

Single Dad on Blakely Bay

LINDI LOVELL

Chapter One

Macy Quinn-Davis

The crunch of wood against metal is loud enough to make my soul leave my body on my first afternoon back in Blakely Bay.

No. No, no, no.

I slam my foot on the brake of the rental truck so hard my sandal nearly slips, and the whole cab jerks to a stop under a live oak dripping Spanish moss. Something thuds in the back. Then another thing slides with a sickening scrape.

And outside my window, a white mailbox tips at an angle so tragic it looks personally offended.

“You have got to be kidding me,” I whisper.

The salty breeze blowing in through the cracked window does nothing for the heat crawling up my neck. Blakely Bay

greet me with bright sun, the smell of marsh and pluff mud, gulls crying overhead, and me murdering a stranger’s mailbox before I’ve even unpacked a single towel.

Perfect. Really strong start, Macy.

I shove the truck into park and scramble out, nearly catching my crossbody bag on the gearshift. Gravel crunches under my sandals when I jump down to the street. The late-afternoon air wraps around me, warm and damp, smelling like tidewater, cut grass, and somebody grilling onions three houses over.

The mailbox is still standing, technically, if leaning at a dramatic angle counts as standing.

“I barely touched you,” I tell it.

A gust of wind answers by flapping one of the moving blankets visible through the back of the truck, where the door now stood open.

Then I hear the shift and tumble of a box sliding.

I spin just in time to see a medium-sized carton bump off the truck’s edge, hit the ramp, and shoot straight into the street.

The black marker on the side hits me like a second collision.

ASHES—FRAGILE

Every thought in my head blanks out.

No. Not him. Not like this.

“No!”

I lunge.

The box skids over the sun-warmed pavement, headed for disaster, and I’m two steps from a full dive into the road when

a pair of worn brown boots steps into view from the opposite direction.

A large hand snatches the box clean out of its death slide.

I stop so fast my knees almost buckle.

For one terrible second, I just stand there, bent forward, breathing too hard, staring at the cardboard in his hands.

Still intact.

Not broken.

Thank You, Lord.

I press a hand to my chest. “Oh, thank goodness.”

The man straightens, box braced carefully against one forearm as if he understands exactly what the word **fragile** means. He is tall. Not just average-man tall. Broad-shouldered, long-legged, fill-up-the-roadway tall, with sun-browned skin and dark hair the wind keeps trying to push over his forehead. He wears a faded blue T-shirt, jeans, and boots that look like they’ve seen more real work than anyone I know in Charleston ever did.

His gaze lifts to mine.

And wow.

Not wow in the flirtatious, butterflies-and-fireworks sense.

More like wow, that man looks at problems the way a contractor looks at water damage.

Measured. Grim. Already calculating repair costs.

And for some deeply inconvenient reason, that steadiness lands somewhere under my ribs harder than it should.

His eyes flick to the truck, the mailbox, then back to me.

Afterword

Reviews Mean the World!

If this story made you smile, sigh, or fall a little in love, I’d be so grateful if you’d leave a review on Amazon and your favorite book platform. Reviews help other readers discover these sweet, swoony romances—and they mean so much to this grateful author.

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Lindi