



THE *DAWN* OF
DARKNESS



A.L. BOYD

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Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

THE DAWN OF DARKNESS

By A.L. Boyd

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love is an Open Road?

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 these authors 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 is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, 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.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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THE DAWN OF DARKNESS

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Photo Description

A tall, thin man dressed in a navy blue and white hoodie, rides a black stallion in an outdoor arena lined with short hedges. The horse, accented with white polo wraps and black and white bridle, trots along the arena rail.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

The man in this picture is extremely shy (he might have some social anxiety disorder? You decide) but also extremely intelligent. His only real contact with other people is with his (small?) family, and he uses his horse to fill in for the emotional contact that he misses. As a direct result, he is an extremely good dressage rider though most people at his barn think that his horse is wasted on him and he doesn't ride at all. One day, someone (the love interest) else sees him riding and realizes that 1. He really is a good rider and 2. He should be competing. Conflict and romance ensue.

Sincerely,

Fossore

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: equestrian, MC going blind, ginger/red head, first time, self-discovery, family, competition

Word Count: 12,365

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I'd just secured the latch on the stall door when I saw my mother approaching, followed by a young man about my age leading a prancing, flashy, chestnut pony. My eyes were drawn to the man holding the lead: his fiery hair was the same golden-red as the gleaming coat of the pony. My breath caught in my throat as I stared at the beautiful man. Desire rushed through me as I gazed over his pale skin covered in freckles, his bright blue eyes, and those brilliant strands. He and the pony moved like a perfectly matched team. Short and of stocky build, he was the perfect height to tuck under my chin if I held him close.

Right before they stopped outside the empty stall across the aisle from my stallion, the sunlight through the barn window glinted off the man's hair. The sight mesmerized me. I continued to stare at him until my mother's voice broke the spell. "You can put her in here, Christopher." Then she turned in my direction and said, "Weston, meet Christopher. He'll take over Billy's duties starting tomorrow." She looked back to the man and continued, "This is my son, Weston. If you have any questions and I'm not around, you can ask him."

"Yes ma'am," Christopher said politely as he led the pony into the stall.

She turned to leave then stopped and looked over at me again. "Weston, do be a dear and show Christopher around. I've a lesson in the outdoor in five minutes."

Before I could even respond, she whirled around, strode down the aisle and out the side door that led to the arena area. I clenched my fists as she walked away. *Why does she always do this to me? She knows I don't do well with talking to people.*

I was still watching where she had departed when Christopher spoke. "Hey, Wes." *Wow, no one called me Wes.* Everyone was too afraid of offending my mother, to even try to shorten my name. I looked down at the extended pale hand and hesitated before I offered my own. As I shook his hand, Christopher continued, "Call me Chris. Your mom doesn't seem to like nicknames."

I snorted and tried to hold back a laugh. "She never will. I can't even call her Mom. It's either Mother or Victoria. I'd advise against calling her Vicky."

Suddenly, I realized I was still holding his strong, calloused hand. I pulled back my hand and turned to look into the once empty stall. The heat rose on my face as I examined the new arrival. Not only was I embarrassed about talking to the man, I hadn't even noticed that the "pony" was actually a small Arabian. *Now, what to say?*

"I wasn't aware Mother was getting a new horse." As long as we were talking horses, I could make conversation. I hoped that we wouldn't run out of horse topics too soon.

I was surprised when Chris laughed. "She's not your mother's. She's my pride and joy. I bought her from the big Arabian farm down near Rutland when she was a foal. I only wish I'd bought her before her breeder sent in the papers."

"Why? What's her name?" *That's it, Wes, keep talking horses. You can do this.* I looked over at Chris as he stood beside me looking at the little mare in the stall. A strange desire to wrap my arm around his shoulders and pull him close crossed my mind.

"Her registered name is A Guiding Light. Seems the breeder was a fan of soap operas. I call her Dawn." Chris reached over the stall door and patted the mare on the neck.

"That's an interesting name. Why that one?" It was so easy talking to him. I hadn't been able to have conversations with too many other people in the past, now I was chatting away like we were old friends.

"Because she reminds me of the sunrise. The start of a new day. Her color matches the golds and reds of the rising sun, but it's more than that. She's my beginning. The foundation of my equestrian dreams for the future." Chris looked back at his horse with affection before saying, "Look, it was great to meet you, but I've borrowed a trailer to bring her here, and I need to return it. I'll be back in time for morning feeding." He turned and walked out of the barn.

Why I followed him and watched him drive away was a mystery. He smiled and waved before he got into an old, beat-up purple Dodge truck and drove off with a shabby little two-horse trailer rattling along behind. *Why did I feel like Chris took away the sunshine as he left?*

Alone at last. I always searched the barn to make sure the riding lessons were completed, and the riders and boarders had all gone home before I led my

stallion, Darkness, out to saddle up. After grooming and tacking him up, I led him to the outdoor arena. Tonight was a full moon, so I didn't bother with the arena lights. I needed to get used to the sensation of riding when I couldn't see anyway. Cueing Darkness to a working trot, I counted the steps down the center of the arena, trusting the stallion to keep on track.

As I rode, I felt the fluid movements of the horse beneath me. The rush of a light breeze crossed my face. I could still see the white railing of the arena fence reflecting the moonlight as I passed by, but that wouldn't last long. Eventually, I wouldn't be able to see at all.

I thought back to the diagnosis. Two years ago, I'd gone to the optometrist for a routine checkup. At first, I wondered if I might need glasses because my peripheral vision had been getting a little fuzzy, and I was having trouble seeing the lettering on the arena markers. Instead of it being a minor issue, on my twenty-first birthday, I received the news that I was already losing my eyesight. My vision would continue to deteriorate until finally, sometime in my forties, I would be completely blind.

My counselor suggested that I work on developing my other senses even though I could still see. When I rode, I tried to focus on listening to Darkness's footsteps. I heard and felt each step as we worked through a variety of dressage movements.

Focused on my task, I wasn't expecting it when the arena lights switched on and temporarily blinded me. Darkness stumbled, and I had to grab his mane in order to keep from taking a tumble over his shoulder. My heart raced as I realized that my life would be different in the future. I wouldn't be able to see when my horse stumbled. I could easily hit the ground and not know which way to roll to get out of the way of the horse's hooves. Scrambling back into the saddle and gathering up my reins, I tried to calm my rising fear and anger at the interruption of my ride.

"Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't know anyone would be out here," Chris said from near the gate, holding the lead on his little red mare.

Groaning, I glanced down at my watch. Seeing the time, I was astonished to find that I'd been riding for more than an hour. It was time to cool Darkness down and put him up, but I couldn't hold back my irritation, so I snapped, "That's quite all right. I'm done now."

"You don't have to stop on my account. I didn't mean to disturb anyone. I came to check on Dawn. She hasn't been acting right today. With all the

changes, I was worried that she might colic, but she seems fine now. I only brought her out to get her used to the new place.”

Chris’s appearance distracted me. His pale skin and red hair made me think things I shouldn’t consider. Darkness had done well in our session, and now I’d take him around the perimeter of the property. Mother had installed small solar lights along the trail and at each of the turnout gates. It wasn’t much, but it helped me keep on track. I rode to the gate and told Chris, “I need to take him for a walk.”

“Do you mind if we come with you?” Chris tied the free end of the lead around the halter and looped the rope over his mare’s head. He swung a leg over and slid right up onto the mare’s back. He looked up at me with a smile.

My heart skipped a beat. I should refuse, and there were my mother’s rules to consider. I looked at Chris’s helmetless head as he sat on his mare with nothing more than a halter to control her. He looked so happy and carefree, I wished I could be like that, but instead I said, “That’s not how we do things—”

Chris cut me off. “Your mom told me the rules. Helmets, proper tack, and all that jazz. But Dawn’s used to this. I didn’t always have money for the tack and helmet. Luckily, I’ve finally found a job that will allow me to keep her. I almost had to sell her last month when the college I had leased her to no longer needed her for their equestrian program.”

I’d never disobeyed my mother or broken any of her barn rules, but the way Chris looked made me rethink things. Having led a privileged life, I couldn’t even imagine not having the funds for basic equestrian items much less being forced to sell a horse because I couldn’t afford it. For me, giving up a treasured horse would be the same as ripping my heart out of my chest. Not knowing what to say to him, I pointed in the direction of the trail and said, “That way,” before nudging Darkness with my heels.

I kept the stallion on a loose rein as we started down the trail while I tried not to pay attention to the small red mare and her rider walking beside us. The scent of mint and a hint of pine drifted past me on the breeze. There were no pine trees on our property, so I could only guess that the scent had come from Chris. I remained silent as I concentrated on finding that combination again, but the smell of oiled leather and sweaty horse overpowered it.

The trail started as the lane between the many small turnout paddocks, then looped around the far side of the hay field before winding back through a wooded area. We rode in silence for a while before Chris spoke again. “So what

do you do for a living? I know your mom works here with all the lessons and such. Do you give lessons also or run the farm books or something?"

That caught me off guard. All the other gossips at the barn assumed I was the spoiled rich type that didn't have to work. Maybe I didn't have to, but I did. Not ready to tell Chris the truth yet, I settled for a half-truth. "I work for a charitable organization." I didn't need to tell the man that I was the founder of the organization. I wished I could see his face as we continued along the trail, but now that we were out of sight of the bright lights of the arena, I couldn't see much more than shapes and bright objects. Even though I trusted Darkness to stick to the path as we walked along, I kept him even with Chris's mare so that Chris wouldn't realize I couldn't see well.

"That's cool. What kind of charity is it? Is it like a horse rescue?"

"No, it's an organization to help people who are going blind. The foundation supports people who can't afford training to help them adjust to blindness. We offer lessons in Braille and other support classes. There are also counseling services to individuals with degenerative eye diseases." Chris didn't need to know that all I did was provide my name and funds to the foundation. My main purpose was to sign a few documents occasionally while my competent staff did the rest of the work. A staff that was teaching me all the same classes as the rest of our clients.

"That's really neat, Wes. My grandma was blind from birth. She passed away a few years ago. She had difficulty sometimes because of her blindness, but I loved going to visit her. She always talked about how she wished she could have ridden horses, but her family was too afraid she'd get hurt." He paused. I saw his pale hand rise up and wipe across his face before he continued, "I think she passed on her love of horses to me though. So I got Dawn, and always told her how it felt when I rode." I heard the sadness in Chris's voice as he talked about his grandma.

I didn't know what to say now. We had gotten past the safe topic of horses, into family and dying. I'd experienced the pain of having a loved one die. My father died in a car accident right before I started my freshman year of high school. Talking about death and dying caused my throat to swell up. I tried to swallow before I finally got out, "I'm sorry about your grandma." We were coming back to the beginning of the trail, and I saw the brightness of the arena lights that were still on. Reaching down my horse's neck, I checked to see if the stallion was still too warm. "He's ready to go in. I'm going to head to the barn to put him up. You can stay and ride another loop if you want."

Chris said, "I'll come with you. I just wanted Dawn to stretch her legs. Let me go flip the arena lights off on the way back."

He skillfully guided the little mare with only his legs toward the arena light switches. The lead rope he'd tied to the halter lay slack around Dawn's neck as she completed a perfect side pass to line up with the switches. Chris leaned over and everything went black as the arena lights turned off. I turned Darkness to face the light streaming from the barn door and waited until Chris rode up beside us. We rode to the door and dismounted our horses.

Chris took his mare back to the stall while I untacked and groomed Darkness. I was still brushing my stallion when Chris said, "Well, I have to be here early tomorrow for my first day. I'll see you around. Oh, and thanks for the little tour of the trail. It was fun." With a wave, he walked out.

I couldn't stop myself from watching him leave. Why did my heart ache as he walked away? I had known from an early age that I was attracted to men, but I've never been able to make an accurate guess about other men's preferences. Growing up, I'd led a privileged life and attended an exclusive, small private school. As a tall, clumsy kid, my teen years were a nightmare for me. At over six foot as a freshman, all the kids thought I'd be a big basketball star, but I was horrible in the typical sports. I hid in shame during PE class because I couldn't catch or hit a ball to save my life. The last straw had been when my teacher let me take a written exam in order to pass my golf and tennis PE courses. I'd learned all the fundamentals and rules of both games, but I rarely connected the club or racket to the ball. The ridicule from my classmates had been a huge blow to my confidence.

After high school, I'd gone to Tufts University in Grafton. The summer after my third year in the pre-veterinary program, I learned about my condition. Because we lived so close, I hadn't needed to move into the dorm rooms, and I never had much contact with the other students except in classes. When I graduated, I didn't see a need to move out because I would eventually need assistance getting around anyway. Taking the easy way out, I stayed with my mother in our huge family home.

I hadn't been very social in school, but when I was told of my diagnosis, I became more afraid of what would happen to me once I was blind, and my family wasn't able to help anymore. Because of my fears, I kept all of my activities away from prying eyes. Riding a horse was the most freeing experience of my life. To be able to control a thousand-pound animal with just the touch of a heel was liberating for me. I wasn't a clumsy oaf when I sat on a

horse. When my mother converted our family stable into a public riding stable, I'd chosen to ride at times when no one could see me. I didn't want the gossips and naysayers to make fun of my one passion. Until tonight, this had been the one secret I'd kept from everyone except my mother.

I was afraid that Chris would say something negative about my riding or tell the whole barn what he'd seen. The gossips would love to listen to the tale of my near fall from a little stumble. That would cement my incompetence in their eyes. I wasn't sure what I would do or say if he let my secret out. Contemplating my options, I finished grooming Darkness, and then led him back to his stall for the night.

When I arrived at the barn before morning feeding to double-check Darkness, I walked down the aisle and heard Chris talking. "...I like him. He's cute, don't you think?" Silence. "I wonder if he likes me. I sure hope he does." More silence. "Well I've got to get to work, baby girl. Time to get all you guys fed."

I nearly jumped out of my skin when Chris walked out of his mare's stall. I couldn't see a cell in his hand, so did that mean Chris had been talking to his horse? Chris almost ran over me when he turned to head toward the feed room. I put my hands out to steady him as his face hit my chest. His face flushed as red as his hair when he saw me. Flashing me a bright smile, he said, "Good morning. I'm headed over to the feed room. Do you have any instructions on the feeding?" Realizing my hands still rested on his waist, I dropped them to my sides. I caught the smell of mint and pine again as I stepped back. The scent intoxicated me, and I wanted to step close again, instead I pulled further back. The fragrance lingered this time as I turned and walked away.

He followed me to the feed room, and I helped him with the morning feeding. After we were done, I showed him the training and turnout schedules while we waited for the horses to finish eating. Usually I rode the young horses in training before the horde of students and boarders arrived. Today though, my nerves were so frayed I didn't think I could ride with Chris here. I didn't want the man to critique my riding.

Just as I was about to sneak out and go home, my mother caught up with me. "I've got Chief all ready for you. I want to see how he's progressing."

The protest died on my lips; it would only fall on her deaf ears. She never took no for an answer.

When I settled into the saddle, the young gelding caught my nervousness, and he danced under me. I closed my eyes and took a few deep calming breaths until I felt the horse relax too. Trying to ignore my surroundings, I warmed the gelding up, and then started working on his gait transitions.

When I finished the training session with Chief, I looked up to see Chris holding my next horse and talking to my mother. As I wondered what they were talking about, my nerves came back full force. Why was it so critical that I have this man's approval? We had just met, but somehow I knew he would be an important part of my life.

I dismounted the gelding with shaking legs and led him over to where they were standing. When I approached, Chris said, "Beautiful ride."

Heat rushed through my body and up to my face at those words of praise. I was so tongue-tied that I could only mumble "thanks" as we traded horses. Watching Chris walk away with Chief, I felt a sting of disappointment that he wasn't going to stay while I rode. But I knew the man had a job to do. Still riding high on those two words of praise, I mounted Lady and set her to her training.

This session seemed to fly by. My heart and mind in sync with Lady as we worked through one of the many dressage test patterns. I'd never felt so alive as right now. My confidence buoyed by two simple words. *Beautiful ride*. I never realized words could make me feel so happy. If only I knew the man liked me as well.

With the training session over, I needed to disappear from the barn. The group riding lessons would begin soon, and there would be dozens of students and their groupies to contend with. I never did well in a crowd, so I always left before they caught me hanging around. For reasons I'd never understood, the ladies liked to flirt with me. I didn't think I was particularly good-looking. Chris, now he was a handsome man. I couldn't tell if women happened to like me because of my height, my unruly blond hair, or because of my family's money. It didn't matter much as I wasn't interested in women, but they didn't know that.

Walking out the side door, I spotted Chris jogging toward me. He stopped in front of me, slightly out of breath and said, "Are you leaving?" His hand landed on my arm, and I felt a jolt as the light touch warmed my skin.

"Yes. I need to get some work done." I had a project for my foundation that needed some signatures, but it wasn't much. That was my normal excuse to get away from the barn, but this time I didn't have the overwhelming urge to leave.

He looked up at me, then I watched as his gaze traveled down my body before drifting back up to my face. A hopeful look crossed his face as he smiled at me. “Will you be back later? I’d like to talk to you some more.”

I hesitated, knowing that I shouldn’t get in too deep with this man. “I-I’m not sure. It depends on how long this project takes me.” I didn’t miss the disappointment that flashed quickly over his face, so I gave him a little hope. “I usually ride Darkness after the late feeding if I’m finished with my other work. If you’d like to join me, I’ll be here for the evening feed.”

His hand squeezed my forearm for a moment before he dropped his hand and said, “Great. See you then.” His smile made me want to stay, but I turned and walked the graveled path up the hill to our Cape Cod-style farmhouse.

The house was far too big for the two of us, but Mother hadn’t wanted to leave even after my father’s death. The property had been in her family for generations and once housed a large extended family. Now, we were the only two left in her lineage. My grandfather died in Vietnam not long after my mother’s birth. Grandma never remarried and dedicated her life to raising her only child. I looked over the house as I approached and realized that I would be the last of our family to live here.

The room I’d claimed for my office had large windows that faced the riding area. I could see all of the activity from my desk as I worked. Usually it relaxed me to watch the riding lessons in the outdoor arena, but not today. I spent the rest of the day trying to work while worrying about having invited Chris to ride with me. That was so out of character for me. I’d rarely talked to anyone at the barn, even the employees. I preferred to do things myself rather than ask one of the hands to do it. My mother already asked a lot of them anyway.

I was wrapping up for the day when Mother brought in a cup of tea and some cookies. The scent of warm chocolate and oranges hit my nose. Without even looking, I knew she’d made my favorites: chocolate crinkles and Constant Comment tea. “Christopher informed me that you have asked him to go riding with you.”

My jaw dropped, and the papers in my hands fell to the desk. Not sure what to say, I stood there and stared at her. I reached for a cookie to give me time to think of a response. My delay tactic didn’t work, and she continued, “Well I think he’s a nice young man. He’s been quite helpful today. You should invite him for dinner one night.”

The cookie I'd bitten into lodged in my throat, and I started coughing. I couldn't believe what I'd heard. Mother never suggested I invite people over. A sip of tea helped the cookie go down and gave me some more time to figure out what to say.

Apparently, I stalled too long again because she continued, "Well, darling, see if he's available on Saturday evening. I'll have the cook prepare a special dinner." Then she left me still too shocked to talk.

I arrived at the barn as the hands were finishing up the evening feed. Darkness was still eating when I opened his stall door. I brought a bucket to use as a stool as I sat and watched the big horse. Not long after I sat down, I heard Chris walking in and then, "Hey girl. You and I have a date tonight." My heart lurched in my chest. Chris was going out on a date? Then he said, "Wes asked me to go for a ride with him. So you can ogle that fine black stallion while I check out the blond rider." Chris chuckled. "I really hope he likes me. Eat up. I'll be back in a bit. I want to run home and wash up. Never know if something might happen."

I peeked over the stall door and saw Chris pat his mare's neck before he turned and walked away. My heart raced. Oh my god, the man had been talking about me. He liked me. I started to shake. Was this really happening? A date? The sweat rolled down my face. My heart continued to race, and I found it hard to breathe. A panic attack. The last time I'd had an attack had been when I was in high school after I learned of my father's accident. The counselor told me it was likely grief and stress induced. Recently, I'd returned to counseling to learn how to deal with my upcoming blindness, but this was the first panic attack I'd had in years.

I struggled to get my breathing under control like I'd been taught after my first attack. Closing my eyes, I leaned back against the stall wall and tried to take slow, calming breaths. Gradually, my breathing normalized before a hot breeze blew across my face. I opened my eyes to see Darkness's muzzle close to my nose; he was quietly watching to make sure I was doing okay.

I reached out a hand and rubbed his soft muzzle. The stallion stood waiting until I calmed down. Then he playfully stretched his neck out and shoved me off the bucket with his head. I laughed as I fell onto the straw-covered floor. Leave it to Darkness to always make me feel better.

Having calmed down by the time Chris came back, I had Darkness saddled and warming up in the indoor arena when I saw him at the gate with his mare. I

didn't know how long the man had been standing there since I hadn't seen him come in. Chris swung up easily onto his little mare, and I couldn't help watching them as they moved. Although the mare was short and stout, much like the man riding her, she moved with a fluid grace. I thought that she would score well in a dressage show. Because I'd ridden after hours so much, I wasn't used to sharing space with other riders, but I found it easy with Chris. We continued working around the arena in silence. I never knew what to say, and it seemed that Chris didn't mind the quiet either.

After we'd been riding for a while, Chris asked, "Why do you call him Darkness?"

I still hesitated in telling him the whole truth, so another half-truth slipped out. "That's his name."

"Just Darkness? That's it?"

I sighed. I didn't really want to go into this right now, but I should at least answer him. "No. His registered name is Delight in Darkness."

"Neat name. Is there a story behind it?"

"I don't know. Like your mare, the breeders named him before we purchased him. Because of his age, his name had to start with a D." My mother had purchased the stallion the day we found out about my condition. I had been angry with her at the time for buying a horse with a name that would constantly remind me of the situation. I called him Darkness because I couldn't see any "delight" in the darkness to come.

"What do you mean?" Chris seemed genuinely interested in knowing.

"He's a Dutch Warmblood. The registry sets a letter of the alphabet to correspond to the year of birth. In 2008, the year he was foaled, that letter was D, so all foals born that year have to have a name that starts with D."

"That's neat. The Arabian Registry doesn't have a rule like that." Chris stopped his mare and watched me continue around the arena. "You ride so beautifully, why don't the others know?"

"Others? What do you mean?" I tried to hold back the anger as I thought about all the barn gossip. I was pretty sure I knew what Chris was going to say next. That was one of the reasons I didn't talk to people at the barn.

"All the boarders and students. The gossip around here is that you don't ride, and your stallion is wasting away. One of the ladies, Janie I think, said

he'd be awesome at the shows. Watching him now, I agree. I don't understand why they all say you can't ride."

I hated this kind of gossip. Though I'd heard it all before, it bothered me more coming from Chris's mouth. I snapped, "What I do is none of their business."

"Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you mad. I just wondered. You really do ride well. You should show him."

"I don't want to show. I just ride. End of discussion. I won't compete." I tried to stay calm and lighten my grip on the reins, but I could feel Darkness fidget beneath me as he picked up on my emotion. Keeping my mind on my riding, I gradually relaxed and let Darkness cool down. I reached down and patted my stallion's neck. "I think he's ready to go in."

Chris brought his little mare to a halt next to my stallion and looked up at me. "I'd really like it if you rode with me on the trail around the property. I don't think I was paying good enough attention last night." When I saw the slight smile on his face, my capacity for speech vanished. No words came to my mind. Finally, I nodded my head and turned Darkness toward the gate.

The low light of the full moon threw me off balance a little as we stepped out from the lighted barn. Darkness shifted under me as he moved to counteract my unintentional leg contact. We bumped into Chris's mare, and Chris reached out to steady me. When his hand landed on my thigh, my skin tingled with the contact as if my breeches didn't even exist. I straightened up and moved Darkness away from the pair before nudging him toward the path. While we rode, Chris chatted on. His voice was soothing, and I drifted off in my thoughts, not really paying attention to his words. He didn't seem to mind that I wasn't responding to him.

Having completed our circuit, we rode back to the barn and dismounted. As we groomed the horses afterwards, Chris said again, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you angry."

Accepting his apology with a nod, I led Darkness back to his stall and settled him in for the night. I considered asking him to dinner like my mother suggested but hesitated when he looked up from Dawn's stall. Words I wanted to say—"I had a nice time," and "Would you like to come to dinner?"—were on the tip of my tongue, but nothing came out. I couldn't do it just yet.

I tried to avoid Chris the rest of the week, but the man kept popping up everywhere. He was there in the morning during my early training sessions. And there every night when I rode Darkness. I had never noticed any of the other hands as easily as I spotted Chris. Although I was attracted to the man, I couldn't risk the heartbreak when he found out about my condition.

Saturday evening, Mother caught me on my way out to the barn. "What are you doing dressed like that? Christopher will be here soon, and dinner will be served at seven. You need to get back up there and change into something more presentable."

For the second time this week, my mouth dropped open, and my mind blanked out. "You... you invited him?" I was dumbfounded that my mother would do something like this.

"Yes, I invited him. It was clear that you weren't going to do what I'd asked you to do."

This was so completely different from anything I'd ever heard from my mother before. Shocked by her admission, I struggled to speak. "Mother, he's a groom. You don't—this isn't like you. What is going on here?"

"Christopher is more than just a groom. He has a degree in equine science and is very knowledgeable in breeding and bloodlines. He's an excellent rider as well. He'll make a great addition to the stables. He's told me so many new, fresh ideas." She continued on talking about Chris, but I wasn't listening anymore. I could only stare in shock at the woman who'd raised me. When had she decided to make even more changes at the barn?

Suddenly something she said jerked me back to the present. "What?"

"I said that Christopher suggested you enter Darkness in the event over in New York. I agreed with him. You need to show the world what he can do. He won't be a valuable breeding stallion if he doesn't prove his worth."

I opened my mouth to argue, but she cut me off before I even drew in a breath. "Don't you argue with me, son. Now go change for dinner. Our guest will be arriving soon."

As I left the room, my face felt hot, and a lump grew in my throat. There was only one thing that would soothe my anxiety. Glancing around to make sure no one was spying, I opened the garden door and slipped out. After rushing down the path to the barn, I slipped into Darkness's stall.

Feeling the panic attack rising again, Darkness's presence calmed me before it got out of hand. I stayed in his stall well past dinnertime knowing that I'd find a plate of leftovers when I finally went back to the house. Overwhelmed by my feelings, I didn't know what to do. Chris was an attractive man, and he seemed to like me, but I was afraid that my condition would be too much for any potential lover.

Chris's footsteps echoed through the barn as he walked down the aisle, but I stayed hidden in the stall. "I missed you at dinner." I jerked my head up to see him looking at me over the stall door. He wasn't on the other side of the aisle like I'd expected him to be.

"Your mom is really nice, but she's not you. I was hoping we could spend some time together. She told me what happened right before dinner. I can see that it's an issue with you, but I still don't understand why you don't want to ride in front of others. You are a great rider, and Darkness deserves to be shown off."

"I-I don't want to talk about it." My muscles trembled as I spoke. I'd come here to be alone. *Why wouldn't he leave me alone?* Even as I thought that, I knew it was wrong. I didn't want him to leave me alone. I wanted far more from him than he might want to give back.

Chris's gentle voice came again. "Come walk with me, please. Tell me what I did wrong. I don't like it when you are mad at me."

Trying to find a way to make him leave, I rose and stepped outside the stall. As I locked it behind me, I said, "Chris, I don't think this is a good idea." When I turned to face him, I couldn't help notice the difference in his appearance. His red hair was combed back in a wave that made me want to reach out and run my fingers through it. Chris had on a nice black-and-white striped sweater and well-fitting dress pants. My dick plumped as my eyes traveled up and down his body. I hadn't seen him dressed up before, and now I felt bad for skipping out on dinner. He was even more eye-catching in this outfit than in his work clothes. I closed my eyes to keep from looking, but his unique scent of pine and mint found my nose. For the rest of my life, I knew I'd always think of him when I caught that scent.

"Just walk with me then. We don't have to talk if you don't want to." The pleading in Chris's voice made me open my eyes and look at him. I could see the sadness in those blue eyes.

I had difficulty resisting his plea. “Okay, but only a short walk around the path,” I agreed.

We walked out of the barn and toward the circular path when I realized that it was later and darker than I expected. With the night setting in, I would have difficulty keeping up. When I stumbled, Chris grabbed my hand to help keep me upright. “Are you okay?” he asked with concern in his voice.

No, I wasn’t okay. I’d never be okay again. Soon, I’d lose all of my sight and would never again see the beauty of my horses or the man beside me. He waited for my answer, and I knew I’d have to tell him the whole truth. I continued down the path, thinking how badly this could end. Finally, I spoke up, knowing the words I uttered would probably drive away the only person I liked enough to want to be around forever. “I’m going blind, Chris. I have a condition known as retinitis pigmentosa. It’s a rare hereditary condition where I gradually lose my sight. First my night and peripheral vision go then slowly my field of sight will constrict until it’s completely gone. By the time I’m forty, I’ll probably be completely blind. My night vision is limited, and my peripheral vision is so fuzzy that I’m already starting to have difficulty reading the arena markers. I can’t compete like you and my mother want me to.”

Chris stayed quiet while I talked. He was too far away for me to see the expressions clearly on his face. I wasn’t sure how he was taking the news so we continued walking hand in hand for a while before Chris said, “Wes, I know this is difficult for you, but being blind isn’t the end of the world. My grandma—”

“Yes, you told me about her, but she was blind from birth. She had no clue what she was missing. The beauty of a horse. The spring flowers. The faces of those she loves. Soon I won’t be able to see any of that. I’ll only have my memories.” I didn’t mean to be so bitter, but the words just came out.

Chris tried to lighten the moment when he teased, “That’s great, you won’t be able to see how ugly I get as I age.”

“I’m serious, Chris. How can I live without seeing all those things again?” I argued.

“I’ll tell you, Wes. I’ll tell you everything. Let me tell you, please?”

I pulled away and snapped, “I don’t need a nursemaid or a mother hen.” I turned and walked back down the path to the barn without Chris, occasionally stumbling as I went. The cool air of the night blew across my hand, still warm

from Chris's hold, and I shivered. I felt so cold and alone without his touch, but I wasn't ready to risk my heart. I didn't know what to do about the desire building inside of me.

I continued trying to deflect Chris's attention, but the man wouldn't leave me alone. Every morning there were fresh flowers in a vase outside Darkness's stall and love notes hidden under my saddle after evening feedings.

On Wednesday, as I was leaving the barn after the morning training sessions, a little girl about eight years old came running up to me. I didn't recognize her as one of my mother's regular students, but before I could ask her if she was lost, she started talking.

"Are you Weston? If you are, Mrs. Abbott needs you back there." She pointed in the direction of our outdoor arena as she continued, "She says to hurry up." She waved her little hand at me, and I squatted down to her level.

My heart started to pound; Mother never sent anyone for me. Something must be very wrong for her to summon me with such an urgent message. "Did something bad happen? Will I need to call 9-1-1?" I asked the little girl.

She grabbed my hand and tugged. "She just said I was to bring you. Come on." She tugged my hand again as she started to walk back around the barn toward the outdoor arena.

I stood and followed her. Realizing that her short little legs would never keep up with me, I reached down and picked her up. I carried her back to the arena where I saw my mother, Chris, and a pack of children all about the age of the girl I'd settled on my hip.

The girl squirmed in my grip, and I had to set her down before I dropped her. She ran to my mother yelling, "I found him!" I couldn't stop the smile that rose as I watched her slow down when she got closer to the ponies. Looking over the scene, I wasn't sure why my mother needed me. Chris was in the far corner picking up some items from the ground, and my mother was tying something onto the halter of her favorite mare, Jazz. The pack of kids—okay, there were only four of them—were lining up along the rail under the supervision of two more people I didn't recognize.

Mother had all five of her smallest lesson ponies tacked up, except they also had halters underneath their bridles. Still trying to figure out why my mother summoned me, I didn't notice when Chris stepped up to my side. His hand

landing on my arm startled me for a moment. I realized my peripheral vision was shrinking if I couldn't see him approach like that. The feel of his hand on my forearm calmed me, and I smiled down at him. Even though I'd tried to avoid him, I couldn't help but think how happy he made me feel.

“Hey, I'm glad you came to help us.” He smiled as he handed me a cowbell and pointed to the corner. “Stand over there, and when we tell you to, ring the bell.”

“What's going on?” I gestured to the center of the arena. “I thought it was something serious when that little girl came to get me.” All this new activity was different from our barn's previous schedule, and I was confused about what they had planned. This cowbell in my hand also didn't make any sense.

Chris moved closer to me and pointed to where my mother knelt down beside the little girl who'd summoned me. “That is Madison. She's my niece, and she's here to help us with this new program your mom and I are developing.” I shivered when his hand landed on my back as he nudged me to look over to the side where the other four kids and their chaperones stood. “Those four little ones are blind or going blind. We are going to teach them how to ride. Maddie will ride the lead pony with the bell tied to her halter. Your mom, my sister, her assistant”—he pointed to the two remaining adults—“and I will each hold the lead of one of the ponies, giving pointers to the kids.” He rubbed my back lightly and continued, “Your job is to make noise when they are moving in your direction. The bell helps the kids find the edge of the arena. You may also need to make sure they don't get stuck in the corners.”

I stayed and rang that bell for what felt like only a few minutes, but I knew it was more than an hour later before the lesson was over. The kids were having so much fun, and I could see the joy on those little faces. During that time, I'd learned that all four were in the foster system, in part because of their blindness. Children's Services had difficulty placing the children due to their disabilities. Chris's sister was their social worker, and she'd arranged for them to have regular lessons at the stable.

Chris treated all the kids as if they were royalty. I loved watching him smile, laugh, and make funny faces at his niece. Chris's actions made me want him more, but I still hesitated, knowing that this could all turn into a disaster for me.

After the ride, Chris introduced me to his sister Maureen. They looked so much alike that they could have been twins. She hugged him and kissed him on

the cheek before gathering up the children who flocked around my mother. They all waved good-bye as Chris stood at my side.

“Thanks for helping us today,” he said with a shy smile. “Those kids had a great time. I’ll have to talk to your mom, but I think we should make this a weekly event.”

My mother looked happier than I’d seen her in years with all of the kids surrounding her. If this made her happy, I knew just how to keep it going. “If you want to fill out an application, my foundation has the funds for activities like this.”

“Really!” Chris almost squealed in delight, and my heart filled with the happiness I saw in him. Before I could tell him more, he asked, “Will you continue to be one of my assistants like today?” His smile was infectious, and I couldn’t help but smile back.

Before I knew what I was saying, I blurted out, “Sure if I don’t have other work to do.”

He turned and hugged me. Not one of those side-shoulder bro hugs, but a full-body, chest-to-chest hug. I wrapped my arms around his smaller body and hugged him back. My cock stirred at the feel of him against me, and I wanted this to continue but...

I pulled back and turned away. “I-I’ll check with my assistant and find you the right paperwork.” My face was hot with the embarrassment I felt as I walked away. I still wasn’t sure what to do about my desire for him, and I didn’t have anyone to discuss the situation with. The only being who knew my deepest secrets was my horse, and he couldn’t answer back.

Despite having had a wonderful hour on Wednesday, my avoidance of Chris continued the rest of the week, but every day Chris’s persistence and his gifts made me smile. On Saturday evening, my mother caught me walking through the house with the vase of roses and asked, “Where did you get those?”

I felt the heat rise to my cheeks as I said, “Chris left them for me.”

“He’s such a sweet man,” Mother replied. “You’ve been avoiding him, but you should talk to him. One of these days, I won’t be around anymore, and you could use someone like him in your life.”

“What do you mean?” The words coming out of my mother’s mouth continued to shock me. We hadn’t discussed my sexuality since high school

when she found a magazine I'd hidden under my bed. She'd given me the safe sex talk, handed me a box of condoms, and that was it. I hid my face behind the roses as that memory surfaced.

"I just want you to be happy. I can see how he looks at you. He likes you more than you probably know. He looks at you like your father used to look at me." I heard her voice crack as she said the last bit, and I looked up to see her wipe her eyes. She continued, "I just don't want you to spend your life alone. You need someone to brighten your days."

I blamed Chris for all the changes in our life. My mother and I had both done things outside of our normal routines since his appearance. As I thought it over, I realized that the changes were all for the better. Mother had been so happy to help the kids the other day. I let go of my fears and told Chris the whole truth about my condition. He hadn't once walked away even when I had. She was right, but I needed time to figure out what to say to Chris. I hadn't wanted to fall for him, but somehow he wormed his way into my heart. I didn't tell her about the note I now kept in my bedside table.

Wes,

I know we've only recently met, but I feel I've known you forever. I don't want to be your nursemaid or a mother hen. I want to be your friend, your lover. If you will let me, I will share everything with you. Be your guide through life. Please let me show you the beauty in this world.

Chris

It was now the day before the show. I still hadn't gathered up the courage to apologize to the man, but I knew that Chris and my mother had planned the trip to the New York show without my consent. They didn't have to tell me that I'd been entered. All my mother had to do was drop the red armband and FEI Special Dispensation card on my desk.

"What is this for?" I knew the rules; I wanted to know what she was thinking.

"Just in case you need it, dear."

"Mother, I'm not that blind yet," I protested.

"You might not need them for this show, but someday you will. You might as well have them now."

I looked down again. The United States Equestrian Federation rules for vision-impaired individuals required them to wear the red armband at all times while on a horse or in areas where others were present. This safety measure let the other riders know that the individual with the armband might not see them. The dispensation card allowed me to have a caller to tell me which arena marker I was nearing. I sighed in defeat. Neither she nor Chris would back down. They would drag me into the dressage arena kicking and screaming if necessary. They had thought of everything.

I realized that since Chris had come to work at the barn, I had changed. I let him see me ride, I stayed around the barn during the lessons to help with the little kids, and now I was letting my mother enter me in shows. Something about him made me want to be different. His approval of my riding skill and his acceptance of my condition made me consider the possibility of a future I hadn't believed could happen. Chris was helping me in ways I hadn't recognized. His trick to draw me into helping with the little kids had shown me that I didn't have to give up riding after my sight failed.

I woke before dawn the morning of the show. As I watched the brilliant orange and yellow glows of the early morning sky, I had visions of Chris and his stunning hair. The beauty of the beginning of a new day was a wondrous sight to behold. Now I understood why Chris named his horse Dawn.

By the time I arrived at the barn, Chris had all of my tack trunks and grooming boxes loaded in the trailer. The horses going to the show had all been groomed, braided, and blanketed. Chris had a line of horses waiting for their leg wraps before being loaded.

“Oh good, you've arrived. Grab some bandages and start wrapping.” Chris was all businesslike as he continued wrapping Dawn's legs.

I wanted to take a moment to talk to Chris, but I could see this wasn't the right time. I grabbed another pile of leg wraps and started on Darkness's legs.

After the horses were all loaded, my mother handed Chris the keys. It hurt to know that she wouldn't allow me to drive with the horse trailer. My night vision might be bad, but I could still see during the day. Though, if I was truly honest with myself, my peripheral vision wasn't good enough anymore. I would probably have difficulty seeing all the traffic on the road.

I wondered what had come over her when she said, “Wes, you go with Chris and the horses. A couple of the students are late, and I'll need to take

them with me. We won't have room for you." She had always been right there in the truck near the horses. I'd never expected her to leave the task to Chris and me.

Chris was already in the driver's seat when I climbed into the truck. Now would be the time to get my tongue untangled and talk to the man. For a while, we drove in silence until I finally said, "Thank you for all the flowers and notes. I should have said something sooner, but I needed time. I'm sorry for my outburst."

The bright smile that Chris flashed me sent my heart soaring. I'd love to see that smile every day. Then Chris said, "Apology accepted. I can't wait to see you steal the show today. I know you can do it."

I was able to carry on a conversation as we drove. Chris was so easy to talk to, and I didn't feel self-conscious. He hadn't brought up my condition, and I was relieved to see that he wasn't treating me any differently than before I'd told him. I had been so sure that going blind would ruin my chances of finding someone who might like me just the way I was.

After we arrived at the show grounds and settled the horses in, I groomed and tacked up Darkness. There was enough time to warm him up before I'd need to change clothes for the event. The morning air was cool, so I threw on a light hooded jacket over my blue T-shirt before riding to the warm-up ring. For the first time in my life, I left my helmet behind. Chris's carefree attitude was starting to wear off on me. Since this show wasn't a USEF sanctioned event, the newly passed helmet requirement didn't apply. I knew this was likely the last time I'd ever ride without it at a competition.

I could see now why Chris didn't always ride with a helmet. My head felt lighter and the breeze ruffled my hair. The sensations were so different from anything I'd felt before. I concentrated on those feelings as we warmed up. Ignoring the growing crowd of people, I put Darkness through his paces. Darkness and I went from a working trot to the collected trot as we moved down the long side. We rounded a corner, and I cued him to an extended trot. I heard a collective gasp as Darkness and I floated diagonally across the arena in a perfectly executed half-pass movement. When I looked around, I saw Chris smiling at me from Dawn's back on the other side of the arena. My mother stood near a gossiping group of women from our barn. Hundreds of strangers gathered around watching. Based on the shocked looks, I realized they had come to see if the barn rumors were true. Finished with our warm-up, I left them behind as I guided Darkness out of the arena and back to the stable area.

I put Darkness back in his stall and walked to the competition arena to watch Chris ride Dawn in their level test. I'd need to change and get ready for my own ride as soon as they finished, but I didn't want to miss seeing the pair as they competed. Today she was working a more advanced level than they had entered Darkness in, so she wouldn't be directly competing with my stallion.

Trained to a much higher level than what he'd been entered, I expected good results from Darkness. We would soon compete at a more advanced level, but my mother and Chris had decided to record the stallion's progress by testing him out at each level. Documenting his show scores created advertising for the upcoming breeding season.

As Chris left the arena, I hurried back to the horse trailer to change my clothes. I'd finished putting on my show breeches and shirt when Chris stepped into the living quarters and locked us in. My hands were shaking so hard that I couldn't button my shirt. Chris placed a hand on my cheek and looked up at me with his beautiful blue eyes. I stared into those eyes as his hand trailed down my neck to the buttons on my shirt. He slowly buttoned it all the way down. When he reached the last button, I prayed his hands would continue lower, but he moved his hands back to my shoulders. Using my shoulders for support, he stood on his tiptoes and kissed me lightly on the cheek. I was disappointed when he said, "Finish getting ready for your ride. You'll do great. I just know it."

I couldn't keep my eyes off him when he started stripping out of his show clothing. I needed to finish dressing, but when Chris bent over to grab his jeans, I couldn't hold back the moan that escaped my lips.

Chris looked up with a smile and said, "We don't have time right now, but maybe after?" He followed it up with a wink. My cock hardened, and I could feel the heat in my face. I grabbed my jacket wishing it was long enough to hide my erection, but I had picked out a shadbelly tailcoat that ended at my waist. I couldn't leave the trailer looking like this. My tight breeches perfectly outlined my hard cock.

Chris seemed to know what I needed and finished dressing quickly. Then he said, "I'll get Darkness ready for you. We don't have time for what I really want to do to you, but I think you'll need a little time alone."

It took Chris leaving and a few minutes alone before my erection finally subsided. Nervously, I stepped out of the trailer keeping my top hat in front of my crotch. Chris's heated gaze teased me and threatened to make me hard again

as I stepped to Darkness's side. Still holding my stallion's reins, Chris reached out and straightened my tie. Slipping my hat on quickly, I mounted Darkness and rode him to the final warm-up ring. I completed a few basic movements while we waited. After a few minutes, we halted, and I sat quietly, thinking about all that had happened. I thought about how I'd told Chris my biggest secret and he still hadn't turned me away. Instead, he'd talked—well, pushed really—me into confronting my fears. Now I was about to show off my riding skills to a much larger audience. I could feel the nerves creep back in, and Darkness started to fidget beneath me. Just when I was about to turn and run back to the trailer, a warm hand landed on my thigh. I looked down to see Chris standing beside us.

“Relax, you've got this. Everything will be all right.” Chris's soothing voice calmed my frayed nerves right as the Ring Steward called me to the ring.

There was a buzz of noise as we entered the arena and halted to salute the judges. I cued Darkness for his first movement and got lost in the beauty and feel of his power beneath me. The chatter died as the crowd became enthralled by Darkness and his presence. We rode a basic test with precision and grace. The cheering erupted in the stands as I completed the final salute. The adrenaline rushed through me as the crowd continued to cheer. I knew we had scored well.

As I rode back to the stabling area, I saw Chris hurry to catch up. I brought the big horse to a halt and dismounted. He stepped up to me, and I wrapped my arms around him. Picking him up in a big bear hug, I whispered in his ear, “Thank you, Chris.”

He took the reins from my hands and said, “Go change. I'll have someone look after Darkness.” Then he led my stallion off to the wash rack.

I hung up my coat and took off my tie. My hands were on the top button of my shirt when he entered the trailer. I turned to face him in the doorway. He shut the door, stepped in front of me, and unbuttoned my shirt. This time when he reached the bottom, his hands didn't return to my shoulders. They dipped lower as he unbuckled my belt.

I was panting as his hand continued to work, unbuttoning and then unzipping my breeches. I felt his hand on my cock—

I heard the quick knock before the trailer door opened and my mother's face peered in. She looked at me hidden behind Chris's body. Trying to hide my

embarrassment, I buried my face in his hair. I could feel Chris's hot breath against my chest as he moved closer to me. I wrapped my arms around his back to protect him from my mother's wrath. Instead, she looked us both up and down before saying, "I told you to make sure and lock the door when you are changing." Then with a wink, she reached over and flipped the lock before shutting the door behind her. I heard her say, "The boys are still changing. Let's go see if the Jacksons will let us use their trailer."

I wanted to keep my nose buried in Chris's hair. His unique scent was strong there, and it excited me. Chris's body started to shake, and for a minute I thought something was wrong until I realized he was holding back laughter. His hand, still wrapped around my cock, began to pull away. I covered his hand with mine and said, "No, please don't stop."

Laughter outside the trailer stopped us both, and Chris groaned. "Wes, I'd love it if we didn't have to stop, but—"

I cut him off. "Please, Chris." My voice cracked as I squeezed his hand still wrapped around my cock.

He kissed my chest, then looked up at me with a smile before slowly stepping back. My hands dropped to my sides as he slid out of my grasp. I felt so empty and alone at that moment as my mind filled with thoughts of rejection. Then he reached over and grabbed my wrist. He unbuttoned my shirt cuff, before reaching for my other hand. He looked past me as he unbuttoned the second cuff as if he was searching for something. Then he reached up to my shoulders and pushed my shirt off. My heart leapt as I realized he wasn't rejecting me at all.

He stepped close again, and I shivered as his hands slid around my sides to my ass. He pushed down on the waistband of my breeches, and they slid down over my butt. Then he guided me backwards until I felt the coolness of the small table against the back of my thighs.

"Sit," he whispered as he gently pushed me onto the table.

I sat and looked down at myself, embarrassed at what I saw. My breeches down around my thighs, my boots still on, and my cock hard as steel outlined against the fabric of my briefs.

The gentle touch of Chris's hand across my flaming cheek made me look at him. He leaned in and kissed me softly before kneeling. He pulled off my show boots then slid my breeches the rest of the way down my legs.

After setting my boots and pants aside, he stepped between my parted legs and kissed me again. I wrapped my arms around his shoulders and pulled him close to me.

“This is for you,” he whispered in my ear as his hand landed in the center of my chest. He applied a little pressure, and I lay back, the surface cool against my heated skin. His other hand trailed down my chest and abdomen until it reached my cock straining against the confines of my briefs. I felt his hot breath on my belly as he rained soft kisses over my abs. It felt like he took hours to release my cock from the cotton.

When he finally pulled my briefs down, pre-cum leaked from my slit and smeared across my belly. He licked a line from the base of my cock up over the head. I jolted and nearly fell off the table when he sucked my cock deep into his mouth. With his free hand, he reached out and stroked my chest to steady me.

I panted and squirmed as he continued to suck and lick my aching cock. Lifting my head, I looked down at him to see him looking back at me. I wanted to say something, but I was lost for words. Instead, I reached a hand out and caressed his cheek. I didn't feel in control of my body anymore. My hand wandered up to bury itself in his fiery red hair. My head dropped back to the table, and I moaned as he continued stroking and sucking my cock. It didn't take long before I cried out and released into his mouth. He tried to swallow, but some of my cum dribbled out of his mouth and down his chin.

Despite feeling boneless and drained, I wanted to hold him and kiss him. Struggling to sit up, I flopped around for a moment before he grabbed my arm and pulled me upright. I wrapped my arms around him and urged him closer. I couldn't stop myself from licking at the drizzle of cum down his chin. I kissed him, my tongue demanding entrance to his mouth. When he opened for me, I tasted myself and him.

Gradually he pulled back and helped me to my feet. “We need to get you dressed and ready to go home. I think we need to talk later, but I want you to know this isn't just a one-off for me. I want to be with you for much longer than a one-night stand.” He looked up at me with those shimmering blue eyes and right then I knew he would stay with me. Here at the dawn of my darkness, I'd found my guiding light.

The End

Author Bio

A cartographer by day, A.L. Boyd spends most of her free time with her horses, gardening, or reading. She never intended to be a writer, but stories like this one sometimes just pop into her head. The writing came about as a way to get the stories out. Her first story for the Goodreads M/M Romance DRitC event was Crest Ridge Vacation. An expansion novella titled Crest Ridge is scheduled for publication this summer.

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