ardor, her lips parted and her lids heavy with passion, and Eli grabbed her hips to still her movements.

"Stop, baby, stop just a minute," he groaned out, his breathing harsh.

Her body stilled but she trembled uncontrollably. "Elijah, I can't...I need to move, to feel you. You're so thick. I want more, please more."

"I want to make it last." He tried to explain. "If you move, I'm going to lose control."

She leaned over and kissed him fiercely as her body began its sensual rhythm once again. "Don't fight it, move with me, Elijah. Let's be lost together."

He could not say no. He thrust upward to meet her every time she moved. Their breathing echoed through the caves. His fingers bit into the smooth skin of her chocolate thighs while he pounded inside her.

"I need you Elijah, now!" Her body took up a frenzied pace. "Come with me!"

Her body clenched around him like a velvet glove and Eli felt his own orgasm begin. "Yes, baby, I'm with you!"

His groan mixed with her cries of bliss as they went over that sensual edge. She fell against his chest and his arms automatically wrapped around her, cocooning her in his embrace. There, in the tropical cave filled with living coral, they were lost in each other.

## Chapter Four

"We have to go," Alison said softly as she caressed Eli's chest. Even though they were in the cave, she knew it was well after midnight. She did not need a clock to tell her what the time was; she was so in tune with nature she could just tell. She and Eli had spent hours in the cave making love and talking softly to each other about anything and everything. Alison could not deny she felt a connection with him; that was why she'd come back to find him. She always followed her instincts.

"Go where?" he asked sleepily.

She laughed huskily. "Back to the beach, so you can go home. Your friend will worry."

"He knows I can take care of myself." Eli rolled over and pulled her into his embrace, kissing her lovingly on the neck. "I want to stay here with you."

Alison arched her neck in pleasure and made a purring sound. He was fogging her thoughts with his touch. "In Philadelphia, yes, but not here. He will worry."

She moaned when his hand reached between them and rubbed her clit gently. She could feel his hard cock pressed against her thigh, and she opened her legs wider to give him entry to her waiting pussy. He slipped inside her easily to the hilt, making her cry out.

His breath was harsh against her ear, and she shivered when he pushed himself deeper inside her. "Just a little more, Alison. I can't seem to get enough of you."

She was already locking her legs around his waist. Her body rose to meet his cock, and she arched and shuddered under him. "Yes, Elijah, yes!"

His lips roamed down her neck, and even as he thrust inside her he captured her nipple in his mouth, laving it with his tongue before sucking deeply. Alison cried out as sensation after sensation ripped through her core. She'd never known pleasure this intense in her life. She didn't ever

want it to stop, but she felt her release building inside her like a volcano ready to erupt.

He was pounding so hard inside her. Now he drove her from one orgasm to another before he spilled his seed inside her.

It was much later before they left the cave the same way they came. The water was surprisingly warm as they swam back to shore. On the beach Eli held her in his arms, and Alison could tell he was as affected as she by their time together.

"Should I take you home first?" Eli asked, kissing the top of her head.

"No, I can find my way very easily from here," she replied. "Remember, I know this island like the back of my hand."

"I know, I know, island girl."

Just then they heard the motor of a power boat, and they watched as it pulled out of the cover farther down the beach. The moon was full, and even from a distance, Alison could tell there were two men on board.

"Wonder where they are going so late?" Eli mused.

"Poachers." Alison spat the word out like a bad taste in her mouth. "They wait until nighttime to go break the coral off and sell it to tourists. The reef is protected by the government and the Barbados Geographic Society."

"Shouldn't we call someone, then? Let them know?" Eli asked.

"Most of the police turn a blind eye to it because they can get a piece of the pie from the poacher. The ones who would do something...by the time they get here those men will be long gone." Alison sighed as sadness ripped through her. "They don't understand that unless you harvest coral the right way, it kills the whole thing. They break it off the rock, and then something that took hundreds of years to form dies in weeks." She knew there was venom in her voice, but she felt strongly that poachers should be punished more for the destruction of the coral reef.

"Alison, don't go after those men alone. I'm a cop, and I'm telling you men like that can be very dangerous."

She kissed him gently. "I won't go after them. Let's not worry about it now, you go home."

"When will I see you again?" he asked.

"Meet me by the grove tomorrow. I will take you someplace remarkable."

"As opposed to the remarkable cave you showed me today?"

"Much better than that, I promise."

She kissed him once more and walked up the beach to the grove. She felt his eyes on her as she walked in between the trees and was swallowed by the lush grove and the darkness of the night. He walked away slowly, looking back every now and again to where he saw her. Alison smiled gently. She wanted to run after him herself and not be away from him, but now she had other things on her mind. She would not go after the men alone, but she knew they would be back again that night for more coral. She would wait and see where they were taking it off the reef and where they were going with their precious cargo.

\* \* \* \*

"Hey, where were you, man?"

Mick's voice reached Eli's ears as soon as he walked into the kitchen. Eli knew he must look like a fool, damp with sand covering his feet and a big grin on his face, but he couldn't help it.

"I was on the beach, then in a cave, then back on the beach again."

Mick peered at him with curiosity etched on his face. "Are you drunk? I told you about those island drinks at the beach bar..."

Eli chortled before sitting down at the kitchen table. "I'm far from drunk. Mick, I found that girl!"

"What girl?"

"The one I told you about that was singing to her snake. Her name is Alison, and she's the same girl from Jewel's story!"

"Now I know you've been hitting the sauce. That was a myth..."

"No, it's not, trust me. Mick, have you ever known me to exaggerate anything? She's as real as you and me."

"Well, you're right, I've never known you to be this excited about anything. Okay, tell me about this Alison."

"Well, parts of Jewel's story are true. She is from that tribe, the Bageu, but she wasn't stolen at birth. They like living off the island, and trust me, she knows tons about stuff I don't even recognize. And guess what? She went to school in America and she's a marine biologist." Eli leaned forward, knowing he was jabbering like an excited monkey, but he couldn't help it. "She is studying and trying to save the island's coral. Plus she took me to this underwater cave with these amazing corals."

"Okay, man, I get your point. No one could make up a story like this." Mick held up his hand to stop Eli's flow of words. "So when do I get to meet this Alison?"

"I don't know, man, but after spending the whole evening with her in that cave and making love, I think I've fallen for her, Mick." Eli saw his friend's jaw drop and his face take on a look of absolute shock.

"You made love and you think you're in love," Mick repeated slowly.

Eli leaned back in his chair with his fingers twined behind his head. "Yeah. Ain't it cool or what?"

"Uh-huh, and where is this Alison again?"

"She went home. We saw some poachers break off the coral at the reef, and that's what she's trying to stop."

"She didn't go after them, did she? Poachers are bad news here, man."

Eli felt a sliver of fear run through him, but he'd seen her go back into the grove, so he tried to push his worry aside. "No, I saw her go and the poachers were far out to sea by the time I left her."

"Well, the next time you see your Alison, bring her by the house for an introduction. I still think you might have had too much sun, but hey, that's just me," Mick said, getting up. "I'm going up to bed before Jewel locks me out of the bedroom."

"Night," Eli called after him. He went back out to the door and looked up the beach. Alison was in his thoughts and a smile curved his face. He washed his feet off outside and went upstairs to shower and go to bed. He wanted the night to pass quickly so he could see her again.

\* \* \* \*

Alison followed all the tracks and paths through the gullies she knew even in the dark. She wanted to get to the other side of the cove so she could see where the poachers were coming in. She needed to know which part of the reef they were destroying for profit. She had found Columbus hanging from a tree in the grove when she came back, so now he was wrapped around her body as she moved stealthily through the night.

She heard the motor of a boat coming back in and she lay flat against the ground and looked over the edge of the rocks. There were two of them, one an islander and the other obviously a tourist. They dropped the heavy anchor onto the reef, apparently not caring that the metal would damage even more of the coral growing there. Alison felt her anger rise. She wanted to rush down to the beach and stop them from breaking any more of the precious underwater coral. But by herself she

could not do anything, and her brothers weren't on the island. She would have to report it to the authorities in the morning.

As she turned to leave, she dislodged some of the loose rocks on the ledge and sent them down to the shallow water. As she heard the splash and the men shout that someone was there, her heart jumped into her throat.

"It's some girl up there, man!" one of the poachers shouted. "We can go up around the bluff and cut her off."

The light they were using flashed up to the rocks. Alison hoped that she had moved quickly enough so they hadn't seen her. Obviously she was not as quick as she thought.

"We'll see if you cut me off. Come on, Columbus." She took the snake up and moved quickly into the shadows. If they were coming up to the bluff to see who was there, they would not find her. The flower-laden vines and the vegetation of the gullies seem to cover her path as she ran.



## Chapter Five

Eli was waiting at the grove by eleven the next morning. He had woken up to find what had become the usual scenario: Mick and Jewel in the kitchen eating breakfast and teasing each other.

"Good morning, Eli. Would you like breakfast?" Jewel asked.

"Nope, I'm heading out early today." He grabbed an orange off the table. "See you two later. Have a good day, guys."

"Going to meet that girl, huh?" Mick turned to his wife. "Eli met him a girl from the Bagueu tribe named Alison. Imagine that."

Jewel looked at Eli as he stood next to the door. "Be careful, Eli. This island holds more than most people think."

"Yeah, don't I know it. See ya." He grinned at their curious expressions when he left by the back door and headed down the beach.

He was filled with excitement and felt like a schoolboy ditching school. He wanted to be near Alison again, and every minute away from her felt like too much. He stopped walking for a moment. *When did I become such a love-struck fool?* Honestly, since he had been on the island, he felt nothing but carefree. Gone were the grim lines around his mouth and the hardened-cop persona. His dark brown hair was bleached a shade lighter by the sun, and the shadows around his chocolate brown eyes had faded. Even when he was on the plane to Barbados, he'd felt like punching the guy across from him who kept talking loudly and laughing over drinks. Now he was practically skipping across the beach. He knew when he went back to Philly, he would have to reawaken the part of him that was suppressed by the island. *I'm going to miss this*, he thought as he resumed his walk to the grove.

"Why that look on your face?" Alison's voice broke through the maze of thoughts running through his head.

He turned to see her standing behind him. He was so lost in his own mind that he did not hear her walk up, or maybe she moved that quietly. She was dressed in a green dress today. The straps were thin and looked like braided gold, and they matched the straps of the sandals on her feet.

She looked exquisite—no makeup on her face, just pure beauty that made him catch his breath.

"You look wonderful. Did you go somewhere?" he said he pulled her into his arms and inhaled the scent of her perfume. She smelled like the exotic hibiscus flowers that Jewel picked from her garden every morning.

"I went to the police about the poachers. Now, why did you look so sad when I walked up?"

"I was thinking about having to go home and leave the island."

"And that makes you sad?"

Eli sighed. "My life back home is so tough, the choices I have to make, the things I see. Here, it's so easy. Being with you is so natural."

Alison caressed his face; he closed his eyes and reveled in her touch. "Don't think so much, Elijah. Just feel, the rest will come to you in time."

Their lips met in a soft kiss that made Eli feel things he thought long lost inside him. This was more than a tryst with an island girl, this was magic.

"So what did the police say about the poachers?" he asked, nibbling on her lips.

Alison made a soft sound of pleasure in her throat. "As usual, they can do nothing. But, I have a plan to stop them."

"Whoa there, you are *not* going after those guys. Do you understand me? Mick said they are dangerous and—"

She pulled out of his arms, her eyes flashing fire. "No, it is you who does not understand, Elijah! If the reef dies, the sea life dies, the ecosystem is destroyed. It affects tourism and fishing. It's like building a house of cards. If one part falls, all of it falls."

He pulled her back into his arms roughly. "I won't have you being hurt! I couldn't stand the thought of you being hurt." Emotion made his voice break, and Alison searched his eyes.

"I care for you, too," she whispered softly. She smiled brightly at him and changed the conversation. "I promised you a surprise, didn't I. Are you ready to go see it?"

"Yes, let's go see this surprise. Can we pick up something to eat along the way?"

Alison laughed as they walked through the grove hand in hand. "Sure, we can eat along the way."

Her version of picking up something to eat was not stopping at a local restaurant. It was picking fruit along the path they walked on. Mangoes, papaya, oranges, pineapples, and so much more grew wild all over the island. Eli followed behind her on a winding path that went down a steep hill into a cavern carved out of the rocks. He could hear the trickle of water. The light that came through from the other side of the cavern showed the stream that ran down the limestone.

Finally, she looked back at him and smiled. "Here it is."

Eli came to stand beside her. The view was striking. There were no words to describe the beauty spread out before him. The gully was filled with birds of unimaginable colors flying from branch to branch. A waterfall cascaded down from the rocks into a crystal pool beneath.

"This is amazing!" he exclaimed.

"It gets better. Come on," she encouraged him and started down the steps carved out of the rocks to the gully floor. Soon they were standing next to the roaring waterfall. Alison stripped her dress off, and then her lacy green panties. Eli felt desire shoot through him as he watched her jump into the pool.

She came up and pushed the hair back from her face. "Are you going to just stand there or are you going to join me?"

He needed no more invitation than that—in a few seconds he was nude and diving into the cool, clear water.

He came up right next to her and pulled her instantly into his arms. Their wet, slick bodies rubbed together as they treaded water, and their lips met in a passionate kiss.

"You looked like a water nymph when you rose out of the water. I wonder if you're a siren that cast a spell over me," he whispered as he looked at her.

"Would it be easier if you believed that, Elijah? Would you stay if I asked you to?"

"I don't know what I'd do, Alison. All I know is I can't seem to stop smiling when I'm near you, and the thought of leaving this island without you is something I don't want to fathom. Come with me," he asked impulsively. It was true—when he went home alone, his world would be bleak without her.

"Let's not think right now," Alison whispered. She kissed him once more; Eli let himself be lost in her kiss.

Her legs wrapped around his waist and she pressed herself against his throbbing cock. Eli groaned and stood on the cool rock floor of the

pool. He reached between their bodies and guided his cock deep inside her. She pressed kisses along his neck and bit his ear gently. He shuddered as he thrust deeper inside her. Her soft cries of ecstasy were muffled against his neck.

*"Je t'aime, Elijah, je t'aime."* Her words ended on a moan while her hands buried in his hair and her body locked around his.

They made love in the pool while the sounds of the waterfalls mixed with their cries of pleasure. He walked out of the pool with his cock still buried inside her and laid her against the soft grass. With her warm body under his he caught her nipple between his lips. He wanted to fill himself with her taste, imprint the feel of her body wrapped around him onto his memories. She was so soft, so wet wrapped around his shaft. Each time he slid inside her, she moaned or sighed his name. It made him feel like he was the only man in the world. It made him feel loved.

His cock throbbed as their pace increased, and soon their cries were echoed by the mockingbirds on the island. Her hands clenched on the taut muscles of his ass while her hips rose and fell in a frenzy. Her release erupted and his cock pulsed inside her while his lips were against the soft skin of her neck. Her hands did not stop touching him. She caressed his back and his neck, whispering something he could not understand in his ear.

They spent the rest of the day frolicking in the pool and under the waterfall, running through the forest and the trees and eating fruits he had never even heard of. She even showed him how to suck the sweet juice from sugar cane and laughed at him when it dribbled down his chin. By the time the sun began to set and the shadows of evening crossed the treetops, he was as contented as he could possibly be.

"Why do you seem so unhappy when you think about leaving the island, Elijah? What happened there to make you so sad?" Alison asked softly.

Eli sighed. "It's not just one thing, it's a combination of so much. I've been a cop for fifteen years, and in that time I've seen women sell their children for drugs, men beating their women to death, senseless murders and children dead on the street. And no matter what I do, it seems as if I'm not even making a dent. I just don't know if I can do it anymore."

"I can't even fathom what you go through every day. I wish I could ask you to stay, but that wouldn't be fair."

"You want me to stay?" He turned to her and caressed her soft cheek.

"I cannot ask you to do that for me," Alison said, kissing his palm. "However jaded your life is there, you make a difference and they need you. Just like I'm needed here."

"Hmmpphhhh." Eli grumbled good-naturedly. "So you say, but a life of decadence on the island sounds good to me."

Alison laughed softly. "Come, we won't go home just yet. I'll show you something not even the islanders get to see."

"What else could there be?"

"You'll see," she replied mysteriously.

## Chapter Six

Alison led him deeper into the gully of the island. When he looked up, he could see a small rope bridge, old and decayed, with rotted wood slats. Above that was another bridge built with cement pillars and steel beams. He could barely make out the trucks and cars passing on it. How far down into the belly of the tropical paradise were they, he wondered. He could almost picture the older generation of islanders traveling on that old rope crossing to get from one place to another.

"My mother told me once that my grandfather used to cross that shaking old thing every day to carry sugar cane to the mills." Alison's soft words broke into his thoughts. She had so much heritage on the island; generation after generation of her family were born and died here. He wished he felt that kind of connection to something. Being alone all his life, from foster home to foster home and then straight to the police department when he could apply, Eli could only call police work his family. He shook his head, knowing that the only pictures in his cramped apartment were the ones he'd bought to hang on his walls. There were no family photos to look at fondly, no treasured knickknacks that were passed down.

"You're making that face again, Elijah," Alison said softly. She stopped to stare at him. "No unhappy thoughts. You'll find your home when it is time."

"Reading my mind, Alison?" He bent and kissed her full lips.

"No, reading your heart." Her words made that organ jump in his chest. "Let's go before we're late."

Eli nodded, and she let her arm slip around his waist as they walked. Soon he could hear the faint sound of music and drums coming through the trees. The deeper they walked into the dense woods, the louder the music became, and he could make out steel drums and pipes. Eli pushed back leafy palm fronds, and he and Alison entered a clearing lined with torches. People milled around, eating, drinking, and laughing, and all turned when they saw Alison come out of the woods. Eli could feel the

stares as she smiled and kissed the cheeks of the people he assumed were her tribe.

One man stood out from the others. Tall with broad brown shoulders, he was dressed in simple slacks and a crisp white cotton shirt, but his feet were bare. As they walked up to him, Alison embraced him. Over her shoulder, the man met Eli's eyes with a questioning look.

"Alison, I didn't know you were coming tonight. Who is this with you?" The man's voice rumbled from his chest.

"Papa, this is Elijah, my new friend," Alison said she pulled Eli next to her.

"Must be more than a friend to bring him tonight, eh?" Alison's father looked from Eli to his daughter.

"I'll be back." Alison kissed her father's cheek before kissing Eli's and walked away to join a group of women.

"It's nice to meet you, sir." Eli met his stare. Alison's father was a formidable man, and Eli could tell most men would be afraid of him. Eli, though, was not most men.

"Welcome to the Bageu tribal dance, Elijah. Eat, drink, and join in revelry with us. I am Joseph, Alison's father." He looked Eli from top to bottom and his face split into a wide grin, showing off the whiteness of his teeth in the waning light. "You must be very important to Alison if she brought you tonight. She never comes to this dance anymore. All the others, but never this one."

"Why is that, sir?" Eli asked curiously. Joseph promptly pushed a cup into his hand and he took a sip and coughed. A big loud laugh erupted from the other man as he heartily slapped Eli on the back.

"Call me Joseph. Too much rum, eh? I told them too much rum in the coconut milk, but they never listen." They began to walk over to a table filled with breads, meats, rice, and desserts while Joseph spoke. "Oh yes, why she brought you tonight? You tell me, Elijah. This is the new moon ritual for love, after all."

Eli's mouth fell open as he watched Alison's father walk away with a smile on his face and his hands in his pockets. *New moon love ritual?* He didn't have more time to think of the implications, as people came around him and the introductions to the Bageu tribesmen and women began.

\* \* \* \*

The sunset turned to night and Eli was in the middle of one of the deepest gullies of the island with a tribe of people the islanders called a myth.

As she introduced Eli around, Alison herself seemed to be amazed at how much the tribe had grown. Eli had met one of Alison's brothers; the other one was in London finishing up exams. Aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, children and adults, they were all there and Eli was sure he met them all. He had met so many people that his head was spinning as he tried to remember names—or was it the rum in the coconut milk? He didn't really care, he was having the time of his life. He had a full stomach filled with roasted meats and fish, and when everyone started to sit down he looked around for his host, who seemed to have disappeared suddenly.

"Sit, Elijah." Joseph came up behind Eli and ushered him to an empty mat on the soft grass.

The music changed from joyous and festive to something slow and sensual. Women ushered the little ones away, and Eli felt his heart thump with anticipation when he saw Alison appear with a group of young women. Eli looked around at the young men he was sitting with, who smiled and clapped eagerly as the women came out. Eli had eyes only for one of them.

The women of the tribe wore almost nothing across their bodies, just blue bikinis and shimmering wraps that looked as delicate as spider webs. The women began their slow movements to the rhythm of the music that played around them. Their hips gyrated from side to side, and they beckoned the men to them with slender arms. Each girl chose a man by dancing in front of him, and Alison chose Eli. His eyes followed the curves of her body, how the light of the torches seemed to glow off her skin and trail down her back as she danced. She held out her hand to him, and Eli gladly accepted. They walked over to where her father sat, and she kissed his cheek gently.

"Bye, Papa," she whispered.

The older man nodded at Eli as they walked past him back into the woods of the gully, where the path was illuminated by moonlight.

"That was unbelievable, Alison! The music, the people—it's amazing that no one knows your tribe does this down here."

"No one can see from the bridge above, and the people here are scared of the gullies, especially at night." She laughed softly. "I'm glad you like my family. You see, we are not the myth that everyone thinks."



"You're a myth to me, mixed with mystery and spiced up with sexuality. I've never met anyone like you!" Eli said it reverently. She had consumed his every thought until not a moment went by that he did not think of her.

She pulled him off the path into a stand of trees and kissed him feverishly. Eli returned her kisses with just as much fervor. She was in his blood like the rum he had been drinking. He tore his lips away from hers and began to kiss his way down her neck. He reached behind her and untied the delicate strings of her top before filling his palms with the smooth globes of her breasts. Eli took the upturned nipples into his mouth and laved each with his tongue before sucking deeply and causing her to cry out in pleasure.

"I can't seem to get enough of your taste!" he whispered. "I need to taste all of you. Can I, Alison?"

"Yes, oh yes, Elijah!"

"I love how you say my name," he said as he kissed his way down her body.

His lips trailed down her smooth abdomen and across the curve of her thigh, then he pulled her bikini bottoms down to her ankles. She stepped from them easily and spread her legs to allow him access to what he sought. He felt her tremble when his hot breath met the soft skin of her pussy. When his tongue flicked between the folds of sweet flesh, her hips jerked in response. Eli could not stand the teasing himself—with a rough jerk, he brought her hips to him and pressed his lips against her pussy. Alison's cry shattered the quiet around them as he licked and sucked at the sensitive bud of her clit before burying his tongue inside her. Her hips undulated against his face until her body shook with her release.

He was on his feet before she could even catch her breath, and hurriedly unfastened his pants and pushed them down. He wanted to be inside her, to feel her wrapped around his cock. He could never get enough of the sensation of her body pulling his in deeper. He took her legs and wrapped them around his waist, sinking his cock inside her wet pussy.

His groan of pleasure was muffled against her neck. He whispered, "You feel so good, baby, so damn good. Take more of me, sweetheart, ah that's it, just like that."

Alison arched in pleasure, pressed against the smooth bark of the tree. "Oh please, Elijah, I need you!"

"You have me, sweetheart, always!" His own orgasm took hold as he pounded inside her furiously, each thrust sending them both higher and higher until their cries blended into one. He sank to his knees with Alison still in his arms, holding her tight against him and whispering sweet reassurances into her ear. She in turned kissed every spot of his body she could reach and echoed his words. If this wasn't heaven, Eli didn't know what was. This was love--he was so certain of it now, more than he'd ever been about anything in his life. How could he leave her when it was time to go home?

## Chapter Seven

They walked hand in hand through the cavern and back to the grove on the beach. The night was clear, and as they walked out to the beach the waves washed up on their feet. The couple did not see the men coming up from the water until the very last moment. In their hands they carried netted bags full of broken coral poached from the reef. Their eyes met with Eli's and Alison's, and for an instant it seemed as if time stood still—until one of the men raised a spear gun and fired at them. Eli pushed Alison to the sand and felt a searing heat as the spear hit his arm and tore through his flesh. Not thinking of the pain, he pulled her to her feet and began to run down the beach.

"Elijah! You're bleeding!" Alison cried out in alarm. She tried to stop to examine his wound, but he could hear the roar of the Jet-Skis as the men tried to cut them off.

He pulled her down by the rocks as the poachers passed. "Mick's house is too far, baby. They're going to double back when they don't see us."

"The cave, we have to go to the cave! Can you dive?" she asked urgently.

Blood oozed from the deep wound and ran down Eli's arms. Although the spear hadn't hit a major blood vessel, the wound was deep enough that it kept bleeding. Already he could feel himself getting weak, but he knew they had no choice. "I can dive, baby, you just lead the way."

She tied the glittering wrap she'd danced with earlier tightly around his arms, trying to stanch the flow of blood. "Barracudas. They're like sharks. Blood brings them coming to feed."

He gritted his teeth as she pulled the knots tight, the pain almost making him pass out. The sound of the Jet-Skis was getting louder once again, so they hurried into the water.

Alison cradled his face between her hands and kissed him hard. "I love you!"

"God, Alison, I'm glad you said that, because I love you, too!" He kissed her again fiercely.

They took a deep breath and sank under the warm water of the Caribbean Sea. As they swam, they went below the bubbles from the propeller of the jet skis above, circling, looking for them. Eli felt himself losing the battle to stay conscious. As he lagged behind, he tugged on Alison's arm. She looked back, and the last thing he remembered was the look of alarm on her face as darkness claimed him.

\* \* \* \*

Reality surged through Eli, jerking him into consciousness. He sat, coughing up the salt water in his lungs. *How long was I out?* He didn't have time to think, because Alison launched herself into his arms, her body racked by sobs.

"I thought you were gone! I thought you were gone!" she repeated, raining kisses on his face.

His arm throbbed painfully but he hugged her as tight as he could. "I'm okay, baby. I'm okay. How did you get me up here?"

"A dolphin I know helped me pull you up to the pool." She tried to smile through her tears.

"You're kidding!" he said in amazement, but sucked in his breath once more as a searing heat shot through his arm.

"No, I'm not." She untied his arm gingerly, looking at the gash as it still bled. "You won't be able to go back down. I'm going to have to leave you here and go get help."

"No! I can't let you go back up there alone!"

"What other choice do we have, Elijah? Even if they're gone, you can't dive. I have to go and get help!"

He started to protest, but he knew she was right. He sighed. "Go to Mick. He'll get things done quickly. Do you know how to get to the house?" he asked as she helped him onto the cot.

She smiled. "This my island, remember? I always knew where you lived." She kissed him gently. "Rest. I'll be back soon." He watched as she slipped back into the pool and quickly out of sight.

"I love you," he whispered. He knew the minutes would stretch into hours until she came back. If those men caught her and touched her, he would stay on the island and hunt them down himself.

\* \* \* \*

Alison surfaced to big droplets hitting the water and her face. She looked through the sheets of rain trying to see the shore but could not.

She would need to figure out the right direction before she started swimming. If she didn't, she could get caught in riptides and be pulled farther out to sea.

Alison closed her eyes and tapped her hands on the surface of the water over and over. Finally, she got the response she was looking for; the fin of a dolphin cutting through the water. She took a breath and went under to greet the friendly gray face. She grabbed hold of his fin and he pulled her through the waves until she came up close to the beach. She rubbed his smooth head before heading for shore, making a note to look out for jet skis on the sand to see if the men were waiting for them. She spotted the small craft pulled high on the sand. Footprints headed into the grove. The poachers obviously thought they were hiding there, which gave her the perfect opportunity to find Mick and get help. The poachers had left their ill-gotten treasure in netted bags on the beach. The coral was already dead, and she felt a pang of sadness for their destruction. But that was not the issue. Elijah needed help. She picked up one of the bags as proof for Elijah's friend and ran up the beach as fast as she could.

She saw the house on the bluff and didn't stop running even as her lungs burned with exertion. She took the stone steps two at a time until she came to the kitchen door. She banged and screamed Mick's name at the top of her lungs until she saw a light go on and two figures approached through the decorative glass.

"Child, what are you doing out in this?" the woman asked with concern in her eyes. "Why are you screaming my husband's name?" She pulled Alison in out of the rain.

"Are you Alison?" Mick asked.

"Yes..." She gulped for air. "Yes, I am. Elijah is hurt. Poachers..." She dropped the bag at her feet.

"Don't tell me you two went after those fools yourselves," Mick said angrily, pulling on his shoes. "I told him that was danger—"

"No, we were coming home! We didn't see them coming in from the reef. One shot a spear gun and Elijah got hurt. We hid, and he's still too weak to get here."

"Where did you hide? In the grove?"

"No, in an underwater cave. Please, you must come," she said urgently and turned back toward the door.

Mick grabbed her arm and stopped her before she ran back out into the rain. "No. I'll call for help. He's safe until we get there, right?"

Alison nodded. She wanted to go back for Elijah, but she knew his friend was correct. They would need more help. Everything went by in a blur: Mick made calls to get the police and a few of his men to go to the beach, and Jewel offered her a towel and hot tea. Alison barely listened. She had to get back to Elijah; he was the only thing on her mind. Finally they were heading back, speeding across the wet sand in dune buggies.

When they reached the beach, Mick strapped on an oxygen tank.

"There's one for you, too," he said to Alison.

"I don't need one, I can get there," she said and walked into the water. She noticed his surprised look, but he said nothing. Mick and two other men followed her into the water, and soon they were heading back to where Elijah was hidden.

*Please be okay*, she thought as she dove deep to go to her love.

\* \* \* \*

The cave was deathly quiet except for the occasional drips of water into the pool. He hadn't noticed the last time they were here how easily a person could lose perception of time. His arm was still bleeding, but it had lessened considerably. He sat on the edge of the rock floor, not able to lie in the cot another second. A splash in the water made him look up, hoping it was Alison. Instead, he saw the friendly face of a dolphin looking back at him.

"You must be the guy that helped rescue me," Eli said.

The dolphin shrieked and clicked in his own language as if it was responding to his question.

"Well, thanks, buddy. I owe you a mackerel. Any chance you can get me to the surface?" At his question, the dolphin clicked one more and dove back under the water.

"Guess not." Horrible images were going through his head. He was practically frantic—it felt like hours had gone by, and Alison had not returned. He was just about to slide back into the pool to go find her when he saw bubbles breaking the still water one more and she surfaced.

"Oh my God, Alison! I was going to come after you!" He reached out his good arm and practically plucked her out of the water. He held on to her tightly just to feel her close to him.

"I brought help, Elijah!"

Mick surfaced right after her, and then the two other men appeared. Eli could see on their faces that they were amazed at the sight of the well-stocked cave.

"Hey, man, the cavalry is here." Mick grinned when he took off his mask. "Trust you to come to a tropical paradise and still find trouble."

Eli kept his arm around Alison. "This time it happened to find me."

"Let's get you patched up and back to dry land," Mick said and looked at his arm. "Ah, shit, this is deep, man." He and his men bandaged Eli's wound as best they could, and one of them buddy-breathed with him until they reached the surface and the sandy shore where the police were waiting. Somewhere in that time Alison managed to slip away quietly. Eli saw her go, but with everyone around him examining his wound and asking questions, he was unable to get to her before she slipped into the grove.

"Alison! Alison!" he called, but either she didn't hear him over the excitement on the beach or she didn't want to hear him. He could understand her wanting to be away from the police and the questions they would have; she wanted to protect the privacy of her cave and her people as much as possible. Eli wanted to go after her and protested the entire time as Mick drove him to go get stitched up at the hospital.

Later that night, after his trip to the local infirmary and tons of questions from everyone, he finally had some peace. He had convinced Mick to make up a story about where they'd hidden and where they were found. When Mick went to bed, Eli went up to his room and lay down, enjoying the feel of the breeze blowing through the French doors. He thought he heard singing in the wind, but passed it off as wishful thinking. *There it is again!* It was distinct and he knew the voice. *Alison!* He rushed out the door. He didn't have to go far, she was sitting on the bluff near the steps. He sat next to her and they said nothing as they listened to the sounds of the island.

"You'll be leaving soon," she finally said in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Do you want to come with me?" he asked quietly, hoping her answer would change.

"I can't, Elijah. I visit America to hear lectures and attend conferences, but this is my home. My work is here."

He heard the sadness in her voice. "What if I stay here?"

She turned to him. "I could never ask you to give up your life to be here with me. I told you that. Even though I love you, I can't ask that of you."

"What life, Alison? I go to work, I see people do gut-wrenching things, and I come home to an empty apartment feeling cold and dead inside. I've lived and felt more with you in the last few days than I have

in years! Why should I have to give that up?" He grabbed her by the shoulders and looked into her eyes. "You said you loved me. Did you mean it?"

"Yes, I meant it with all that is in me. I love you, Elijah." Her soft, simple reply filled his heart with joy.

"I love you, too. This is a new beginning for me, a new frontier, living in paradise with the woman I've fallen in love with. Ask me to stay, Alison, and I will." He'd never been as sure of anything as he was tonight.

"Stay, Elijah," she whispered. "Stay."

He nodded and a smile curved his lips before he crushed her to him and kissed her.

"Elijah, your arm," she said around her laughter.

"I have my island girl in my arms. What better medicine is there than that?"

Eli found a new home and a new love on the beaches of Barbados. The lovers held each other while the waves broke on the beach and sealed their new promises with a kiss.



## About the Author

Dahlia Rose, best selling author of contemporary erotica, suspense, and paranormal romance. She was born and raised on a Caribbean island and now currently lives in Charlotte, NC with her four kids whom she affectionately nicknamed "The children of the corn" and her biggest supporter/long time love. She has a love of erotica, dark fantasy, Sci-fi and the things that go bump in the night. Books and writing are her biggest passion and she hopes to open your imagination to the unknown between the pages of her books.

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