

The Summer That Changed Everything

Nia was never supposed to stay in Charleston past the Fourth of July. A wedding photographer with a packed August schedule in New York, she had promised herself the trip down South was just a break—a little sunshine, a little family, and absolutely no distractions.

Then she met Mason. It happened on a humid Wednesday at the local farmers' market, of all places. She was juggling her camera bag, a lemonade, and a basket full of peaches when he offered her a hand—and a smile that made her forget what day it was.

Their conversation started over spilled fruit and turned into a two-hour walk ending with ice cream. What followed was the kind of romance Nia had only photographed—beach walks, boat rides at dusk, porch talks under string lights. Mason never asked her to stay. Instead, he said, 'You'll know what to do when the moment comes.'

On the last weekend of August, Nia sat on the dock behind Mason's house, camera in her lap, and heart aching. He joined her quietly. 'I never planned to stay,' she whispered. 'I know.'

'But I never planned to fall in love either.' Mason handed her a torn return ticket. 'I figured we could write our own itinerary.'

With love,

Karlene Pitters

www.jamericandream.com