

# LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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# NOTHING'S MISSING NOW

# Westbrooke Jameson

# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

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**By Westbrooke Jameson**

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love Has No Boundaries* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a free gift to you.

### What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what they do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love Has No Boundaries*.

Whether you are an avid M/M romance reader or new to the genre, you are in for a delicious treat.

### Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

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## Photo Description

Model and former Marine Alex Minsky poses in red briefs while holding a rolled-up white towel behind his shoulders. Most notable are his tattoos and the fact he wears a blade prosthesis on his right leg.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*My name's Liam and I'm sure you've noticed that I'm missing a leg. That hasn't stopped me though, well, maybe it did for a little while. But he's (yup, I said he... shocking right?!) here in my life now and not letting me give up.*

*\*Angst is good if it fits\**

*\*Story can start either before or right after the loss of his leg\**

*Sincerely,*

*Rissa*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** blue collar, military men, bears, disabilities, hurt/comfort, PTSD

**Word count:** 8,444

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Everything seemed difficult today.

Liam resisted thinking that he'd had a lot of good days so, of course, he was due for a bad one. That kind of pessimism didn't help him or change anything. Useless? Put it aside. He did really want to get to the point where it was a rough moment instead of a whole day. If he could find some reason to smile or laugh he could beat this mood back and get on with things. The crap on TV wasn't cutting it.

Then he saw his hand curled on the arm of the recliner like there should be a glass in it. Or a bottle. He fisted that hand, then grabbed his crutch. With a series of hops and pulls, he headed upstairs to his bedroom—the one he'd had from birth to shipping off with the Marines eight years ago—to give himself a reminder he obviously needed.

On top of his dresser was his six-month sobriety chip. You see that? Six months, man. You earned that. It was hell, but you did it. He picked it up, ran his thumb over the letters. Liam had accomplished a lot in the year and a half since an IED took his leg, but this little coin meant he'd saved himself. He'd chosen to live, no matter how hard it was, and not get lost in an alcoholic daze. I can do this.

He had a lot of people who supported him from therapist to sponsor to parents... He smiled. And now he had someone who he might just get to call his boyfriend soon. Well, there went his spirits lifting. Just thinking about Ray picked up the corner of Liam's mouth and added a little heat to the thump of his heart. He took his cell from the back pocket of his jeans, checked the time, and figured Ray would probably be driving home from work right about now.

“Hey there, Li.”

Liam's smile grew. “Ray. On your way home?”

“Yeah, and God, how I love your voice.”

Liam could relate; sometimes Ray’s voice managed to growl and purr at the same time.

Ray went on to say, “It’s like you’ve just finished blowing some lucky bastard.” He huffed a laugh. “Raspy and rough, but so damn satisfied too.”

Hell but this man could make him blush. And squirm. He was still learning how to live out and hearing Ray talk like that gave him a rush. Ray didn’t hide anything. A big guy, a little coarse, a good man, and ever so very queer. But what Ray said... No, Liam couldn’t go there.

So Liam pushed out a chuckle. “Thanks, man. I was needing a lift.”

“Yeah? What’s up?”

No worry, no alarm, just concern. Genuine concern too. That was one of the things he liked most about Ray.

“Just a rough day. I’m dealing.”

“Course you are. How about I swing by and give you some more reasons to smile?”

“Be good to see you.” And it would be, but—

“I’ll be there in five.”

“Oh. Uh. Ray? Ray?” Liam looked at his phone and realized Ray had hung up.

Well, shit. His new guy was on his way over to meet the parents.

Liam grabbed his crutches, put one back since he maneuvered better with one, then hopped for the door. His heart pounded in his ears. He’d only come out to his parents a few years back. They’d never seen him with a guy because he’d never really had one he’d wanted to introduce to them. Ray had picked him up or dropped him off, but neither of them had ever made a move to have him come in. Was this Ray’s way of making sure it happened?

“Mom! Dad!” Damn, but he felt like a teenager even though he’d never had his parents meet anyone then either. “Where are you guys?” he asked while practically throwing himself down the stairs.

“What’s wrong?” his mom asked, suddenly below him. She looked him over fast, obviously worried.

“No, it’s fine. Sorry. Not an emergency.”

He could see her sigh and swallow like a crisis had been averted. It struck him with guilt over all the times it had been that serious since he’d gotten out of the hospital and moved back in with them.

“Ray’s coming over. I just... I didn’t realize... But he’s on his way right now.”

“Oh,” she said, brightening. “Is he staying for dinner?”

“Uh, I... don’t know.” He stopped a couple steps above her, annoyingly winded from the sudden exercise. He really needed to work out more.

“Well, ask him if he’d like to. I made lasagna, so there’s plenty.” Smiling, she reached up and squeezed his hand. “It’ll be good to finally meet the man who makes you so happy.” She winked one blue eye. “Don’t think I haven’t noticed.”

Liam felt a blush heat his cheeks before she patted him and walked off toward the kitchen. So, okay, his mom was good with getting to meet his sort-of boyfriend. One down.

From the archway into the living room, his dad said, “Ray’s visiting?”

Liam came down the rest of the steps and hovered near the front door. “Yeah. Right now.” He resisted asking if it was okay, not wanting to revert that many years; he was twenty-eight, he could have a visitor over without getting permission first. Technically.

“Good,” his dad said with a nod. “I can ask him about the kitchen.”

“He’s not coming over to do an estimate, Dad. This is just... He’s, uh...”



“Coming to see you. I get it.” He rubbed his hands together and grinned. “But if the opportunity to pick his brain comes up over dinner, I’m taking it.”

Liam smiled but squeezed at the back of his neck. “Okay. Knock yourself out.”

“Maybe we’ll get a family discount.” His dad wagged his eyebrows.

Two down. And, apparently, sleeping with Ray to get a deal on a kitchen renovation was fine with Dad, too. For crissakes.

Then Liam realized Ray had never seen him without his prosthesis on. Shit. Sure, he’d pinned up that sweatpants leg this morning since he hadn’t been planning on going anywhere and... sometimes he just didn’t want to wear that contraption. Now it was too late to go back up and put it on since that was Ray’s truck parking out front. Don’t freak, Ray. Please.

Something in the center of Liam’s chest eased while he watched Ray walk toward the house. He felt himself smile, just a little, as those big, booted feet propelled strong legs and thick thighs forward. He hadn’t seen Ray’s bare legs, but he’d felt the firmness of the muscles. At six three, Ray had really long legs, and Liam was nothing if not a leg-man. Or maybe a Ray-man since the whole, muscular body of the man did it for him. Though Ray absolutely knew Liam was interested, he didn’t push for more than they’d done. And that was just a couple make-out sessions in Ray’s truck when a goodnight kiss hadn’t been enough.

Then Liam was opening the door and getting a close up look at Ray’s scruffy cheeks bunched up over a grin so wide it almost hid his brown eyes. Solid jaw, slightly Roman nose, full pink lips and all of that face so damn happy to see Liam standing there waiting.

“Hey,” Ray said and cupped Liam’s cheek before giving him a quick kiss. “Look at you brightening up my day right back.”

“Yeah,” Liam said, almost sighed. That thing easing inside him kept spreading outward. Having Ray here, now, did feel really good. Really right.

Ray's eyes flicked down below Liam's waist, but his expression said curious. He didn't say anything and then he gave Liam a wink and a cocky grin. So not bothered, but what was that? Liam backed up to let Ray inside, baffled by his reaction.

Realizing both his parents were behind him in the entryway, Liam made the introductions. Ray didn't bother with handshakes, but dove right in to hugging both Liam's mom and dad. The man was definitely a touchy-feely type and unapologetic about it. He liked you; he hugged you. Period. Liam had found himself touched and held seconds after meeting Ray and, though it had been odd and a little awkward for him at first, he'd grown to like it and maybe even depend on it. So few people touched him in any way that wasn't required for therapy. A touch just because was pretty wonderful.

"Well, let's let the boys have a few minutes," Liam's mom said with a hand on her husband's arm. "We'll finish up prep for dinner and give a holler when it's ready."

Liam felt a twinge of annoyance that his mom might think something was wrong and Ray was there to smooth it over. He pushed that away since, yeah, that was why Ray was here and Liam really did need to get used to and comfortable with asking for help when he needed it. He felt better already, but did need this.

His parents headed off down the hall behind the stairs for the kitchen. Liam gasped as Ray shoved his arms up under Liam's and manhandled him backward and into the wall. Ray's grin and wink made a little more sense. Had Ray anticipated that he could pin Liam like this? Wouldn't be surprised if he had.

"Hi," Ray said with another big smile an inch from Liam's face.

Liam chuckled, feeling silly and happy because Ray did this for that very reason. "Hey, big fella. You gonna let me stand up?"

"You are standing."

"Not really. I'm on my toes and... you."

Ray leaned in to make their stubble rasp together. “You can be on me whenever you like.” He nipped at Liam’s jaw. “Shorty.”

“Hey, now. I’m a perfectly respectable five-ten, you giant.”

Liam had to ignore the innuendo. He wasn’t ready. Still getting used to this body himself, how was he supposed to just let someone else have at it? It wasn’t just the missing leg either. Sure, his left thigh ended in a stump, but he had scars and scar tissue other than just there—places on him where it was obvious muscle had been rerouted to fill a gap gouged out of him by that fucking bomb. He’d considered himself pretty hot before, but now? God, but he didn’t want to see pity or disgust on Ray’s face. Not yet.

Quietly, Ray asked, “Where’d you go?”

“Huh?”

“Those whiskey eyes were staring over my shoulder for a minute there.”

Liam sighed. “Nowhere. Just the day.”

“You’re a tough one to distract,” Ray grumbled. He pressed in closer, a thick thigh wedged between Liam’s now. Then he leaned in even more, fitting them together very closely. “How’s that for giant?”

Liam rolled his eyes and readjusted his hold on Ray’s shoulders.

“Not gonna answer?”

“You don’t need an ego boost, big fella.”

Ray made a pleased, growly sound, but didn’t rub or grind his heavy dick into Liam’s good hip. Liam was learning that just wasn’t Ray’s style. He was a hugger, a cuddler. Ray liked getting Liam in close and then just holding onto him. Liam could imagine lazy Sundays lounging with Ray in bed or on the couch, comfortable and in no hurry. Like now, this close contact was the payoff for Ray.

When Ray kissed him, Liam just gave himself over to the sensations while practically sitting on Ray’s leg. He did want to take Ray upstairs—okay, maybe go to Ray’s place, not here—and push away all his doubts and worries

and fears to have sex with this man. Ray wouldn't freak, and if anything did bother him, he'd say something. Ray talked about things. Not in the "let's analyze all our feelings" way, but in the way that solved problems. Should they talk about this?

Ray eased back, concern on his face while he slowly rubbed his palm over the high and tight hair on Liam's head that was no longer anywhere near Marine respectable. "You really are distracted."

"Sorry. It's not you." Liam tried to fight back his guilt.

"Tell me?"

Liam opened his mouth despite not knowing what to say, but his mother interrupted from the other room. "You boys come along and wash up. Dinner's on the table."

"Later," Liam said.

Ray set him on his foot, nodding, before he fetched the fallen crutch too. Liam got a rub along his back, reassuring him, then he led the way toward the dining room.

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Liam leaned back in his chair, laughing right along with his parents at another of Ray's work stories. Apparently, home renovation had a lot of opportunities for some slapstick comedy and a few surprise discoveries.

In between giggles, his mom asked, "They really had no idea?"

"The looks on their faces when those pages started raining down all over the floor said they definitely had no idea their son had hidden about a hundred centerfolds above his drop ceiling."

Liam's dad shook his head. "I'd have mailed them to his dorm room. Or better yet!" He waved his hands, a mischievous smile on his face. "I'd have gone up there and hidden them all over the place so he'd never know when one might pop up."

“Oh yeah, you would’ve,” Liam agreed. “Like the time you decided to have an Easter egg hunt only you forgot where you hid all the eggs?” He looked at Ray as his dad threw his hands up. “We were finding eggs for weeks and one not until almost a year later.”

His mom shuddered. “I still have trouble being near egg salad.”

“Was it rotten by then?” Ray asked, grinning with Liam at his dad’s misery.

Dad groaned. “Yes, it was. It was a horrible experience and I rue the day I ever thought I was clever for hiding the blasted thing under that loose floorboard.”

Ray laughed with the rest of them while Liam’s dad rolled his eyes and blushed. It was one of those family stories that would never fade away.

It struck Liam, right then, just how well Ray was fitting in with his parents. He’d charmed them from the moment he entered the house and kept them in smiles the whole time. He didn’t even hold back on the PDAs, which thrilled his mom all to pieces. She loved romantic demonstrations.

“Ray,” Liam’s mom said, “would you like more to drink? I think we could all use a refill after this workout laughing session.” She pushed back her chair to stand.

Liam was the closest to the kitchen. His pride took a hit from knowing she was going to get the damn pitcher because she didn’t want to burden him. She’d said as much a couple times before. But he was better now and, even on one leg, he could do it just fine.

“I’ll get it, Mom.” Liam got up and snagged his crutch from where it leaned against the wall. There was a silence that felt tense to him before Ray started up another story, one Liam had heard already. Liam gave Ray’s shoulder a squeeze in thanks as he passed him.

Suddenly, a flash of light confused Liam for a second. Did someone just take a photo from outside? Then the explosive noise of a thunderclap shook him. It wasn’t so strong a vibration that it actually made him shake—he knew

that—but he couldn't stop how it startled him. His heartbeat kicked into double-time and he was gasping before the sound faded. He felt his fingernails bite into the wood of the doorframe, but he couldn't make himself relax enough to let go. Not yet.

“Liam?” his mom asked in the quiet voice she used when she didn't want to push—when she didn't want to make it worse.

The lie was automatic. “I'm fine.”

No one said anything else, but he could feel them watching. He had to release his death grip on the doorframe or they'd know he was faking. Move the crutch forward, lean, hop, and he basically ripped his fingers free of the wood. He clenched that fist, used it to balance him against the wall as he kept going around the corner and into the kitchen.

Another flash, and he tensed. Another bang, and he flinched anyway.

“Dammit,” he whispered into the darkened window over the sink. He could see his pale face reflected there and it disgusted him. Fear, worry—He wasn't a child! Why couldn't he separate the destructive concussion of an IED explosion from the impotent boom of a thunderstorm?

He looked beyond his own face to the backyard, a place he knew so well, and tried to see nothing but rain on summer grass in the twilight of evening. No scorching sun, dry winds, or danger there. It wasn't the same. It's not the same.

“Li?”

He closed his eyes and something like shame bit at his heart. Couldn't he have had more time before Ray saw just how messed up he was? A crippled, recovering alcoholic who was also afraid of thunderstorms? Oh yeah, he was a catch.

“Hey,” Ray said quietly as he came to stand beside Liam. “You're not fine.”

Liam glared at the window, into the dark. “It's not your problem.”

Ray huffed a breath, an almost laugh, then moved in so he stood facing Liam's side. He slid a hand up Liam's back until he could tease the short hairs at the base of Liam's skull. "Couples share problems, dumbass. What hurts you, hurts me."

"We're not—It doesn't—" He sighed and closed his eyes, rubbed at them.

Ray's hand settled on the back of Liam's neck. The heat of that big, calloused palm cradled Liam's head until Ray made Liam turn to look at him. He couldn't raise his eyes to Ray's face.

"Yes, we are and yes, fear hurts," Ray whispered. "If there's something I can do to help, just tell me."

Lightning, thunder, like it was right over their heads, and Liam gasped and trembled. Ray's soft lips and the bristle of a day's beard pressed to Liam's cheek. Ray lingered there, leaving more kisses along Liam's cheekbone and around and down his jawline.

Acceptance. The lump building in Liam's throat was the pure gratitude of knowing Ray accepted this part of him. He actually wanted to be here.

Liam tentatively reached toward Ray, worried Ray might not be as accepting as he said. But Ray was right there to gather Liam into his arms and hold him tight. Liam relaxed against him.

"This helps," Liam whispered. "You, like this."

"Being close? Touching?"

Liam nodded, and Ray moved in closer, wrapping Liam up in big, muscular arms. Letting Ray hold him felt so good, Liam couldn't care about seeming weak. Ray didn't mind that. Liam would be strong later, but right now... Right now, he'd let Ray help.

Ray nudged Liam's head up, and Liam saw Ray smirk. "Kisses might help too," Ray suggested. "Instead of a make-out session, we'll call it therapy. Very important."

Liam chuckled even into the kisses Ray dropped on his lips. Then Liam opened his mouth, inviting Ray in, and the kiss went deeper. Slow and

thorough. Liam heard his crutch clatter to the tile flooring, but he didn't care. Ray was kissing him, holding him so tightly that nothing as silly as the sound of something falling and drawing Liam's parents into the room could matter.

Until Liam heard a tiny gasp from somewhere behind Ray.

She might've witnessed that hello kiss at the door when Ray arrived—which was, technically, the first time she saw her son with another man—and a dozen other touches through dinner, but seeing Liam's new 'kiss therapy' in her kitchen... He pulled back enough to peek over Ray's shoulder, the worry of being caught still alive and kicking in Liam's gut.

Hands clasped under her chin and grinning so hard he couldn't see her eyes, his mom stood there in the doorway. Okay. So she was pleased as punch.

“Smiling?” Ray barely whispered.

Liam chuckled. “Her face might split.”

Ray gave him one more peck, then turned to look too.

“Why don't you two go on upstairs?” She shooed at them with her little hands. “I think you've got the right idea for what to do during a thunderstorm.”

“Mom...” he couldn't stop himself from whining. Was she honestly suggesting they make out in his bedroom instead? It was like she wanted them to go have sex. While his parents were down here. Knowing about it. Oh nuh-uh.

“I think so too.” Ray turned around and crouched down a bit. “Hop on, babe.”

Hop on? Crissakes. Liam's face burned at the offer of a piggyback ride, but he took it anyway. Draped over Ray's broad, hard back was a place he'd wanted to be for a while now, so hell yes, he leaned on Ray and wrapped his arms around the man's neck. Ray held Liam's forearms so he couldn't choke him, then straightened up, lifting Liam off his foot. Ray didn't hesitate to hook one hand behind Liam's knee while the other cradled the underside of his stump. That lack of hesitation to touch it was nice.



“Stairs right behind you,” Liam said. As his mother tittered, he hid his blush by pressing his face into the back of Ray’s neck.

Ray turned around, wished Liam’s mom a good-night, and then stomped up the old servant’s stairs to the second floor.

“This is ridiculous,” Liam muttered.

“I guess you haven’t noticed I’ve got a thing for picking you up.”

Well, he had but... “What’s that about? ’Cause I’m no damsel.”

Ray snorted and reached the top of the stairs. “Damsels don’t weigh as much. Which room?”

Liam pointed. “It’s a dominant male thing, I bet. Used to getting your way, Raymond?”

“Oh yeah, I’m a total top.” He snorted again. “Not.”

Liam was surprised. As Ray opened the door and got them inside, Liam reevaluated what he’d thought he’d known about what Ray wanted. Sweet as the man was, Liam had thought Ray was an always-in-control kind of guy. If he was being sarcastic here... Goddamn, but now Liam was a hell of a lot more interested. Are you ready or not?

Ray set Liam down beside his dresser and there, on top where he’d left it, sat his six-month chip. If he could do that... If he wanted this... He looked back at Ray, who was just closing the bedroom door.

“This okay?” Ray asked and waved a hand at the door.

“Yeah. Yeah, of course.”

Ray smiled uncertainly. “You had a look on your face... If you don’t want me here...”

“I do.” He glanced at the coin again, then focused on Ray. “I do want you here. I’m just... sorry it’s like this.”

Ray shrugged one shoulder and came over just as another crashing thunderclap made Liam flinch. There was nothing in Ray’s eyes but a reflection of his soft smile of concern and acceptance.

“Can you tell me about it? All the things that bother you? I don’t want to get you in a situation or do something that makes anything worse.”

Liam nodded. He owed Ray that knowledge.

“You know about me and crowds.”

Ray nodded, probably remembering their second date when Liam had to ask if they could leave the sports bar for somewhere quieter. Liam was fine with normal large groups of people and he could even go to a bar without too much temptation now. It was the rowdy, active crowds that he couldn’t handle well. All that trapped noise and movement made him anxious, fidgety, jumpy, and unable to concentrate.

“This is the other big thing.” Liam looked away and noticed the open window blinds. He hopped over to close them, giving himself something to do while he spoke. “I don’t hear thunder. I mean, I do, but I also hear the explosion. I’m better now because I know there’s a difference, I don’t get lost in the past like I... like I did before.” He rubbed at his forehead, his eyes closed. “The problem is when I’m asleep and a storm wakes me up. I don’t know where I am and I... I forget about... That I can’t walk.”

Twice his parents had found him panicking on the floor. Trapped in the nightmare of seeing his body broken, burnt, bleeding out...

“I don’t sleep when storms are in the forecast, but I didn’t watch the forecast tonight because, well, I was on the phone with you.”

“So I should keep you awake.”

Liam nodded and finally turned around. “I pretty much can’t sleep now that it’s here,” he said through another boom. This one did shake the house some, but hey, his voice hardly warbled at all.

“If we do fall asleep now,” Ray said, coming closer, “and it wakes you up, what should I do?”

Liam closed his eyes. He knew he shouldn’t feel ashamed, but... He sighed, then said, “Tell me where I am. That it’s all over. Tell me I’m... safe.”

Ray moved in then and held his face while he kissed him. It felt like reassurance, but also like a reward. Liam smiled against Ray's lips, and Ray smiled back.

"Let's get more comfortable and stretch out," Ray suggested, then dropped down to sit on the bed and get his boots off.

Liam nodded, reminding himself he could—should—do this too. Getting comfortable and using the bed was perfectly normal. Of course, he had a lot less than Ray to take off to get himself comfortable. One sneaker and a sock later, he wasn't sure if he should lose the T-shirt. He'd definitely keep the sweatpants on since he only wore a jock under them and, no, he wasn't ready to throw that much temptation at Ray only to make him resist it.

Unless he wasn't going to make Ray resist anything.

Damn it, make a decision already.

But Liam couldn't think when Ray stood up after he was done with his work boots and socks to shuck his jeans. Boxer briefs wrapped around his hairy legs, their muscles thick and heavy. Gorgeous legs. I knew it. Suddenly, a very vocal part of Liam was screaming for him to stop waiting, stop questioning and worrying, and just grab on and not let the man go.

"Come on," Ray said over his shoulder as he lifted the blankets. "Let's get in here."

Since Ray left his shirt on, Liam did too. He scooted up to slip under the covers as Ray climbed in with him. For a moment, they lay on their sides facing each other and not touching. Then a bang of thunder made Liam shiver, and Ray inched over to him so he could rest an arm across Liam's waist and rub on his back. The up-and-down touch, the warmth, the scent of Ray here in his bed... "This is good," Liam whispered. "Just... this."

"It is."

"Means so much. You doing this," Liam whispered. He blushed from admitting that, but Ray deserved to know.

"Liam, I wanna be here for everything."

He'd known that. Kind of. The confirmation was good. Liam let go of more of his worries and pressed his face into Ray's chest in thanks.

"Not just to help you when I can, but to watch you push through each struggle. You're an amazing man, Li. So strong."

Ray hugged him tighter, and Liam realized he was shaking, little tremors vibrating his arm and chest muscles. Why was Ray saying all this?

"I'm not," Liam insisted. "Not always."

"Babe, you might wobble some and you might fall, but you've got this fire that won't let you stay down for long. You inspire me."

He inspired Ray? Tears leaked from Liam's eyes despite how tightly he squeezed them closed. He couldn't get a word out to make Ray stop.

"I know it wasn't always like that. I know you've been through so many different kinds of hell. But you do it now. You get up and you keep going."

Oh God, he was breaking. Right here in Ray's arms, he was just falling apart. The storm raged on above them, flashes and bangs, but it was Ray confessing his feelings that ripped into Liam now. He wasn't worthy.

"And, Li, I want you to know that if you need it, need me, for help... I'm here, okay? You need a smile, a hand, or someone to sit up with you when it storms, pick me."

Liam moved fast, desperate to make Ray stop before he lost it completely. He fused their lips together, bumping in, pushing hard. Ray opened up, just let Liam's tongue in to thrust and parry, and held him tightly.

But Liam couldn't maintain the kiss as a sob ripped out of him. He choked back any further such noises and hid against Ray's shoulder again. Ray's words had broken him, but he knew he'd needed them, needed them from Ray. This man wasn't going anywhere and wanted whatever Liam would give him. That was love. Dear God, Ray loved him already.

"I pick you," Liam managed to whisper near Ray's ear. "I do. I pick you."

"That's all I want."

Ray rubbed at Liam's back, soothing all the aches he'd started. Slowly, Liam stopped shaking and the tears dried up. He felt cleaned out and exhausted, like the storm had moved through him as it was moving over the city. Leaning heavily, half on top of Ray, Liam just breathed and realized he didn't know and didn't care about what he should do now. All that mattered was this moment right here.

"All right?" Ray asked and stopped rubbing to hug him.

"Yeah." He refused to feel embarrassed about weeping on Ray. He'd obviously needed that, and Ray wanted everything. "Thanks."

"I meant it."

"I know."

Liam sat back enough to look Ray in the eye. They both wiped at Liam's wet face, then shared a smile. "Can you stay for a while?"

"How's all night sound?"

A wiggle of worry about his parents had Liam hesitating, but only for a second. "All night sounds perfect."

"Good. Now get on my other side so this one can dry off."

Liam snorted and moved around, making sure to get his elbows and knee in soft places so Ray would grunt and twitch. When he lay down again, Ray started arranging Liam's limbs so one arm was tucked against Ray's side, the other went across his chest, and his pelvis was snugged right up into Ray's hip. Ray even gripped Liam's stump leg and pulled it across his thighs, then went and left his warm palm resting on it.

"Comfortable?" Liam asked with a smirk.

Ray seemed to consider it, then nodded. "Yep."

"Sure you don't—" Liam was cut off by a roll of thunder. More distant now. The storm was receding. Okay. "—want a glass of water?"

Ray chuckled. “Nope, I’m good. Well, there is one thing.” He used his other hand to push Liam’s head down onto Ray’s shoulder. “Ah,” he sighed. “Now we’re good.”

Liam smiled and closed his eyes. He probably wouldn’t sleep until the storms had passed, but if he slept and woke in the night, Ray was here to ground him and remind him where he was. He’d be just fine.

\*\*\*\*

In the morning, Liam woke to find himself on his back with Ray draped over and hugging him like one of those full-body pillows. He smiled before he even opened his eyes, so complete just knowing Ray was still here, softly snoring into Liam’s ear.

They’d talked a little more last night while the storm rolled away, but about nothing important to anything except the fact Ray stayed and distracted Liam from his worries. Some more “kiss therapy” hadn’t really wound them up, but Liam had fallen asleep in about the same state of arousal he was in right now. Feeling Ray against his hip just added to that.

Then Ray rolled to his side and hauled Liam with him. Ray’s hand against the small of Liam’s back made sure their erections lined up perfectly.

With his voice gruff from sleep, Ray asked, “Are two trees enough to count as a forest of morning wood?”

Liam snorted, then chuckled. He squeezed his eyes closed, but nope, the mental image of a forest of giant, erect cocks didn’t vanish. He laughed more when he imagined himself running naked through all those “trees” looking for the perfect one to climb.

He laughed until he realized his mental image of himself had two whole legs. When he tried to imagine an update on that, he only succeeded in drawing out a memory of waking up in the hospital with a stump.

Ray made that fade away—bless him—when he said a good morning to the side of Liam’s neck. Lips and breath ghosted over his skin before a firm, wet tongue teased itself against his stubble. The wash of warmth that cascaded

from that spot southward through Liam had him sucking in a breath and holding tighter to Ray.

When Ray nibbled Liam's earlobe, Liam knew he either had to give in or stop. "I don't want to stop," he said, his voice even rougher from a night's sleep.

"Then don't," Ray said before moving his head around to find Liam's mouth for a kiss.

Liam moaned into Ray, hot and eager that fast. He held tighter to Ray's shoulder and waist, feeling a little squashed when Ray rolled back on top of him, but it was under nearly a couple hundred pounds of thick muscle, so he just couldn't care. Except... Except then Ray's heavy erection lined up with Liam's and everything got real.

When Ray came back for another kiss, Liam turned his head away. "Wait."

"Okay." Ray eased back. "It's okay."

Liam covered his eyes. "Fuck, I'm sorry."

"Hey, seriously, it's fine. I mean, if it physically causes you pain—"

"It doesn't."

"Oh."

Liam looked at Ray. Had he let him think there was a physical problem? Or had Ray gone there on his own? Then Ray smiled.

"And it feels like everything's in working order too," Ray said with a small grin and ground his hips into Liam's.

Liam groaned, near defeat. That felt so good. Just that much. "Everything works fine. I... I don't want to... to—"

"Listen, you want more time, I'm—"

"—disgust you."

"Disgust me?" Ray jerked and frowned. "You couldn't possibly."

Liam's temper flared. "I have a lot of scars, Ray. It's not just my missing leg. It's a patchwork of scars from putting me back together again."

"So? You're a dumbass if you think I don't want to see and touch you anyway. D'you really think some injury takes away from how fucking hot you are?" He glared at him. "I'm not missing out on sex with you because you're a moron."

Liam glared back. "Keep calling me names, asshole."

"Keep being stupid, and I will. For shit's sake, Liam, I don't care about a missing leg or bunch of scars. I don't need you in pristine condition. I just want you." Ray pressed his forehead against Liam's. "Need me to repeat everything I said last night?"

Liam's anger dissipated and he sighed. "No."

"Remember everything?"

"I remember. I know." He relaxed again beneath Ray. If he really wanted this...

"Then let's just see what happens, hmm?" Ray kissed his forehead and rubbed one hand along Liam's side. "Let me love you this way too."

Liam squeezed his eyes shut, swamped by a new, scarier emotion. He'd thought maybe Ray was saying he loved him last night, but to hear the words now... Ray did love him. Couldn't imagine why, but there it was. Oh God.

Ray nudged Liam's forehead, and Liam tilted his head back. A moment later, Ray's exhale seemed to convey his relief just before his kiss told Liam all about the man's excitement. And need. Ray hadn't kissed him with so much passion before. Feeling that, knowing it was for him, God, it melted Liam right into the bed. He just gave in completely, come what may, because he trusted Ray.

When Ray tapered off the kiss and looked into Liam's eyes, Liam saw the question. He nodded, his course set. Ray made all the difference now.

Ray's smile was equal parts triumphant and devilish. Liam smiled, and Ray grabbed Liam's T-shirt and pushed it up. Liam was going to hold it out of the



way or maybe just take it off completely, but Ray dove down and swirled his tongue around Liam's nipple.

"Aw yeah," Liam practically sighed.

"Oh good. Love doing this."

Liam's breath came faster as Ray licked and sucked at his chest. He couldn't hardly keep still as Ray worked both nipples at once, the different sensations thrumming pleasure all through Liam. Then suddenly, Ray moved on top of him, some of that big-guy manhandling coming into play as Ray wrestled Liam out of his shirt. Liam let him do it and laughed while he did.

When Ray whipped his own T-shirt off, Liam paused to appreciate the sight. Thick whorls of black hair covered Ray's chest, hard, square pecs and rippled abs. Liam would have to conduct a mini-scamper hunt to find the man's dusky nipples and navel beneath all that dark fur.

"You look like you're about to start drooling," Ray said with a chuckle.

Liam grinned. "Nice sweater."

"Hey, just because you're practically bald..." He tugged on the fuzz between Liam's pecs.

Liam batted Ray's hand away. "I like the sweater look, Raymond."

Ray dropped down on top of Liam again, this time with a cocky grin and a move that rubbed their chests together. Liam laughed a little breathlessly at the way Ray's chest hairs tickled his skin. A solid, warm, male body wanting him... No, accepting him. Priceless.

After a swift kiss, Ray began meandering down Liam's chest, gripping muscles and licking skin. It felt so good to lie there and let Ray do whatever he wanted. It was arousing as all hell to be worry free now and just content to explore each other with no more secrets.

Ray grinned and wiggled Liam's waistband down another couple inches to reveal the top edge of his pubes. He ran his tongue along that sensitive line, making the hair all over his body stand up. Ray still looked so pleased with himself at that. Liam tensed a few muscles to keep from shivering, but it didn't

work. Of course, the shiver made Ray look up and grin like he'd accomplished some mission.

Then Ray's fingers pulled Liam's sweats down farther in the back and his nails lightly scratched Liam's bare ass. Okay, yeah, he so needed this. Suddenly, it was sex, with Ray, and right now. But Ray flinched, making Liam look down in time to see Ray's eyes go wide. Another tug and Ray uncovered Liam's ass.

"Christ on a thumbtack," Ray said before his eyes panned up to meet Liam's gaze. "You've been wearing a jock? All night? Around the house? This whole time?"

Liam chuckled at all the overemphasizing and shrugged one shoulder. "They're comfortable."

"They're porn, you son of a bitch. They're locker room fantasies and—" He huffed a breath, and then dropped his head down onto Liam's naked hip. "You little bastard."

Liam bit his lip to keep from laughing again. Ray looked up, with more than arousal coloring his cheeks now, and barked a laugh before dropping his head into Liam's groin and moaning. The vibrations made Liam squirm and grab Ray's hair, some pleased noises ripping out of him. When Ray started rooting around down there, Liam felt his eyelids flutter as he groaned and rubbed back.

"Yeah," Ray said and got up on his knees over Liam. "Much as I love these damn things, I gotta get you out of it right now. Right now."

Ray tugged Liam's sweats the rest of the way off, while Liam took off his T-shirt completely. Given Ray's enraptured expression, it was apparent he paid a little homage to the jock as he slowly worked it over Liam's erection and down his legs. Ray actually gave the underwear a kiss and promised to visit it again soon before he tossed it over his shoulder.

Then Ray was staring down at Liam's naked body. No more hiding, there he was. And wasn't. Pink and white, battered and abused. Every last broken bit of him right out in—

Ray sighed. "I won't lie and say it isn't hard to see you like this, Li." Ray's gaze flicked from spot to spot on Liam. "You shouldn't ever have had to go through any of this." He trailed his hand down Liam's thigh, his fingers gentle as they smoothed over the stump end. When his eyes found Liam's again, Ray smirked. "Still hot as hell, though, you gorgeous fuck."

Liam chuckled, posed to get another wink, and realized... Yeah, we'll be okay.

Holding his gaze, Ray leaned down and kissed Liam's scarred hip. The look in those chocolate eyes raised Liam's heart rate. Ray's touch, though, that was a bit fascinating. The feel of Ray's fingers and tongue would disappear as they passed over a scar, then come back almost too strong on the other side. Liam knew his nerve endings were still getting their act together, but God, he hadn't known their misfiring could feel so intensely good.

"Ray," he whispered and reached down to touch the man's hair.

Ray hummed and took Liam's hand, holding it against the mattress. Liam grinned and gave in all over again now that he'd been told not to disturb Ray's explorations.

Honestly, despite the fact Ray had only one and a half legs to explore, to Liam the experience didn't feel all that much different from when other—

No. No, this was completely different. He looked down his damaged body and it was Ray taking his time to leave kisses and gentle touches over every inch of him. Liam might've gotten laid plenty of times, but he'd never had a man make love to him and mean it before right now. This was completely different.

"Poor babies," Ray whispered.

Liam came out of his revelation with a confused frown. "Babies?"

Ray cupped Liam's sac and moved it away from the scar high on Liam's inner thigh. "That was way too close." He took away Liam's ability to comment by sucking one nut into his mouth.

A moan stuttered out of Liam and he spread his thighs wider. He tilted his pelvis up toward Ray, desperate. Liam reached down to stroke himself, but Ray's hand pushed him away before doing it himself. The sloppy suction on his balls combined with the firm pull to his cock had Liam writhing, thrusting into Ray's hand because he couldn't not do it, and teetering on the edge already.

When Ray swallowed the hard, hot length of Liam's cock? "Oh God, Ray, yes," Liam said, hissing that last word. Plunge and suck, plunge and suck, then Ray's mouth left him. The loss of it had Liam gasping and moaning in confused desperation. "Please. Ray."

But then Ray's hand was on him again, slick this time and pumping fast. Liam saw Ray watching him and the intensity of his touch, his gaze, was overwhelming. It bowed Liam's spine, arched his neck, and stole his breath. Sensation shot through Liam hard, tensing every muscle he had from his toes to his ass to his jaw, pausing his lungs, tripping his heart, until a shock of release freed him to groan. He melted under Ray's touch even as it grounded him again, letting him wallow in the beauty of that hard-fought moment of release. Freedom. God, he was so free.

Ray left him again, but this time, when Liam looked, he saw the incendiary sight of Ray using Liam's cum to slick his raging erection and get himself off with urgency. Liam touched Ray's furry belly, felt it tremble, and combed Ray's short hair back from his sweaty forehead. Jesus, he was beautiful fighting for his own orgasm. Fierce and strong, just struggling to fly.

"Come on, big fella," Liam said and kissed Ray's chin when he tipped his head up, eyes closed and panting. "Shoot all over me."

Ray tensed up, his face a clenched-jaw grimace, then he barked out a sound of release and warm jizz splashed onto Liam's belly and cock. Ray's deep bellow preceded him falling against Liam and he pressed his face into Liam's shoulder as he shuddered a couple more times.

"Goddamn, you're gorgeous." Liam pulled Ray against him, just held him, welcoming the clinging heat of their bodies and the way they panted in sync.

One of those deep breaths told Liam his mother was awake and frying bacon downstairs. He felt and heard Ray inhale before the man chuckled.

“Forgot about your parents.”

“Me too.” Liam winced internally. How much might they have heard? Enough of him was still basking that he sort of didn’t care if they’d heard every grunt in surround sound.

Ray rolled to his side, and Liam felt him wipe them both down with something cotton. Probably a T-shirt. No doubt Liam’s.

“How about you spend the weekend with me at my place?” Ray asked.

Liam peeked at him with one eye. “That’s cheating.”

“How so?”

“My brain’s all mushy.”

Ray chuckled and leaned against him again. “So it might be easy to influence you?”

Liam rolled over, daring to seek out more closeness. “Your words are too big.”

“And you’re one of those guys who’s useless after an orgasm.” Ray gathered him into those strong arms. “I’ll remember that.”

“What?” Jeez, Ray was a post-orgasmic Chatty Cathy.

“Spend the weekend with me and I’ll give you lots of orgasms,” Ray said into Liam’s ear, his voice a real nice rumble.

Liam snorted. “Deal.”

“Slut.”

“Yup.” Liam sighed, then tilted his head enough to kiss Ray’s throat. “But only for you.”

“Mmm... And why’s that?”

Moment of truth time. Liam opened his mouth and just said it.

“Because I love you, too.”

Ray sighed, sweet and satisfied. He pulled Liam closer into the warmth and solidness of his big body.

Liam sighed, too, with exhaustion, yes, but also with peace. So much soft, decadent peace. He couldn't remember the last time he felt like this and he realized... Nothing's missing now. Liam relaxed completely and knew he was finally ready for the next chapter of his life to begin with Ray by his side.

**THE END**

## Author Bio

*I might be an escaped con or a former sheriff's deputy. Once I was a chef... or was that a chief? It's entirely possible I'm a used-car salesman or an insurance agent. Go-go boy, I might have done that... recently. Then there were the years as either a waiter, dog walker or bike messenger, but I don't like to talk about them. I might be a carpenter and singer, and though I don't have a sex tape available anymore, I'm definitely gay now. Oh! Occasionally, I write a thing or two.*

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