



TONIGHT

KAREN STIVALI

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Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

TONIGHT

By Karen Stivali

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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Photo Description

Two sexy, shirtless, dark-haired young men are making out on a couch. The muscular, tattooed man on top is holding the other guy's wrists above his head with one strong hand as they kiss.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

See the hot jock sitting on top of me? He's my older brother's team mate and I've lusted after him—and loved him—since forever. I never thought I'd have a chance though. That dumbass brother of mine always said he was straight. But look at the way he's giving the phrase "He takes my breath away" a whole new meaning! My brother must be wrong. Please, dear author, let him be wrong and make my dream come true.

Thanks!

Sincerely,

Liza

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

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Chapter One

“He’s not gay, you know.”

If I had a dollar for every time my older brother Derek reminded me that his best friend, Wiley, wasn’t gay, I’d be able to afford my own place instead of sharing an apartment with the two of them. The first time Derek had said it, I thought I was going to die. I was sixteen, and we were sitting in the kitchen of our old house, eating leftover lasagna out of the pan. Wiley had just left after being at our house all day. We’d watched a Rocky movie marathon and followed that up with a Ping-Pong challenge. It was the first time I’d gotten to hang out with Wiley for more than a few hours, and I was near delirious with the rush.

“I mean it, Davey. He’s not. I’m not trying to be mean or anything, I just don’t want you getting your hopes up.”

I could still feel the bite of lasagna stuck in my throat as my cheeks tingled. Forcing myself to swallow, I choked down the mouthful and shrugged. “I’m not.”

“Good.”

That was five years ago, and I still can’t eat lasagna without hearing those words. *He’s not gay*. Not that I need lasagna to remind me. For a few years, pretty much any time we’d all hang out, Derek would bring it up as soon as we were alone. Once I’d hit college and started dating, he stopped mentioning it.

Until a few weeks ago, when Wiley moved into our apartment.

Derek and I had offered up our couch as soon as Wiley mentioned that he’d be needing a place to stay.

“Are you sure?” Wiley asked.

Derek answered before I could. “Of course we’re sure. Shit, you’re here eating our food half the time anyway.”

That was about as close as Derek could come to expressing compassion.

Wiley ignored him and turned to me. “What about you? You sure it’s okay? I know you’ve got a lot going on with finals.”

That was true. I had exams and an art portfolio that needed finishing so I could complete my grant application for my junior year. Wiley would be a huge

distraction, plus I always did my sketches and painting in the living room, which is where we kept the couch we'd just offered him. But hell, I'd never say "no" to anything where Wiley was concerned. Besides, I wasn't about to let him sleep in his car just because his roommate was being a dick, and his new place wasn't available yet. "Consider the couch yours. I'll move my drafting table over by the window so you have a place for your stuff."

Wiley's smile warmed me in ways I knew he didn't intend. Anything that drew my attention to his mouth set my brain on paths I'd been trying to keep it from taking for years—dark lips, smooth, the lower one so plump and tempting, I wanted to lick it, bite it, rub various parts of my body across it.

As usual Derek kept his thoughts to himself until Wiley left to go get his stuff. I counted in my head, wondering how many seconds it would take for him to mention it. *One one thousand, two one thousand, three—*

"He's not gay, you know."

This time I laughed. Under three seconds. That may have been a new record. "He's not?" I gasped and clutched my chest, falling backward onto the couch—the couch where Wiley would soon be sleeping every night. *Does he sleep nude?*

Derek whacked me on the head with a pillow. "I mean it, dork."

"I know you do. Don't worry. I'm more than well aware." *Not that that stops the fantasies. Speaking of which, do you happen to know if he sleeps nude?*

"Good. Because I'm pretty sure the last thing he needs is more drama right now. Not after the crap his roommate pulled."

"What crap?" All he'd said was that the guy's girlfriend had moved in, and living there had become intolerable. "Were they having sex on the kitchen table or something?"

Derek shook his head. "Dunno. He won't talk about it. All he said was they'd fought, and I didn't get the impression it was a minor disagreement."

That was odd. As far as I knew Wiley told Derek pretty much everything—they'd been best friends for years. Plus Wiley wasn't the arguing type. "Must have been pretty bad for him to want to move out a month early."

"He'll probably give us the details once he's less pissed off."

"Yeah, probably."

Only that was three weeks ago, and neither Derek nor I had a clue what had really gone down between Ben and Wiley.

I was curious, but honestly? I was mostly just happy Wi had moved in. Distraction or not, I liked being around him. When he and Derek graduated last year, I worried I wouldn't see Wiley as much anymore. That turned out not to be the case at all. If anything, the opposite was true. Derek's girlfriend, Lily, was spending the year studying abroad, which left him more time for Wiley than he'd had in years.

Even though they were both full time grad students, they both worked part-time. Derek was an assistant at an architectural firm while he completed his master's and Wiley was at an investment company that had promised to pay back his MBA loans as long as he agreed to work for them after he graduated. Neither of them raked in big bucks, but they had more cash than me, plus neither of them could cook to save their lives, so they'd been buying groceries while I made our meals. Cooking has always calmed me down, so I'd wound up making breakfast and dinner every single day, including nights that I had dates.

A lot of my friends bitched about not being able to get a date. Dating was never my problem. I dated. A lot. It just never turned into a relationship. And not because I wasn't a relationship kinda guy. There was nothing I wanted more than a steady boyfriend. The problem was that I was in love. Well, actually the problem was that I was in love with Wiley. The bigger problem was that every night he was sprawled right there on the couch, all six foot two inches of him. And knowing he was going to be there made me not want to go home with my dates. It made me want to come back to my place because I knew he'd be there.

Hot guy. Right in my own apartment. Sexy tattoo etched across his crazy-broad shoulders—a tattoo I'd managed to memorize every detail of just from stolen moments spent staring at the lettering whenever he was shirtless. Doesn't sound like much of a problem, right? Except for the fact that he was my older brother's best friend. Or that he'd known me for five years, since I was a sixteen-year-old dork. Or that he thought of me as a kid brother. Or that, as Derek liked to remind me, he's straight.

Yeah. Like I said. Problem.

Wiley rolled over on the couch, and I tried to focus on cracking eggs and tossing the shells into the trash so I wouldn't be tempted to stare. That never worked. Every morning, without fail, the blanket inched down when he shifted. Now, in addition to the fucking happiest trail in the world, I could see that today he was sleeping in his black boxer briefs.

He owned multiple colors. Navy, deep green, heather and dark gray, and black. Not that I'd memorized his underwear collection... except I had. Every single pair, including the blue- and white-striped regular boxers he only wore when he'd forgotten to do laundry. When it came to the boxer briefs, black was definitely my favorite. I don't know if it was the fabric or the fact that they accentuated the dark hair that disappeared down into them or what, but it was damn near impossible for me to look away when he was wearing them.

I surveyed for morning wood, but the blanket was still bunched enough that I couldn't tell. On him. On me it was a different story. My cock plumped any time Wiley was around. I'd taken to wearing compression shorts in the morning so I didn't embarrass the shit out of myself while I was cooking breakfast.

Scrambling eggs wasn't the quietest activity no matter how hard I tried. I managed to put the frying pan on the stove with a minimal amount of banging, but the flames whooshed up around the bottom and the butter sizzled and spit a bit as it coated the pan. At least focusing on making breakfast got my mind off Wiley for a few seconds. Plus I'd be lying if I didn't admit that I liked cooking for him.

I knew I sounded like a goddamned fifties housewife sometimes, but I couldn't help it. I cooked well, and he liked to eat. I especially liked the happy noises Wiley made when I cooked something he found particularly pleasing. Moments like that—sounds like that—got filed away in the part of my brain that fueled all my fantasies. And since most of those fantasies—okay, all of them—starred Wiley, this was a pretty fucking convenient set of sounds to have stashed away for those special times I shared with my fist.

Pouring the eggs into the pan made an even louder sizzle, and this time Wiley stirred. I pretended to study the eggs, but in reality, I could scramble eggs with my eyes closed. Every peek I risked revealed another treasure. The muscles in his arms flexed and bulged as he stretched. Over the head, then sitting up, and behind the back. Same routine every morning. Same effect on my pulse rate every morning too.

I pulled the eggs away from the edge of the pan, careful to keep them from browning. He didn't like it when the eggs browned. Not that he complained. He and Derek were both downright grateful whenever there was food around. But I still took extra care to keep the eggs yellow and fluffy, just like I made sure the coffee was extra strong, and that there was always that weird, flavored coffee creamer he liked in the fridge. I knew what he liked, and I wanted to make him

happy. It made me happy. It might sound lame, but it was the truth. I knew it didn't make us a couple, but it was as close as I could get, so I was happy to take it.

Wiley scrubbed his hands through his thick black hair, making it stand up in the sexiest way imaginable. "Morning."

His voice was always more growl than words until he'd had coffee.

"Hey. Breakfast will be ready in about ten minutes."

The sleepy smile he threw me made my heart twist. Jesus what I wouldn't give to have him smile at me like that after a morning fuck instead of a discussion about breakfast. But again, I was willing to take what I could get.

He stood, and my legs went weak. Thighs thick and perfect, God-like calves. I couldn't even look at his abs without thinking about running my tongue along them.

"I'm gonna grab a quick shower."

"Sure. Derek's still asleep as far as I know."

Wiley headed for the bathroom, and I busied myself staring as the door closed behind him. I hadn't even heard Derek come out of his room. He whispered in my ear and I jumped. "He's straight."

"So you've mentioned."

"I just don't want to see you hurt. You know that."

I did. Derek was the best older brother I could ask for. He'd been a jock since he first started walking, but there hadn't been one day of our lives where he hadn't been looking out for his dorky, artsy little brother—aka, me. I'd never even been able to sustain the illusion of being straight, so by the time I was a freshman in high school everyone knew. That was fine with me. I wasn't ashamed and had nothing to hide. But I was also the only out kid in our school.

Derek was co-captain of the rugby team and three years ahead of me. Another guy in his position might have tried to distance himself from his gay, freshman sibling—not Derek. He made sure everyone knew I was his brother, and if anyone bothered me, they'd have to deal not only with him but with the whole team. He commanded so much respect on that team; he knew it would carry on after he graduated. And sure enough, it did.

That rugby team saved me from being stuffed into lockers or shoved into the girl's locker room. I felt safe knowing they were looking out for me,

especially since the football team wasn't quite as open-minded. But my favorite thing about the rugby team? It brought Wiley into our lives.

Wiley transferred to our high school his senior year. His mom—a single parent—had gotten a new job where she worked super-long hours, so our family practically adopted him. I didn't mind one bit. From the first time I laid eyes on him, I was smitten.

Funny enough, the first time I met him was over breakfast. Derek had told him to come over, and I'd scrambled eggs while my mom made two packages of bacon, and we'd all sat at the breakfast table getting to know Wiley. I mostly tried not to stare, and the second Wiley excused himself to go use the bathroom, Derek shook his head at me.

He didn't say a word, but I knew what he meant. It stung, partly because I hadn't realized it was so obvious I was swooning over Wiley and partly because crushing on someone straight seemed hopeless. Depressing. One more person who was out of reach.

Wiley had a way of making it not depressing. He wasn't just fun to look at, he was hilarious. Whenever he was at our house, which was most meal times, he'd do goofy shit like juggle dinner rolls or separate the eggs by hiding them around the kitchen—just to make me and my mom laugh. And we'd laugh so hard we'd be in tears. I think he thought if he made us happy that kind of evened the score for all the meals we fed him. It was a shitload of meals.

Derek and Wiley were both trying for athletic scholarships, and they worked out constantly, which paid off with lots of tuition dollars for both of them. But in the meantime they ate enough for ten average people. That's how I learned to cook so well. I even considered going to culinary school, but art called to me louder. It may or may not have helped that the best art program in the area was at the university Derek and Wiley attended.

Three years later, my scholarship came from winning a national art competition. And who was right there cheering when I got presented with my award? Derek and Wi.

That's why I fell in love with him. Not just because he was so fucking hot I couldn't even look at him without getting turned on, but because I could imagine what it would be like to have him in my life as... more. I could imagine that it would make me happier than I'd ever been. Of course in all these dream scenarios he was blissfully happy too... and he was also gay. Which apparently he wasn't anywhere outside my very elaborate fantasies.

I scraped the soft-set eggs into a buttered casserole dish, layered on broccoli, diced ham, and shredded Monterey Jack cheese, then stuck it in the oven and went to work slicing bread for toast. If left on their own, Wiley and Derek would've eaten nothing but protein shakes. I tried to tempt them into a more balanced diet by making toast out of the honey oat bread from the shop on the corner and sticking as many veggies as possible into whatever I made. I was sure my mom would've been proud. I was more like her than I'd care to admit most days. I was also more of a morning carb eater. I preferred to slather my toast with peanut butter and honey or sliced strawberries and have a fruit smoothie along with it.

I dumped handfuls of frozen strawberries, two frozen bananas, cocoa powder, and Greek yogurt into our Ninja and gave it a whirl. I poured mine first then dumped in the protein powder they were both addicted to and whirled it again. I handed Derek a glassful, and he chugged down half without stopping.

The bathroom door opened, and Wiley strode out wearing a towel and a smile, followed by puffs of steam. He bent over and rummaged through his bags, affording me an even better view as he grabbed jeans and a shirt and strolled back into the bathroom. Did I mention how fucktastic his body was? Somehow a towel made it even hotter, probably because it made me imagine what he'd look like without it.

Normally I liked to shower right after him. Something about sharing the same steamy air made it that much hotter when I beat off under the warm spray of water, thinking about how much hotter it would be if he was still in there along with me. Today even that wasn't in the cards. Derek had dibs on the shower next. Grad students were on different schedules than undergrads since they had longer seminars. Their classes were way earlier than mine.

That worked out great for me because my junior project was due soon, and my plan for the day was catching up on the sketches I still needed for my portfolio. I had a model set to come over for three hours, and I hoped that would help me knock out at least half the remaining poses.

I'd gotten a little behind schedule the past few weeks, since Wiley had moved in. It's one thing to hang out with the object of your affection. It's another thing entirely to have him crashing on your couch every night in all his half-naked, tattooed perfection. Chatting with him was also way more fun than getting work done. It didn't help matters that my last two models had blown off their appointments.

This one had to show up, or I'd be in serious trouble. I had to get my drawings done by the deadline, or I'd be blowing a huge opportunity to get grant money and maybe even a show at the prestigious Dormand Gallery.

Wiley wandered into the kitchen, hair still wet and slicked back, wearing low-slung jeans that made it hard for me to form a thought. He pulled a T-shirt over his head, and finally my brain started functioning again.

"Smells great." He grabbed the coffee pot and poured two mugs, one for him and one for me. He dumped cream and two sugars in mine then got the weird caramel-flavored shit out of the fridge for himself. There was something about him knowing how I take my coffee that made this seem like a couples moment. But I knew it wasn't. Roommates. Friends. Nothing more. Nothing less either.

I scooped eggs onto his plate and put the rest on top of the stove, tented in foil to stay warm for Derek. Wiley dug into his eggs. "If you ever change your mind about art school, you should be a chef."

"They're just eggs."

"It's not just the eggs. It's everything you make. I know your mom taught you well, but you've been a better cook than her for years."

"Don't let her hear you say that. She still makes a better cheesecake than I do, and she might stop making them."

"Fine. I don't want to endanger the cheesecake. But still, you're seriously awesome."

"Who's awesome?" Derek asked.

Now he was the one with wet hair that was still dripping. Not sexy, just messy, leaving puddles on the floor that I'd just stepped into in my socks.

"Can you learn to dry off when you get out of the shower?"

"Sorry, I usually let the girl take care of that."

"Lovely."

"I return the favor. Tit for *tat*, so to speak."

"Well I can't wait for Lily's semester abroad to end, so her tits can keep you from dripping all over the floor."

Wiley snickered.

"Sorry, Mom," Derek said.

My cheeks heated. I knew he was teasing but being called “mom” in front of Wiley still embarrassed me. I wanted to be seen as... me... only better. I’m not as geeky as I once was. I run now. And bike around the city a lot. I’m toned and muscled, just not bulked like they are. Again. That would matter, a lot, if Wiley were gay. But...

“You guys will be out of the apartment this afternoon, right?” *Please say yes.*

“Why? You got a hot date coming over?” Derek shoveled eggs into his mouth so fast I don’t know how he didn’t choke.

Wiley stayed quiet, drinking his coffee, but he seemed to be waiting for an answer too. “No hot date,” I said. “Not this afternoon at least. Just a model so I can finish this project.”

“Nude model?” Derek’s eyebrows popped up.

“No.”

“Then yeah, I’ll stay away.”

I smacked him with a kitchen towel, and Wiley laughed. God, I love the sound of his laugh. So deep and rich it echoes through the room. I could listen to that sound forever.

“Thanks for breakfast, Davey.” Derek ruffled my hair.

David. I wanted to say it, but I knew that to Derek I’d forever and always be Davey.

“You’re the best, dude.” Wiley smiled as he put his dish in the sink.

When they were finally gone, I looked at the clock. I had an hour and a half to clean the kitchen, take a shower, and set up for the art session.

Chapter Two

I'd texted the model the night before to confirm our appointment, but now it was two hours past his arrival time, and he was nowhere to be seen. I paced around the apartment, compulsively checking for new texts. Nothing. No messages. No apartment buzzer ringing. Instead I heard the distinctive sound of Wiley bounding up the stairs of our building.

The apartment door swung open, and Wiley tossed the mail onto the table in the front hall. He looked startled when he saw me.

"Sorry." He glanced around. "You still with your model? I thought you'd be done by now. I can come back."

"Don't bother." I tossed my sketch pad onto my desk. "I don't suppose you saw some well-built dude roaming around our building looking lost, did you?"

"Nope. Why? You expecting a date?"

"I'm expecting to fail this fucking class because I can't get any of the damned models to keep their promises."

Wiley sat down backward on a kitchen chair. "Are you kidding me? You had another no-show?"

I nodded.

"Shit. What's wrong with people?"

"I have no clue. It's not like they don't get paid. If they bother to show up."

Wiley shook his head. "Sorry. That sucks. What do you need the models to do, anyway? Is it complicated?"

"Not at all. Just life poses. They strike them, I sketch them."

"Does sex matter?"

That got my attention. "What?"

"You need guys, right? Or do you need more female models?"

"Guys are fine. It's all about form and movement. Here." I opened my portfolio and showed him the drawings from the two sessions I'd managed to have. One was a girl from the dance department who'd done a stretching routine for me, giving me twenty unique poses. Another was a guy from the

gymnastics team who yielded a whopping twenty-five. The others had all blown me off. And not in the fun way.

“What about me?” Wiley asked.

I glanced at him, expecting to find him laughing, but he looked serious. “You want to pose for me?”

“It doesn’t look too complicated. And your work’s great. It’d be a shame for you not to finish because a few losers bailed on you.”

This wasn’t computing. He really wanted to do this? More importantly, could I do this? Could I stare at him and still remember how to use a pencil? Would the sketches come out so sexual it would be obvious to anyone with eyesight that I had the hots for my subject?

Who cares? my cock screamed on its direct line to my brain. *We’ll get to stare at him. Do it. Do. It.*

“I mean if I’m not the right material...” Wiley paused as he yanked off his shirt and tossed it onto a chair. He stood up straight, hands on his hips. I could see every ridge of every muscle in his abs. My tongue wanted to count them to make sure they were all present and accounted for.

“You’re umm...”

“Sketch-worthy?” The hint of teasing in his voice nearly killed me.

“Sure.”

“Where do you want me?”

Oh Jesus. On the floor... in the tub... on my bed... on me... “How about by the window? There’s good light over there.”

He turned and took a few steps closer to the big bay window. The muscles of his back were just as fun to look at. I swallowed hard, willing myself to chill the fuck out.

“You want me facing you or facing the window?”

I want you. Shit. “Why don’t we start with you looking outside, like you’re waiting for someone.”

He put one arm up and leaned against the window frame, affording a side view of his beautifully sculpted torso. “How’s this?”

“Perfect. Hold it.”

My hands shook a little as I reached for a pencil. Perfect wasn't a figure of speech in this case. He was perfect. Every inch of him. Or at least every inch I could see. I shifted, trying to keep myself focused as I started to draw.

I attempted to keep track of time, asking him to change position every five minutes or so. I didn't want him cramping up. My pencil flew over the pages of my sketchbook. At some point I switched to charcoal, sketching rapidly, concentrating on the contours of his body. Shadows, light, ripples, bulges... I was so caught up in what I was doing it startled me when he spoke.

"I'm no artist or anything, but don't you have to look at me at some point?"

Heat spread from my neck through my cheeks. *Fuck*. I glanced at him, then back at my notebook.

With each position change, he'd moved slightly closer to me. I was afraid if I looked at him for more than a second, he'd see all the non-artist thoughts that were swirling in my brain. Not professional. Not friendly. Most of them pornographic. Some illegal in a few states.

I could feel him staring at me.

"Almost done." I cleared my throat, thinking maybe a dry throat could be the reason my voice sounded so rumbly. "Okay, you can move."

He stretched, cracking his back and making me want to offer him a massage. Before I could switch to a clean sheet of paper, he strode toward me. Eyes glued to the drawings scattered across my drafting table.

He leaned across me, shifting the papers carefully so he could see all of them. Now I really couldn't look at him. Not at this close range, not when he'd just seen the drawings. Not when I was such a mix of embarrassed and turned on that I could barely breathe.

"You're fucking amazing, you know that, right?"

The sincerity in his voice made my chest ache. Then he touched my shoulder. Just a light touch, but I felt it in every cell of my body. I tried not to, but I couldn't help it. A shudder rippled through me. I flinched, expecting him to withdraw his hand, but instead he tightened his grip.

My heart beat unevenly, and I stole a glance upward. The muscles of his beautiful jaw tensed and flexed as he continued to study the drawings. I couldn't take my eyes off him. Gazing up from that angle made him look godly, like he'd been sculpted of stone. The word "perfect" echoed in my mind again, so loudly I wondered if I'd said it out loud.

He closed his eyes then turned to me. I tensed, not knowing what he was about to say and acutely aware that his hand was still clutching my shoulder. His breath was warm and sweet with a hint of mint. "I can't draw, but I know exactly what you look like too."

"Oh yeah? What color are my eyes?"

"They're green. Most of the time. But they get really dark, almost black, if you're concentrating on something, or you're pissed off."

My heart skipped a beat. "They do?"

"Yeah. And your hair's dark brown, but if you spend time in the sun it gets these reddish streaks in it and you get freckles, but only across the top of your nose."

My cheeks heated. *Did everyone notice stuff like that?* It felt... intimate.

He kept talking. "You used to be really thin, but now you're toned, cut. You'd probably have been a good swimmer if you'd wanted to. You're built like one."

He thinks I'm toned?

"You've got really long fingers. And if you've been painting a lot, sometimes the tips of your fingers get stained."

Listening to him sucked all the air out of my lungs.

His eyes were still closed. "You've got an appendix scar by your hip and a scar on your thigh from the time those assholes ran you off the road on your bike. And you've got a birthmark shaped like an ice cream cone." He opened his eyes and stared straight into mine. "Right there on your neck."

I remained frozen as he ran his thumb along the hollow of my collarbone, right over the birthmark.

He's touching me. "You'd make a great eyewitness. You could tell a sketch artist everything."

His head shook from side to side. "I don't notice this much shit about most people."

Swallowing was next to impossible, but I did it anyway. "So how do you—"

"Because I spend way more time than I probably should looking at you."

"Why?" His fingers continued to lightly graze my neck, and it was all I could do not to pass out.

“I like looking at you. And wondering if you look at me the same way.”

Like a brother? Like a friend? Like a...

Stunned, I held still, thinking any moment he'd back away. But he didn't. He inched closer, hand still on my neck, and pulled me toward him.

I'd fantasized about kissing Wiley for five years. Good fantasies. Elaborate ones that ended up with us in bed, in the shower, in a pool. None of that prepared me for what it would feel like the moment those lips—those absolutely flawless fucking lips—landed on mine.

The kiss itself was a thing of beauty. Our lips locked into place. I'd heard people talk about fitting together like two pieces of a puzzle or being drawn together like magnets. This was what they were talking about.

That's it. I figured. That's got to be it. One kiss. One ultimate, incomparable kiss that I can remember for the rest of my life. He got caught up in the moment and kissed me—nothing more.

Except then he licked his way between my lips to find my tongue, and the two twirled and tangled, exploring so deep I had to rise on to my toes just to keep up. Hell, I'd have done anything to keep that kiss going, because for those few beautiful seconds of tongue and lust and heavy breaths, I could pretend that this was what he wanted. That I was what he wanted. When we stopped kissing there'd be awkward silence and some mention about how he didn't mean for it to happen. And maybe make a joke... I knew that was all I could be where he was concerned. A lapse of judgment. I pulled back for air, dreading the expression I'd see on his face.

Only I didn't see what I expected.

Wiley's pupils were huge and dark, lips slightly parted. I knew that look. I'd seen it before, just never on the one man I wanted to see it from—him. Yet there it was. Plain as day. Eyelids at half-mast, dark lashes casting shadows on his flushed, sculpted cheeks, breaths coming fast and shallow. He wanted. He wanted so bad I could see it, feel it.

Then it hit me. *He wants me.*

Holy shit. Can that be right? After all these years, he wants me? Before I could complete the thought, he reached for me again, tugged off my shirt, and pulled me into an embrace so hot all my thoughts evaporated. Skin to skin, it felt as if we might melt altogether. I'd never felt so much heat.

One hand gripped my neck while the other grabbed my waist, turning me and walking us backward to the couch. The couch he'd slept on for weeks. The couch I'd dreamt about coming out to every night to see if he was still awake. The couch where I was now flat on my back as he climbed on top of me.

The weight of him pressing down on me felt better than anything I could have imagined. He moved his hips, showing me exactly how turned on he was. Our cocks rubbed side by side, separated by denim and doubt. The more he kissed me, the more doubt went out the window. I reached to stroke his back, but he caught my hands in his and pinned them above my head. I ached to touch him, but being held down while he kissed and ground against me made me feel wanted in a way I never had before.

We moved together, humping until I thought I might come. I was so close my legs were shaking. Then the door downstairs slammed and footsteps thundered up the stairs.

Fuck. Derek.

Wiley climbed off me and tossed me my shirt. I had it back on seconds before Derek burst into the apartment. He tossed his keys next to the pile of mail then noticed me staring at him.

His squinted back at me. "What's up?"

I cleared my throat, praying my voice would sound normal. "Nothing. I had another no-show so Wi volunteered to pose for me."

Derek's eyebrows popped high. "Oh yeah? That's cool. If you still need bodies, say the word, and I'll ask some of the other guys from the rugby team. Some of them owe me a few favors."

That was Derek. Always looking out for me. I wondered what he'd be saying if he'd barged in thirty seconds earlier and seen Wiley sprawled on top of me on the couch.

"I think I'm good. Thanks though."

I tried to subtly get Wiley's attention, but it wasn't working.

Derek grabbed a box of Chex from the kitchen counter and crunched on a handful. "Wi, man, you ready to go?"

Go? Where are they going?

"Shit, I forgot," Wiley said. "Give me two seconds." He rooted around in one of the suitcases he'd been living out of then disappeared into the bathroom.

“What are you guys up to?” I hoped that sounded as casual as I was trying to make it sound.

“Bar Nine. Big get-together with the team. Drinking to forget last week’s bust of a game. You wanna come?”

I wanted to come, but not the way he meant. My cock and I needed some serious alone time to make up for what had just happened. Or what had almost happened.

Jesus fuck. What the hell *had* happened?

Part of me wondered if I’d just imagined the entire thing.

Wiley came out of the bathroom dressed in super-dark jeans and a black T-shirt. He looked even more model-quality delicious than he had when I’d been drawing him. I almost asked to do another quick sketch just for the excuse to stare at him.

Derek didn’t bother changing, but he always looked good. The two of them together were deadly at any bar. It bummed me out to think about how many women would probably be flirting with them tonight. *Wiley’s straight*, I reminded myself. *Or maybe bi? Or maybe he’s just curious. Whatever. It was a one-time thing, and I need to deal, and that’s all there is to it.*

My stomach churned at the thought. I could still feel his lips on mine. I could still taste him.

I busied myself at my desk, stacking the drawings, putting pencils back in the holder.

Derek opened the fridge and grabbed a Powerade. He chugged half of it. “You ready yet? I told the guys we’d get there first and snag a table.”

“Just getting my phone.” Wiley came up behind me, closer than he’d normally stand. His thigh grazed mine, and his hair tickled my cheek as he leaned in toward my ear. Warm breath caressed my skin as he whispered, “Tonight.”

He plucked his phone from the bookcase next to my desk, shoved it into his pocket, and headed for the door.

Chapter Three

Tonight. It was just one word, but it set off a thousand different fantasies. I knew what I was thinking, but what did he mean? What tonight? More kissing? In my room? More than that? Or, my stomach twisted, maybe he wanted to apologize. To take it back and say we should pretend it never happened. My skin flushed hot then cold. Who knows what he meant or if he'd even show. He could wind up going home with some random girl from Bar Nine. Everyone knew that was the bar you went to if you wanted to hook up with a rugby player, which plenty of women did.

Oh God.

In a matter of hours I'd gone from lovelorn, to basking in a moment of perfection, to being worried I was about to get dumped. How the fuck had all that happened? All I'd planned on doing today was drawing.

"See ya, Davey." Derek twirled his keys on his finger.

"See you later, David." Wiley held my gaze until I nodded, and then, God help me, he winked. He fucking winked like we had a code or a secret, only I didn't know what either one was. *Does Wiley like me? Does tonight mean we'll continue where we left off?*

The door slammed behind them, and I listened as they trotted down the stairs and out the front door. Their laughter filtered through the window until I heard the slam of Derek's car doors and the rumble of his engine as they drove away.

Flushing morphed into hot and cold sweats. *I need a shower to clear my head and my dick. Get us both on track with nice clean thoughts. Yeah, right.*

I made it into the bathroom on autopilot. Shower on. Clothes off. Within ten seconds of getting under the rhythmic shower spray, my hand wrapped around my cock. I'd been at half-mast for the better part of the last several hours. My dick practically sighed with relief, plumping to fill my fist and thrusting back and forth against my wet palm. It didn't take much. I'd needed to come since we'd been making out on the couch. *Fucking hell. I made out with Wiley.* Just remembering the taste of his lips was enough to get a stream of precum out of me.

Thinking about that tongue in my mouth, our crotches lined against each other, rubbing. Oh God, the rubbing, the weight of him on top of me. I stroked

faster, swiveling around the head, wondering if his tongue would circle my cock like that—hard and wet with just the right pressure to make me crazy. The thought of my dick in his mouth did me in. I came hard and fast all over the shower wall.

I let the calm seep through me. The warm water soothed away the remaining tension as I shampooed and rinsed. Then I grabbed the soap, and the more I lathered, the more my mind wandered back to that word. *Tonight*. I scrubbed harder. Exactly how clean would I need to be? My brain had recovered from the last orgasm and was actively planning the possible ways to achieve the next one.

Stop. Just stop. He's not gay.

The words made me drop the soap. Derek's brainwashing now had me repeating his mantra. *Jesus Christ*.

I gave myself a vigorous rinsing, making sure all the soap was off and that the wall was clean. Even toweling my hair so hard I got a little dizzy didn't shake the nervousness from my brain. Billows of steam followed me into the living room. I glanced at the clock by the couch. Seven o'clock. All I could think of was that Wiley would be out with Derek for at least a few more hours. That seemed like a supremely long time to try to hold my sanity together.

The sketches on my desk weren't helping. Every time I looked at them, all I could see were Wiley's eyes when we broke from the kiss—that crazy, hot kiss that wouldn't stop playing over and over in my mind—to go to the couch.

I'd been waiting five years to see that look in his eyes. Lust, passion, need, desire. Five years. Wiley was it. The be-all, end-all of my crushes. Through all that time, it didn't even occur to me that someday the fantasy might come true. The way he'd look at me mirrored all the things I felt every fucking time I looked at him. Eyes heated with lust. Face, so serious, but so seductive, as if the dirty thoughts in his head were the most important thoughts in the universe.

To me they were. He could do any filthy thing he wanted to me—I just wanted to be with him. For five years I'd wondered how his groans would sound, how his skin would smell close-up, if his eyes stayed closed or open during an orgasm. *Does he grunt, moan, curse, or come in total silence? How far does he shoot? Does he aim? Cup a hand? Come into a towel, a tissue, a jar?* I'd spent thousands of nights thinking about all these things. Would I finally find out the answers? Tonight?

My hands shook at the thought. If I wasn't careful I was going to wreck the drawings I'd spent all afternoon on. I placed the stack of papers into my leather portfolio for safekeeping.

A movie. That would get my mind off things. Hell, maybe I'd even fall asleep.

A car door slammed, and I froze for a full five seconds, holding my breath as I listened. Nope. Not them. And not a chance in hell I'm falling asleep before Wiley gets home.

Chapter Four

By the time I heard the front door to the apartment click open, six hours and three and a half movies later, I was convinced I'd imagined the whole afternoon.

Derek's voice was muffled, but I could tell he'd been drinking. He always talked louder when he'd been drinking, and even with my bedroom door closed, I could make out some of what he was babbling. Something about pizza and how if Lily didn't get back from her semester abroad soon he was going to go insane.

"Just one more month, dude. You can make it." Wiley sounded calm. Which was the opposite of how I felt. I wiped my clammy hands on my T-shirt.

It seemed like an eternity before Derek mumbled the words "good night" and shuffled past my door. I was pretty sure he tripped on the coffee table on his way. His door squeaked as he opened it then rattled a little as he closed it. My heart beat in my ears. If Derek was in his room for the night Wiley was free to knock on my door. If that's what he was going to do.

Tonight. The word echoed in my brain as I counted my heartbeats.

Time had never passed so slowly. *Should I just go into the living room? Too scary.* I forced myself to sit on my bed, wishing I had X-ray vision and could see what the hell was going on in the other room. Then I heard the bathroom door close and the roar of the shower.

Shit. I flopped back onto my pillows. Movie number four was just about over. Not that I'd been paying any attention. I stared at my laptop screen. Just as the credits started to scroll, I heard the shower turn off. I bolted upright in the bed, straining to listen. My fingers cramped from gripping the edge of the mattress.

How long does it take to dry off from a shower? Images of Wiley toweling off distracted me for a few seconds as the wish for X-ray vision returned with a vengeance.

One AM. I closed my laptop and set it on my nightstand.

The bathroom door still hadn't opened. Had it? Maybe he'd opened it quietly and was already asleep on the couch. I checked the time on my phone: 1:03. I tapped the screen each time it went black, checking the clock over and

over like a fucking lunatic. Two minutes. Five minutes. Nine. Nine minutes. It doesn't take anyone nine whole minutes to dry off from a shower.

Fuck. He's not coming. I closed my eyes and clutched my phone. *Count to sixty. If he hasn't knocked after ten minutes, he's not going to.*

Twenty... forty-five, forty-six, forty-seven. Shit. Forty-eight. My phone buzzed at forty-nine, and I nearly dropped the damned thing on the floor.

A text. Wiley's number. *Jesus fuck.* I'd swear my brain was beating. My hands went hot and cold at the same time as I dragged my finger across the screen, leaving a sweaty smudge behind.

You still awake?

My hand shook as I typed back. *Yes.*

I'd thought time moved slowly the last few hours. Now I could practically see it, thick and murky, flowing around me. I refreshed the screen three times. Nothing. Then it buzzed again.

Can I come in?

I typed the first two letters before realizing how stupid that was and got up off the bed. The eight-foot walk to the door seemed eternal. I turned the knob and opened it.

Wiley stood inches away, wearing a dark T-shirt and shorts. His hair was still damp, and he looked completely... edible. He'd turned off the lights in the living room and kitchen, and his eyes glinted in the darkness.

"Hey." The word came out as even more of a whisper than I intended.

"Can I..." He gestured into my room.

"Of course." *Jesus. He's actually here. To tell me what?* My mind raced through all the scenarios I'd been trying, unsuccessfully, to keep from obsessing over for the past few hours. Apologies. Take backs. Excuses. Declarations that it should never happen again. My stomach made an angry twist.

Wiley watched as I closed the door behind him then raked a hand through his hair. *God he's beautiful.* Even with his forehead creased from stress and his mouth working the way it did when he chewed the inside of his cheek... he was still perfect to me.

"About before..." He trailed off and looked around my room.

Here it comes. “Hey, that was...”

“That was, I mean, was that... was it okay?”

Okay? Is he kidding me? I nodded, fearing that speech might fail me.

“You’re sure?” He looked frightened, unsure, words I’d never once associated with Wiley.

I moved closer to him, stopping right in front of him. “I’m positive.”

“Good. Because I was thinking, if I don’t do that again, I might die.”

“Do wh—” His mouth landed on mine before I got the word out. *Holy Christ.* Warm lips, strong and demanding, pried my mouth open so that sweet, thick tongue could get to mine. I let out a soft moan, and Wiley tugged me closer, grasping handfuls of T-shirt and pulling me against him.

We kissed so hard the room started to spin. Wiley must have lost his balance too, because I felt us turn. He stumbled on the pair of sneakers by my bed but steadied himself, then broke away just long enough to toss his shirt aside. I did the same with mine and got a look of such need and approval it occurred to me that I should never wear a shirt around him ever again.

Wiley leaned toward me, strong hands roaming up my sides, across my nipples. *Goddamn that feels good.* He must have noticed because, instead of going in for a kiss, he planted his tongue on my nipple, licking and flicking until I had to grit my teeth to keep from groaning.

He pushed me against the wall alongside the bed and moved closer again. Skin against skin, our chests rubbed together as his lips made a path up my neck, nipping at my collarbone, my ear, trailing across my cheek to my eagerly waiting mouth. Deep, hungry kisses made it hard for me to think about anything other than his mouth and the fact that our cocks were grinding against each other again. Only this time it was through thin athletic shorts instead of heavy denim. Friction. Anticipation.

So fucking good.

I held his hips, rocking harder against him, but Wiley grabbed my wrists like he had on the couch. *Fuck.* With my hands over my head I couldn’t move much. Wiley wedged one leg between mine, and we humped against each other, kissing like our lives depended on it. Maybe they did because if he’d stopped I’m pretty sure I’d have perished on the spot.

This is really happening. My body was consumed with what was happening, but my brain was still trying to catch up. It wasn't a one-time thing. He wants more. How much more?

Wiley's hot lips trailed down my neck, to the hollow of my collarbone. I have a major weakness for being kissed in that very spot. My cock swelled exponentially, and I rubbed against his thigh with near maniacal enthusiasm. He must've noticed because he let go of my wrists with one hand just long enough to plant the other on my crotch.

He's touching my cock. Well. He's touching the shorts that cover the boxer briefs that cover my cock. But seriously, his hand is on my dick. My heart pounded so fast my chest hurt.

Oh, Jesus. His hand burrowed under my waistband. Hand on boxers on cock. Fuck.

One stroke. Two strokes. I squeezed my eyes shut as tight as possible, focusing on anything I could to keep from coming.

Hand on cock. No boxers. Mother of... How had he managed to keep stroking and take my dick out without missing a beat? Cool, smooth fingers skimmed over the burning heat of my erection, and I could have cried with pleasure. I whimpered into his mouth, and he kissed me even harder, sucking on my tongue as he continued to stroke me.

Gentle and measured at first, he grew more confident and sped up the movements of his hand, swirling at the head then tugging harder on the down stroke. *Not yet. Not yet. Don't come yet.* I wanted this to last forever. Or at least until I'd gotten to touch him too.

I felt the need to ask first. It took some doing, but I wrenched my mouth from his, breathing hard against his cheek. "Can I touch you?"

"Fuck yes." He released my wrists and stepped back, thankfully slowing the hand that continued to tease my cock.

Staring kept us each occupied for a few seconds as I reached for him. The planes of his chest were smooth and firm, hot beneath my fingers. I followed the silky trail below his waist to the promised land. *Fuck. Me.* His cock was thick and hard, radiating heat even through two layers of clothes. I didn't wait to work through the layers, I wanted him naked, the sooner the better. One firm tug on his waistband was all the cue he needed. He shoved his shorts and boxers off—the light-gray ones, I noted as they pooled around his feet—and he kicked them off completely.

The sight of my hand wrapped around his cock was almost enough to make me blow my load. *Not yet.* I inhaled so hard my brain burned.

So thick. Silky foreskin slid back and forth over the swollen, deep-red crown. I swept my thumb across his slit, swirling wetness across the tip then down his length. My mouth watered.

Wiley shifted to the side so we were right in front of each other. His forehead pressed against mine as we both watched our cocks sliding in and out of each other's fists.

"So fucking good." I heard his whispered praise through every fiber of my being. His hips pitched forward, bringing his dick centimeters from mine.

Jesus. I braced my back against the wall so my hips could jut forward. One more step, and his tip bumped mine. *Fucking fuck.* Wiley nudged my fingers out of the way as he wrapped his around both of us. Soft smooth skin slid back and forth as our cocks caressed each other in the confines of his large capable hand. He kept his strokes slow and tentative as we both stood, mesmerized, staring at our dicks. Good didn't begin to describe it. Fucking paradise.

Wiley widened his stance and braced his arm on my shoulder. He was getting close. I could see it. The tension in his abs, rock-solid thighs flexed, eyes staring down, all while his hand stroked both of us into a haze of need and pleasure.

"Fuck," I whispered. "Can't last much longer."

"Thank God," he said. "Me neither."

His hand moved with more determination, stroking down tight so our swollen heads caressed each other, balls banging together, thigh hairs tangling, fingers clutching at shoulders.

"Wi... can't wait."

"Me neither."

His head fell back in abandon, and I studied the straining muscles of his neck before lavishing them with kisses that earned me a low growl. He sped up again, creating such delicious friction I couldn't wait another second. "I'm gonna, I have to..."

"Come," he said the word right in my ear, smooth and seductive, like a command. My cock gratefully obliged.

The first blast went straight up and splattered on Wiley's upper chest. He let out a groan of desperation then unleashed his own stream of come. Four, five, six thick stripes crisscrossed the lines I'd left on his chest. Rasped breaths left his body in deep gasps as he regained his equilibrium. The glaze lifted from his eyes, and he gave me a look I couldn't read. Before I could ask what it meant, his lips were on mine. Deliberate, but slow this time. Soft, easy kisses. He turned us away from the wall and toward the bed and pulled me down alongside him.

Talk about dream material. Wiley, next to me in bed, naked, covered in come? This was better than half my fantasies, and I've got a great imagination. "Here." I grabbed the still damp towel from my shower and handed it to him.

"Thanks," he said, surprising me by wiping off my stomach before he bothered with himself. When we were both dry and fairly clean, he rolled toward me. "Was this okay?"

"What?"

"Me being here. What happened on the couch before. Now. Are you all right with this? I don't want to make things weird."

"Nothing's weird. I'm thrilled."

"Yeah?"

"Absolutely. Surprised. But pleasantly."

"You had no clue?"

"None."

Wiley rolled onto his side and pulled me closer, gripping the back of my neck and planting his lips on mine. I kissed him back, hard, working his tongue, still not believing any of this was real. After years of wondering what he'd taste like, I finally knew, and I craved more.

He broke the kiss, panting, and pressed his forehead against mine. Our bodies were flush together, his hand still clasping my neck in a firm, possessive grip. His thumb idly stroked just below my ear. I had to keep myself from purring.

"I feel like I owe you an explanation," he said.

"You don't owe me anything."

Those beautiful eyes closed, and I could feel him struggling. "I do. I've wanted this so long. Wanted you for so long."

You have? My heart traded places with my stomach and did a happy dance. “I didn’t know.”

He nodded, sliding his smooth hair back and forth against my forehead. “I know. No one knew. I’m a fucking coward.”

I’d never heard Wiley talk like this. Since the day I met him he’d been one of the most self-assured people I’d ever known. “You’re not a coward.”

He let out a wistful laugh. “For five years I’ve watched you be brave. Be who you are, no matter what anyone said. I’ve spent all that time living a lie.”

Wiley sat up and I immediately missed the feel of him against me. He scrubbed his hands through his hair and rubbed his temple with his thumbs. My heart pounded. I hated seeing him struggle. Needing to touch him, I sat up alongside him and placed my hand on his back.

I massaged the back of his neck, wanting him to keep talking but having no idea what he needed to hear from me.

“Remember when I showed up in town with my mom? Back in high school?”

“I remember.” *Best day of my life.*

“She didn’t change jobs because she felt like it, like I said. She did it because of me, so we could move to a new town and start over. That’s why my dad left too.”

“He didn’t want to move?”

“He didn’t want to deal with having a gay son.”

Wait, what? My eyes bugged, but I tried to keep myself in check. “You came out?”

“No. I got caught. I had a group of friends in my old town. A bunch of guys from the rugby team. We’d get together in one of their basements and watch porn. Straight porn. And beat off.”

“Lots of guys do that.”

“Yeah, well one of the other guys and I both got off way more on the dudes’ come shots than the other parts of the movies. One time it was just the two of us, so we kept replaying this one scene, and we both got so hot we started jerking each other. That’s when the other guys showed up.”

I kept rubbing his neck. It didn't help. His muscles had tensed. His jaw was clenched tight. "What happened?"

"They were shocked at first, then the names started flying. We both got the hell out of there as quick as possible, but not without black eyes. I tried to give my parents a revised story, but one of the guys apparently told his folks, and they called mine."

"Fuck. I'm sorry." I couldn't even begin to imagine what that must have been like.

"It is what it is. I'm lucky they didn't toss me out on the street. That's what happened to the other guy."

"Shit."

"Yeah. I definitely got the better deal. My parents split, and my mom and I moved to Fremont—with an agreement that I'd start over."

"Meaning..."

"Meaning I'd be straight, like a 'normal' person." He air quoted the word "normal" then ran his hands through his hair again.

"That sucks."

"It did, but then I met your family."

"And we damn near adopted you."

"Thank God." His eyes closed again, and I shifted enough to look at him. He was always beautiful, but vulnerable, like this, he was even more gorgeous than usual. I rubbed my thumb along his perfect cheekbone, memorizing its curve, not sure how to ask what I needed to know.

"Can I ask you something?" My heart quivered like it had broken loose from my other organs.

"Anything."

"Why now? What changed?"

A wistful smile crossed his face, and those kaleidoscope eyes looked right into mine. "Ever since I moved in here, I've been watching you go on dates, and it's been fucking killing me."

I snorted. "Seriously?"

“Fuck, yes. I lie awake waiting for you to get home, dreading the fact that you could bring someone with you and knowing if you stay out all night it’s not to play Monopoly.”

“No. Boggle maybe, but not Monopoly.” I chuckled, but he didn’t.

“It’s been making me crazy. I can’t even think straight when you’re around.”

“No pun intended.”

His eyes glazed for a second then it hit him. “Funny. Yeah, no pun intended. And I’m not straight.” He paused and took a deep breath. “I’m gay.”

Even though I’d been listening to his story and had an idea where this conversation was going, those two words hit me hard. “You’re sure?”

“David...”

“I know, it’s not the kind of thing you’d say lightly, but I mean... you’ve been with girls, right?”

“Sort of. I slept with a few, trying to convince myself that I could be happy like that. And it was okay, I guess. It’s just not what I want. It’s never been what I wanted. I was just too chickenshit to do anything about it.”

“Why?”

“Well, the first time I tried, it turned my whole life upside down, not to mention my parents’ marriage.” He let out a shuddery sigh, and I wrapped my arms around him tighter. “Then when I got so close to Derek and you and your family... I didn’t want to risk losing any of that.”

His voice cracked on the last few words, and a ball of sorrow clogged my throat. “You wouldn’t have lost us.”

“Crushing on my best friend’s younger brother, like some pervert? It didn’t seem like the best way to say thanks for inviting me into your family.”

He’s crushed on me since back then? My heart swelled with pride. It killed me to think about all the shit he’d gone through, but this, the fact that he’d wanted me, thought about me, the same way I’d been thinking about him—that was a dream come true. Wiley needed to know this wasn’t a bad thing, at all. “It would have been okay.”

He gave his head a slow shake. “I didn’t want to do it to the team, either. Everyone on the team knew how close Derek and I are. It would have made things beyond awkward for him.”

“He could have handled it. You see how he is with me. He tells everyone else to fuck off.”

“Yeah, but you weren’t in the locker room with us. You weren’t tackling other guys on the field.”

“True. I’m sorry. I can totally see why you’d stay quiet.”

“Like I said. Coward.” He lay back on the bed. I took it as a positive sign that he was still in my bed at all. I sprawled alongside him, propped on an elbow, facing him.

“You had a shitty experience. That doesn’t make you a coward.” My heart beat irregularly. “So, other than that time in high school have you... uh... like, been with guys?”

“No.”

“At all?”

He shook his head. “Not at all, until last month. I tried one of those cyber hookup sites, you know where you...” He gestured to his crotch with a few tossing motions.

“Chatterbate?”

He nodded, not making eye contact with me.

“How’d that go?”

“It was okay, I guess. Except the next morning my roommate crashed his computer and came into my room to borrow my laptop, and the site was still up.”

“You have the worst fucking luck.”

“Yeah.”

“Holy shit. Is that the fight you had? The one that made you move in here?”

He nodded and blew out a deep breath. “Yep.”

I’d never seen him like this. And I’d never been more turned on in my life. I slid my hand across his chest and stroked his jaw with my thumb. “Look at me.”

He turned toward me, slowly. The light from the bedside lamp glinted off his eyes. The gold flecks glowed brighter than usual, and I wondered how close he was to tears. The thought wrenched my insides. He had nothing to feel ashamed about, and it killed me that he didn’t seem to understand that.

“You’re still James Wiley. Still the all-star rugby player, still the *cum laude* graduate of his university, still number three in his MBA class. Still the best friend Derek’s ever had.” I scooted closer. “Still the guy I’ve had a mad crush on since the first day I laid eyes on him.”

His dark brows popped high. “Seriously?”

“You never picked up on it?”

“Honestly, no. I mean, Derek mentioned it once years ago, but I thought he was just being overprotective of you. I didn’t take it seriously.”

Damn it, Derek. “I don’t blame you. I was pretty dorky.”

He shoved my shoulder. “That’s not why. Shit. I never thought of you as a dork. I just figured you’d go for some artsy guy. Like you.”

My lips spread into a grin so wide my cheeks ached. “Yeah, well, as it turns out, jocky business majors are more my type.”

The light came on behind his eyes, and I could see him debating his options. I hoped he chose whichever one would make the most of the fact that we were still naked on my bed.

“So, you’ve thought about us... like this?” He shifted onto his side and ran a hand up my spine.

I shivered as he pulled me closer. “More times than I can count.”

“I like the sound of that.”

I’d been semi-hard the whole time we’d been talking. The grip of his fingers on the back of my neck made my whole body stiffen. Need coursed through my veins. “What else do you like the sound of?”

“I liked it when you moaned earlier.”

I let out a small one and was rewarded with a look of pure desire. “We have to be quiet though. Derek’s asleep right down the hall.”

“Quiet I can do.” Wiley leaned in and kissed me, full and hard, sweeping his tongue around mine. I breathed into his mouth, and he swallowed my sigh, holding me tighter. I could stay quiet forever if it meant more of this.

Chapter Five

Humping against Wiley felt even better horizontally than it had vertically. Smooth. Heat. Everywhere. Hands—in my hair, on my back, clutching my ass. Lips—on my mouth, my neck, my chest. Cock—sweet Jesus—rock-hard cock rubbing against mine, sliding across my stomach, my hip.

We rolled around, him on top, me on top, side by side, clutching at each other like the world was about to end. None of that was enough. With some amount of effort, I pushed Wiley onto his back and slid my mouth from his lips to his neck. He gave a low growl, and I quieted him with a soft *Shhh* against his chest.

He shivered but stayed silent as I continued on my path, licking my way down his smooth chest, stopping to flick each dark-brown nipple, until he sucked in a breath, then trailing lower. Wiley tensed when I nipped his hip bone, and for a second I thought he wanted me to stop. My heart pounded. *Is this not what he wants?*

Strong fingers clutched my shoulder as he bucked his hips toward me.

Never mind.

I grinned against the heat of his skin, running my hand over his cock. He flexed and strained against my palm. That was all the encouragement I needed. Smoothing my hand over his balls, I leaned forward and took the lick I'd been fantasizing about for years.

Salt and sweetness played on my tongue as I swirled it around his swollen head. Wiley kept quiet, but I saw him clutch at a handful of blanket. My own cock begged for attention, but I was too focused on Wiley to listen. Not yet. All I wanted was to give him a blow job he'd remember the rest of his life.

A silent blow job isn't as easy as it might seem, but I gave it my best effort, trailing my nose down his length as I lapped at his shaft. Each exaggerated breath he took brought me closer to my own orgasm. I stroked with long, slow passes, drawing his foreskin up over the tip then tugging it down until he strained against my fist. Licking his balls made him hiss and claw at the blankets again.

I straddled his leg for better positioning, taking mental photos of each angle of his stunning erection. "Your cock is fucking perfect." I wasn't one for sexy talk but that statement was so true it needed saying. Thick and tall, with a

perfect, full crown. Silky tan skin at the base, deepening in shades of red up to the crimson tip. If his cock were a building, it would be the Empire State Building, lit up for Valentine's Day.

Wiley huffed out a laugh that morphed into a gasp as I took him into my mouth.

"Fuck." The word was whispered, but it spoke volumes as he swelled against my tongue.

I slithered one hand up his chest, tweaking a nipple as the other made short, quick strokes from the base of his cock in time with the bobbing of my head. No suction noises. My tongue worked double-time, swirling over him, working the head without letting him pop free.

"Yunhh..." His hips moved with me, and I humped against his leg as I kept up the frenzied pace with my mouth.

He tugged at my hair. "Can't wait."

I wiggled my tongue at the base of his head, feeling his fingers tighten against my scalp. *God, yes.* The thought of him coming in my mouth was almost enough to make me blow my load. He swelled, thrusting deeper, and I felt the first blast against the back of my throat. Swallowing hard, I rolled my tongue along the underside of his cock, milking him for every drop.

His hand relaxed against my head, and I sucked lightly until he stopped quivering. I let him slip from my mouth then collapsed alongside him, my hand instantly on my cock. Hard didn't begin to describe it—I was ready to explode. I stroked slowly, wanting to make the feeling last.

"Christ, you're sexy." Wiley's voice was low and rumbly, his gaze locked on my erection.

I'd never been much of an exhibitionist, but the look in his eyes gave me the urge to perform. Forcing myself to slow down, I palmed my balls with one hand, pressing my erection between my forearm and stomach.

Wiley propped himself on an elbow for a better viewing position. *Jesus. He's watching me like porn.* The thought fueled my desire as I traced two fingers up the length of my cock, feeling precum pool on my belly.

Slicking my fingertips with my own wetness, I stroked my favorite spot, right below the head. Unable to keep from whimpering, I pressed my head back against the pillow, biting down on my tongue.

As if I wasn't close enough to coming, Wiley ran his hand over my chest, from one nipple to the other then down toward my dick. I could come from massaging that spot, but I needed more. Fisting my cock I thrust hard and fast. *Jesus. Fucking. Christ.*

Wiley let out a soft moan, and I glanced at him. His eyes were dark, wild. He threw me one quick, heated look then swooped down, taking me in his mouth. Shock bought me no more than three seconds as I stared down at his profile with my bright-red dick between his deep-pink lips. Mother of God. I swallowed the groan that threatened to roar out of me. "Wi, I need to, I'm gonna..."

He sucked harder, rolling his head so his hair grazed my stomach. That did it. I passed the point of no return, come tearing down my length at lightning speed. Beams of color raced behind my tightly clenched eyelids then turned to darkness, and for a second I thought I might actually pass out. Wiley swallowed hard, then let me slip from his mouth.

He cleared his throat. "I'll get better at that. I promise."

"If you get too much better than that, you'll kill me."

He laughed and leaned in for a kiss. Tasting myself on him was surreal. I rolled my tongue around his, trying to burn the memory of the entire evening into my brain. Our kisses grew lazy, and Wiley sank down against the pillows. His fingers made leisurely passes over my skin. I listened as his breathing slowed. I'd never heard anything more beautiful in my life.

Chapter Six

I didn't remember falling asleep, but I must have because my eyelids were closed and sunlight was glowing bright and yellow right through them. And someone was gently stroking my back. Warm. Strong fingers. I sighed, wondering if I was dreaming, then the memories of the night before flooded my brain.

Wide awake, I rolled over, half expecting I'd imagined everything and no one would be there—or worse, someone else would—but there he was. Wiley. On his side, watching me intently, hand now running along my side instead of my back.

“Hey.” Morning conversation has always been my strong suit.

“Hey.” He tugged at my waist, pulling me closer, and kissed me.

“You stayed.” *Good job, Captain Obvious. Now tell him his eyes are blue.*

“Is that okay?” Wiley's hand stilled, and he squinted at me.

“Fuck, yeah.” *Eloquent.* “I just... I don't know. I thought you might have snuck back out to the couch before Derek woke up.”

“I love you.” He said the words so plainly, so simply, but they didn't compute in my head. As much as I wanted to believe them, I figured he had to be mistaken.

“I think that's just the orgasms talking.” *Good. Give him an out.*

He breathed out a laugh. *I knew it. He wasn't serious.*

The laughter snorted again, and I realized he was trying, unsuccessfully, to stay quiet.

“It's not that funny,” I whispered.

He snorted again.

Great. He's got a case of the giggles, and I'm dying. The more he tried to keep from laughing, the harder time he seemed to have keeping it under control. His body shook so hard the whole bed vibrated.

I started to get annoyed. “What the fuck is so funny?”

He held up a fist and wiggled his thumb up and down to make the talking hand puppet mouth. “I'm a talking orgasm,” he said in a phony French accent. “It was not me.”

I stared as he dissolved into laughter again, pulling a pillow over his face to mute the sound. He held the puppet hand up again.

“Sorry,” it said, and he tossed the pillow aside.

I couldn’t help but chuckle.

He took a deep breath and held it, wiping his eyes, then blew it out. “Seriously, sorry.”

“It’s okay.”

He turned to me, eyes serious now, and touched my face. Just a light touch—from my forehead to my jaw—tender enough to send heartbreak and desire crashing over me in alternating waves, like fire and ice. “It wasn’t the orgasms. I mean it. You and Derek and your mom, you’re like family to me, and you have been for years, but this...” He gestured between us like he didn’t have the words. “What happened between us... It’s not about that. It’s about you and me and how I’ve felt about you for a long fucking time. I love you.”

The words seeped in a little, melting over me.

He said it again, his voice softer, face closer. I felt each word against my lips. “I love you.”

And then we were kissing again. Hard. So hard I couldn’t breathe. Couldn’t think. Couldn’t get close enough to him. He pulled me on top of him, and I rode him like my life depended on it—cocks sliding against each other, hands tangled in each other’s hair.

The pounding on my bedroom door nearly gave me a heart attack. “Yo, Davey. I’m starving.”

Derek. Fuck. Impeccable timing, as always.

I was pretty sure I’d locked the door, and pretty sure Derek wouldn’t just barge into my room, but I panicked anyway. “Sorry. Overslept. I’ll be out in sec.”

“Thanks. Can you make the special? I’m hella hungover.”

“Sure.”

The bathroom door clicked shut, and I held my breath, glancing at Wiley, who stayed equally still. The muted roar of the shower starting made us both let out sighs.

Getting out of bed was the last thing I wanted to do, but I knew I had to. I grabbed the pair of shorts that had landed next to my bed. “He’s probably already noticed that you weren’t on the couch. I’ll make breakfast. It’s Thursday. He’s got an early class. As soon as he leaves, you can come out.” Shit. Poor choice of words.

Wiley’s eyes had grown dark. I could tell he was struggling, and I didn’t want that. He didn’t need to deal with Derek right now.

“It’s okay.” I leaned in and gave him a quick kiss, instantly regretting it because all it did was make me want to leave the room even less. “He’s hungover. He’ll eat fast and leave.”

Wiley reached for my arm as I got out of bed, but I grabbed a T-shirt, pulled it on, and headed for the door.

“David, I—” Before he could get another word out, the shower turned off.

I wanted to know what he was going to say, but I also didn’t want Derek to come out of the bathroom just as I was leaving my room and see Wiley naked on my bed.

“Don’t worry. I’ll make sure he doesn’t eat all the French toast.” I threw him a quick smile and left.

I’d managed to get three eggs cracked before Derek wandered out of the bathroom, hair dripping, as usual. “Thank God,” he said when he saw me in the kitchen. “I must’ve had way more to drink than I thought. My head’s fucking killing me.”

“You’re probably dehydrated. There’s orange juice in the fridge.”

“Good idea.”

He traipsed into his room. My mind raced as I cracked another six eggs and beat them with some milk. *Wiley must be freaking out.* This was not the morning after I’d had in mind.

Derek reappeared, wearing jeans and a T-shirt, hair still soaking wet. He headed straight for the fridge, grabbed the orange juice carton, and started shaking it. “There’s no way I’m making it to class this morning.”

Shit. I handed him a glass. “You’ll be fine after you eat.”

He chugged a glass of juice and slumped into one of the kitchen chairs. “My brain hurts.”

“What the hell did you drink last night?”

“I don’t know. We had a bunch of beer then someone bought a few rounds of shots. Wi said he wasn’t in the mood to drink and pretty much as soon as he said he’d drive home I stopped counting.” He groaned and rubbed his head.

“Drama queen.” I tossed him the bottle of Advil then turned the burners on under the griddle. *Wiley wasn’t in the mood to drink? Because he wanted to be sober when he came to my room?* Hope fluttered in my stomach.

Heat radiated off the griddle. I swiped a pat of butter across the hot surface, watching as it bubbled and sizzled, then dunked bread in the egg mixture and tossed it on the pan.

“God, that smells good.”

“See? You’re feeling better already. I’m sure Mom would be thrilled to know her French toast recipe is our favorite hangover cure.”

Derek chuckled and rubbed his forehead again. “Hey, do you know what happened to Wi?”

My heart skidded to a stop. “What do you mean?”

Derek shrugged. “I know he drove me home last night, but he wasn’t here when I got up at four to take a piss. Couch doesn’t even look slept on.”

I flipped the French toast and tossed some sausage into a frying pan. *Please stop thinking, Derek.* “Maybe he went to the library.”

“The library’s closed overnight, dork. I’m guessing he went back to the bar after he drove me home. There were women all over us last night.”

I swallowed hard, trying to make sure I didn’t drop any French toast on the floor as I took it off the grill. Bread, dunk, sizzle. I shook the frying pan so the sausage wouldn’t stick. “Dunno.”

Derek smirked. “I bet he went home with the blonde. She was practically in his lap at one point.”

The back of my neck prickled, but I stayed silent.

Derek poured another glass of juice. “At least one of us got lucky last night.”

“Yeah.” At least that wasn’t a lie.

I flipped the slices then turned off the stove so they wouldn’t burn as they finished cooking. Derek must have been starving because he got up and got

plates and forks and even grabbed the maple syrup from the fridge. Two plates. One for him. One for me. Because he didn't have a clue that Wiley was in my room, probably smelling breakfast and trying not to have a stroke.

I handed Derek the platter of French toast then piled the sausages onto a plate and carried them to the table, pretty sure I wouldn't be able to eat a bite.

Derek stacked his dish high. "You sure cooked enough. Sheesh. Maybe Wi will be hungry if he makes it home from his big night."

The door to my bedroom swung open, and my jaw dropped. Wiley's eyes locked on mine, and he gave a small nod.

"Actually, I'm starving," he said.

He strode into the kitchen, grabbed a plate from the cupboard, and sat down across from Derek, next to me. My knee bobbed so fast it banged against the tabletop. I pressed my feet into the floor, trying to stay calm.

Derek looked from Wiley to my bedroom door to me. Given the headache I knew he had, furrowing his brow that much must have been painful. "Wait, I don't..."

Wiley stabbed two slices of French toast and dropped them on his plate then reached for the syrup. "You were right. I got lucky last night. Really lucky."

I gaped at Wiley, and he threw me a sideways smile that made me want to tackle him.

Derek shook his head. "But you were in Davey's room." He paused, eyes squinting, then growing wider. "All night?"

Wiley nodded.

"You two weren't. I mean... were you? No... wait. You're not... Are you?"

Wiley looked right at Derek. I held my breath.

"Yeah, Derek. I am."

Derek stared, first at him, then at me. "Did you know?"

I shook my head. "Not until last night."

"When did you... I mean how did..."

Wiley took a deep breath. "I've known a long time, but I was fighting it. I'm tired of fighting."

Derek was clearly trying to process what he was hearing. I couldn't tell if he was having any luck with that whatsoever. "So you and Davey..." His face darkened.

Oh shit. I knew that look. That was his "hurt my brother, and I'll fucking kill you" look.

"Derek." I said his name loud enough that he turned toward me and stopped glaring at Wiley. "It's okay."

Derek rubbed the back of his neck, eyes darting back to Wiley. "I don't want to see my brother get hurt. Fuck. I don't want either of you hurt."

Wiley interrupted him. "It's not just some fling, Derek. It's something we've both wanted for a while. I was just too chickenshit to do anything about it. And I didn't want to freak you out either. Sorry about that, man."

"So you just... never mind. None of my business." Derek's eyebrows were practically dancing as his expression bounced back and forth between confused, shocked, and annoyed.

Wiley reached for my hand and gave it a squeeze. *Holy fuck. He's holding my hand, at the breakfast table, in front of Derek.* My insides traded places with one another, but I squeezed his hand back.

"It's not a casual thing, if that's what you're worried about."

Derek's eyebrows popped high.

Wiley threw me a smile then looked Derek in the eyes. "I'm in love with your brother."

The room was silent except for the drip of the coffeemaker.

Derek studied his French toast like it was a map to the world's greatest lost treasure.

Please don't say anything stupid. Just be happy for us.

He looked up and scratched his cheek. "You know how much I hate admitting I'm wrong, but, hey—this time I was really fucking wrong."

I knew exactly what he meant. All those years of "he's not gay" were definitely fucking wrong. I laughed.

Wiley looked confused, but that was okay; there was plenty of time for me to explain it to him later. There was plenty of time for everything later.

“You’re happy?” Derek asked me.

“Very.”

“You too?” He turned to Wiley.

“For the first time in a long time.”

“Okay then.” Derek picked up his fork. “I don’t mean to let the air outta your love float, but this hangover’s not gonna cure itself. And I’ve got class in half an hour.”

He dug into his French toast.

I felt Wiley sigh with relief and realized I was still holding my breath. Breathing out, it felt as if a huge weight had been lifted off me. For the first time in my life I had everything I wanted. Wiley. Derek’s approval. And French toast, which was amazing because, now that I could breathe again, I realized I was starving.

We ate and talked and joked just like it was any other morning. Only it wasn’t. It was so much better.

Derek rushed around getting ready for class, and Wiley showered and dressed for a meeting with his advisor. I hung out in the kitchen, cleaning up and trying to decide which sketch of Wiley was going to turn into the main piece in my portfolio. There were so many to choose from I wasn’t sure which to pick. I loved them all.

“You need a ride to the admin building?” Derek asked, slinging his backpack over his shoulder.

Wiley shoved his keys in his pocket. “That’d be great.”

“Come on then, let’s go.” Derek opened the door and stepped into the hall.

“Be there in a sec.” Wiley came up behind me while I was wiping down the griddle.

I turned to look at him, and before I could open my mouth to say something, he kissed me. Not a long, passionate kiss, but firm and sweet and just enough to make my heart skip a beat.

“See you later?” I said.

“Count on it.” Wiley grinned then leaned closer and whispered. “Tonight.”

The End

Author Bio

Karen Stivali is a prolific writer, compulsive baker and chocoholic with a penchant for books, movies, and fictional British men. She's also the multiple award-winning author of contemporary and erotic romances. She writes novels about love... like real life, only hotter. Karen's lifelong fascination with people has led her to careers ranging from hand-drawn animator, to party planner, to marriage and family counselor, but writing has always been her passion. She enjoys nothing more than following her characters on their journey toward love. Whether the couples are m/f or m/m, it's guaranteed that Karen's novels are filled with food, friendship, love, and smoking hot sex—all the best things in life.

When Karen isn't writing (and often when she is), she can be found on Twitter attempting witty banter and detailing the antics of her fruit-loving cat, BadKitteh. She loves to hear from readers (and other writers), so don't hesitate to contact/follow/like her.

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