

LOVE IS AN OPEN ROAD



Don't Read in the Closet 2015

# FIRST DANCE

**E. Davies**

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# Love is an Open Road

*An M/M Romance series*

## FIRST DANCE

**By E. Davies**

### 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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# FIRST DANCE

By E. Davies

## Photo Description

Two shirtless men hold each other in a cobblestone street, embracing and kissing.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*Please make this story your own.*

*Sincerely,*

*Claire*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** stripper, erotic dancer, sweet/no sex, new adult, book store, geeks/nerds, dating, poetry

**Word Count:** 7,882

# FIRST DANCE

By E. Davies

The bell on the door jingled, and Kyle had to resist the urge to sigh. The habits of the other young people he worked with were rubbing off on him—namely to do as little work and read as many books as possible from the shelves of the independent little bookshop in downtown London.

Instead, Kyle made himself smile and get to his feet as he put aside his book and looked towards the door. “Evening,” he greeted politely, trying to lilt it like the locals did. Some Londoners found his Canadian accent hard to understand, or worse, thought he was American.

*Oh.*

The man who walked through the door filled up the doorframe with his broad shoulders, but he wasn’t unattractively muscled like a bodybuilder. This customer was lithe enough to be devilishly handsome, but his strong forearms filled out his T-shirt sleeves perfectly, and his jeans hinted at thighs with just as much strength. A sports player? Construction worker? Did he just work out frequently, but not too much?

*It’s been way too long since I broke up with Ash.* Kyle hastily refocused his gaze on the newcomer’s face. He hadn’t been caught; the man was glancing around the shelves. “Evening,” he replied.

“Can I help you with anything?”

That got the man’s attention. His gaze flickered to Kyle’s face for a moment before he relaxed and smiled. “No, thank you.” He headed straight through the shop as if he already knew where he was headed.

“Let me know if you need assistance, then.” Kyle nodded and sat down again, picking his book up. He liked self-directed customers the best. They tended not to be as much trouble as the ones who wanted special orders or help remembering a title they’d once heard someone talk about, or God forbid, tried to return books with marks in them.

He couldn’t resist sneaking a peek over the top of his book at the man. While men here were almost universally well dressed and tidy, it was rare for someone quite so gorgeous to walk into his shop. Even though they were on the

edge of Soho, they didn't stock many specifically gay-interest books, so Kyle rarely got a chance to flirt with customers anyway.

He tried to take his mind off how sad his dating life had been since his move here two months ago by watching the gorgeous blond pick up a book of poetry. Of course he'd have a romantic side, too.

The customer made a beeline for the counter once he had the book, so Kyle had to tuck his bookmark back into the pages as he stood up and moved to the register. "All done?"

"That's it for now, thanks," the man agreed with a handsome smile, his green eyes warming up even more.

Kyle rang in the book, noting the ring on his middle finger (none on his ring finger) and trying not to think about the girlfriend this man was probably buying the book for. "Six-fifty, please," he requested, tucking a shop bookmark into the pages and sliding the book across the counter. When the man dug out two crisp fives, he made change and handed it over and then smiled again. "Have a good night."

"You, too," his customer answered, his eyes lingering on Kyle again for a moment before he picked up the book and left.

The moment he left, it seemed much cooler in the store. Kyle rubbed his face and settled down on the stool in the corner again to turn his attention back to the chapter he'd just begun. It was bound to be a quiet Wednesday evening by this time—most shoppers' attention had turned to pubs and shows at this hour.

Regardless, there was no sense in dwelling on this random customer he knew nothing about, as Kyle rarely saw customers twice.

\*\*\*\*

"Off working again tonight?"

Kyle glanced over at his flatmate, Louis. Louis was a quiet second-year computer science student who spent most of his time building robots in his room. The occasional robot appeared in their common area to try to sort dishes in their kitchen or vacuum up broken crisp bits, but otherwise, each of them tried to stick to their own rooms in the small space they had to share.

"Yeah, unfortunately." Kyle frowned.

"Oh, I was going out with a few mates, we were gonna ask you along," Louis declared as he leaned in the door of his bedroom, gesturing with a



controller with wires sticking out of at least three places and a battery pack dangling beneath it. "Next time?"

"That'd be great," Kyle answered with a smile. It was rare to be given the chance to hang out with new friends with so many people keeping to themselves. Even his coworkers hadn't yet asked him to come along for drinks. "Let me know before Friday, and I can ask for the day off the following week, okay?"

"Yeah, yeah." Louis nodded and then waved him off. "Have a good shift then. Oh, it's Kyle Roberts, right?"

"Yeah," Kyle answered, surprised for a moment. "Why?"

"I'll add you to Facebook. Then I can let you know when we're going out if I don't catch you in person, yeah?"

Kyle smiled, his shoulders sinking with relief. Louis hadn't taken it as Kyle brushing him off because he didn't want to be friends. "Yeah, that's perfect! I'll add you once I get to work. Gotta run now," Kyle answered, raising his hand to wave and run out the door.

He barely made the bus. The seats were full with the rush-hour commute, but as he leaned on a pole and watched the crowds through the large windows, he let his mind wander a little.

Getting off at his stop was a routine now, and one he barely thought about nowadays. Where he'd come from, the bus service was spotty at best and had none of the amenities of London buses. The overhead stop display signs alone were a miracle for someone used to squinting out of bus windows and through the infamous Newfoundland fog to try to read street signs.

He hopped off the bus and turned sideways to scoot past a small crowd of commuters and then strode briskly down the side alley towards the bookshop.

Just as he reached the door to the shop, he heard someone greet him. "Afternoon. Or is it evening now?"

When he turned to see who it was, he couldn't help but smile. The handsome man from three nights ago—the one he'd almost forgotten by now—was back. He pushed his glasses up his nose unconsciously, resisting the urge to check his hair. *Did I brush my teeth? I think so.*

"Hi," he answered breathlessly. "I'm just starting my shift."

"Perfect timing, then," the man answered. He wore a tight T-shirt with looser jeans again, and he wore them well. A tattoo peeked out of one T-shirt

sleeve and wound its way down his bicep towards his elbow, and if Kyle squinted, he could almost make out another along his chest.

“More poetry books for you?” Kyle asked. The man scooted by—just close enough to make it seem flirtatious—and opened the shop door and then held it open for Kyle. “O-Oh, thanks.”

“You’re welcome. And yes.”

“Finally,” Kyle heard Ashley, the other shop assistant who worked mostly the afternoon shift before his evening shifts, say. She stopped when she saw the man who entered with Kyle. “Oh, sorry.”

“S’all right, love,” the man assured her.

Kyle’s heart sank a little. *Was that friendly or more than friendly?* “You can take off now, Ashley. I’ve got it.”

Ashley seemed reluctant, but she stepped out from behind the desk and went to the back to grab her coat as Kyle headed behind the counter.

“Can I help you with anything in particular?” Kyle asked, aware of Ashley leaving and waving her goodbye while focusing his attention on the customer.

“I’m looking for Shakespearean sonnets, actually.” The Scottish accent that rolled off his tongue made Kyle shiver. He wasn’t familiar enough with accents around here to place what kind of Scottish accent it was, but it made him want to find out more.

*He’s got to be in love with someone. Everyone who picks up Shakespearean sonnets is a student or in love, and he’s a little too old and buff to be an English student.*

“Over here,” Kyle told him, leading him to the appropriate shelf and picking up a few slim volumes. “This one’s my favourite. It has some reference material in the back. But this one’s just the poems, if you’re more interested in that.”

“I’ll trust your judgement...” The man’s eyes fell to Kyle’s chest.

“Oh, right.” Kyle reached behind the counter to rummage for his name tag and pinned it on his shirt. “Kyle,” he said rather unnecessarily.

“Kyle,” the man repeated with a smile. “Thank you. Just this tonight.”

Kyle rang him up, excruciatingly aware of the moment the other man’s fingertips brushed his palm to drop a few coins into his hand. He smiled and closed the drawer once he dropped them in. “Enjoy.”

“I will,” the man promised, holding up the book in a little goodbye. He brushed a hand back through his blond hair and nodded, watching Kyle for a few moments longer before heading out.

Once he walked out, Kyle glanced around the store to take in the two other customers already browsing. He quietly put his forehead on the counter for a few seconds to try to get his focus back on the job and not the polite, soft-spoken, and well read man who had just left. God, considering he was a complete stranger and probably in love with someone already, Kyle was absolutely smitten.

If he came back a third time, Kyle promised himself he’d ask for the man’s number.

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It was several days again before the man came back a third time, but Kyle was caught by surprise nonetheless. This time, his favourite customer wasn’t alone.

Two other men—one a little shorter than him, one much taller, both muscled and ruggedly good-looking—followed after him as he entered the shop.

Kyle swallowed hard, taking the three of them in together. He hadn’t been convinced before now, but now that they were all here together, he was sure they weren’t straight. His instincts told him so, and this time, he believed them.

“Hey.” His customer greeted Kyle with a twinkle in his eye—and how sad was it that he was thinking of the man as *his* customer now?

“Hi,” Kyle answered, trying not to seem personally interested with others watching their every interaction. *Be professional*. “Good to see you again.”

“You too, Kyle,” the man answered and then quickly headed through the aisles. “Okay, we’re gonna be late for our shift if we don’t hurry.”

“Can I...” Kyle trailed off, watching the three of them head straight for the photography book section. The photo book they came back with a few minutes later made Kyle blush. *Stripped Men* was a very different book than the ones he’d been picking up before.

“That’s, er...” Kyle opened the cover to check the inside, trying not to let his eyes linger too long on the front cover photo, “twelve pounds fifty.”

It was one of his customer’s friends who paid up. “Thanks very much.”

“Thank you.” Kyle knew a London accent by now. *Maybe my customer’s visiting him from Scotland... maybe they’re together. You can’t ask him out in front of the others.* “See you again?” he said, glancing straight at the blond who had been watching him for just about the whole transaction.

“I hope so,” the other man answered, still watching him with those soft green eyes. Kyle couldn’t look away.

The London friend wrapped his hand around the man’s arm to pull him away. “Hurry, we’ve still got to get there and it’s five minutes before we start.”

That jarred them both out of the moment and Kyle awkwardly raised a hand. “Good luck. Don’t be late to work.” *I assume it’s work.*

“Thanks.” A smile flashed over his customer’s face and he hurried out again.

*I still don’t even know his name.*

It was a long shift once the three men left. It was unusually busy that night, meaning Kyle had no time to read on the job. He got home around nine thirty as usual. He pressed his hand to his forehead as he unlocked his apartment door and just about fell through it.

“Hey,” Louis greeted with a smile. His smile then turned to a frown. “What’s the matter?”

“Nothing, just tired. Long day,” Kyle tried to explain and smiled back. “Where are you going?”

“Out for drinks. Didn’t you get my message?”

*Oh, crap.* Kyle hadn’t even checked Facebook that evening, work had been so busy. “No, sorry... work was busy.” *I have to take him up on it.*

“You look like you got hit by a bus.” Louis chuckled, clapping him on the shoulder. “But you need to get out a bit. Live it up, get out from that stress... meet some girls...”

Kyle wasn’t in the mood to tell him. He was sure Louis—a man his own age, in his early twenties—wouldn’t have a problem with it, but now wasn’t the time.

“Or blokes...”

“Sorry, mate,” Kyle answered with an apologetic smile. “I really have to get to bed. Next time?”

“Sure, next time, mate,” Louis answered, but Kyle had the feeling it was less than sincere. His roommate waved slightly and headed out past him, and as Kyle let the door shut, he leaned on it and sighed. *I’m never going to make friends at this rate. I have to get out and... do things.*

It was going to be a lonely year in London if he didn’t. He tried to ignore the nagging voice that told him that perhaps talking to that handsome stranger was a good way to begin.

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When the door jingled near the end of Kyle’s shift the next evening, Kyle looked up quickly. Every jingle of the bell had become a possible entrance of the man he was pretty sure he’d been flirting with, and every time, it had let him down.

This time was no exception. The man who entered was the Londoner who had bought the risqué book rather than his Scottish friend, the one Kyle was actually interested in. His heart sank a little, but he tried not to look too down as he greeted him politely nonetheless.

The man was carrying a stack of papers. “I have some posters for a dance class...”

There was a community bulletin board in the window of the shop, so Kyle already knew what he was going to ask. “Yeah, that’s fine. What kind of dance?”

“Funny you should ask.” The man smiled crookedly. “Pole dance. For men. Is that all right?”

Kyle couldn’t help but laugh. “Well, we put up an ad for women’s classes a month ago, so I don’t see why it wouldn’t be.” They *were* on the edge of the gay district, so perhaps he was hoping to attract some local attention. “You teaching it?”

“No, my mate is, the Scottish one. Tristan.”

*Tristan.* Kyle seized on the name right away as he reached out for a copy of the poster and then turned it over and scribbled *Kyle* on the back to authorize it. “Ah, right. I’ll put it up right now. Where is it, then?” He turned the page back over to examine the details. Ten pounds for an evening-long intro session didn’t sound too bad, but he wasn’t sure about the name of the club.

“Lazarus. It’s a... a gay strip club,” the man answered frankly.

Kyle turned this over in his head as he stepped out from behind the counter to head to the window and pin up the poster. "I see."

"Well, anyway, thanks," the man answered with a brisk wave and headed out.

"Yeah, no worries," Kyle said casually. He had to wait until the shop was empty, but in a gap between customers, he looked up the club on his phone.

It was just a few streets away, not even five minutes' walk. And it opened at nine, just when the book shop closed. That explained why Tristan always came in near the end of Kyle's shift, and... It explained how good-looking he was. If it was a gay strip club, he was probably gay, too. The one thing that left him uncertain was the poetry. Nobody just bought love poetry and sonnets on a whim. Surely he had a boyfriend or something already—perhaps even the guy who'd come in putting up posters.

Nevertheless, he made up his mind: it was time to live a little.

Kyle knew exactly how much was in his wallet as he closed up the shop, and he just hoped it would be enough. Thank God payday had just been a few days ago.

The walk to the club took just a few minutes, and it only occurred to him once he was nearing the door that Tristan might not even be working that night. Maybe he only worked every few nights, or even once weekly.

He needn't have worried. As soon as he paid the cover charge and walked into the dark joint with neon lighting, he caught sight of the very man he was watching out for.

Tristan was up on the stage, shirt off, his hands running over the button on his jeans as pop music thumped in the background and his hips moved in small circular motions to the beat. The way he draped himself against the pole made him seem like he was lying against it despite standing upright, and when he hoisted himself up by his hands and thighs, it seemed effortless.

Kyle gasped under his breath, freezing for a moment before he caught himself. He chose a seat further away from the stage, but kept his eyes so fixed on the performance that he nearly tripped over the chair as he sat down in it.

Tristan's jeans hit the ground as he shimmied back up the pole. He stepped out of them, leaving him in just bright blue, tight briefs with a thick waistband as he ground against the pole and took a few more lazy spins around before bending to accept a tip in his waistband.

Kyle blushed at the sight of the bulge in the front of Tristan's underwear, the way he suggestively ran his hand across his chest and down his stomach...

He glanced away, looking at the bar instead. Should he get a beer? It felt wrong to watch him, but at the same time, he *did* want to see Tristan naked. But he didn't *just* want his body... he wanted to properly get to know him, too.

As he stared hard at the bar, the song ended and he resisted the urge to peek back over at Tristan just yet. He waited a good ten or twenty seconds to make sure Tristan was dressed again before glancing over again, only to spot him still mostly naked and gleaming with sweat. *Oh, man, he keeps his pants off.*

Tristan was walking around the tables and seats closer to the stage, looking around for new people to talk to, and the handsome stripper caught sight of him at the same time. His eyes widened for a moment before he quite deliberately veered the other way to talk to a table on the other side of the room.

Kyle's cheeks flushed and he rose to his feet. *Did I just make things uncomfortable? Oh, God, I hope I don't seem like a stalker now.* He swallowed hard, glancing around the room again. Suddenly, it had gone from being just a touch uncomfortable and out of his comfort zone to unbearably anxiety provoking.

He strode quickly for the door, not even caring that he'd only spent his five pounds on the cover charge a few minutes ago.

At least the cool air outside helped bring Kyle back to his wits a little. He hardly knew what to think, but he shook his head. It had been a stupid idea in the first place, and he shouldn't have pursued it.

He headed for the bus home, his mind lingering longer than he would have liked on the visual of Tristan leaning back against the pole, his hand sliding up the steel above his head. Then, all he could think about were those warm green eyes staring at him from over the counter and the strong hands clutching the delicately thin book of poetry close.

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Kyle honestly didn't expect to see Tristan again, so when the six-foot-odd man in his usual tight T-shirt and loose dark blue jeans wandered into the shop just before closing time the following night, he didn't know what to say.

Tristan's blond hair was ruffled from the wind outside, and he looked a bit dazed, just as most of Kyle's customers that night had. It was an uncharacteristically blustery day, and the swinging bookstore sign outside the shop had been rattling all evening until Kyle's nerves were on edge.

“H-Hi,” Kyle greeted, instantly blushing.

He wasn’t expecting to see Tristan’s cheeks turn red too, as the other man glanced around the shop to make sure it was empty and then walked up to him at the counter. “Just about closed for the evening?”

“Yeah... can I help you...” Kyle trailed off, but he had the feeling Tristan wasn’t there about a book this time.

Tristan cleared his throat, looking like he was about to recite something he’d memorized. “My name is Danny. I’m sorry for, um, freaking you out last night.”

Kyle stared at Tristan—no, *Danny*—and tried to process that for a moment. “I thought you were Tristan...?”

“That’s my stage name,” the green-eyed man told him. “Danny, to my friends. Danny MacArthur. And, um, dates. Wait, no, I’m getting ahead of myself.” He stuttered slightly, the smooth confidence of last night replaced by adorably nervous mannerisms now.

Kyle couldn’t help but smile. “Okay, Danny it is. I’m Kyle Roberts. But no, you didn’t freak me out. I think I freaked myself out...”

“No, really, I know I did,” Danny insisted. “I get nervous, and you were there and you’re cute and I hadn’t yet gotten a chance to properly ask you out, and then I wasn’t sure...” he trailed off.

“You were nervous? You didn’t look nervous at all!” Kyle exclaimed with a laugh, leaning against the counter.

Danny leaned against the other side, bringing them a bit closer. “No, I am. I get really nervous on stage, actually, and in person... I just fake it.”

“No,” Kyle scoffed, tilting his head as he looked Danny up and down. He didn’t seem like he was joking or lying.

“Really!” Danny laughed now in a low but warm chuckle. “That’s why I buy poetry books...”

“I... don’t follow.”

“To memorize, and I recite them in my head when I get nervous.”

Kyle narrowed his eyes. *Is he trying to lie to impress me?* “Go on, then. What were you reciting last?”



“From fairest creatures we desire increase, that thereby beauty’s rose might never die, but as the ripper should by time decease, his tender heir might bear his memory...” Danny trailed off.

*Shakespeare. Sonnet? I think so. Oh, the first one!* Kyle looked impressed despite himself. “Go on.”

“I can’t, I don’t have it memorized past that point. I go a line at a time,” Danny admitted with another easygoing little laugh.

Kyle nodded. “Okay, I believe you. But you had a question for me?”

“I did?”

Kyle raised his eyebrow meaningfully and took off his name tag and then locked the change drawer shut.

“Oh!” Danny exclaimed, even that single syllable accented as he smacked his forehead lightly. “Sorry! Er, would you... go out to dinner with me? Tonight? Tomorrow? When works for you? You always seem to be here at night so I never knew when would be good.”

“Tonight would be fine,” Kyle told him, resisting the urge to beam. He hadn’t expected to be asked out on a date that night; he wished he’d worn a slightly nicer shirt that evening.

“Right now?”

“Unless you have work?”

“No, no, I don’t. Right now would be great,” Danny answered with a breathless little smile. “Okay. Great. I’ll wait outside until you’re done closing up...”

“Okay,” Kyle agreed, springing into action as soon as Danny stepped outside the door. He brought the locked drawer to the back to deposit in the office safe and then took a moment to check his teeth and chew a breath mint before hurrying back out to close up the shop.

When he joined Danny outside, Kyle noticed that Danny was a little taller than he was. They looked like a stereotypical couple out for an evening together—one a bit taller and broader, more muscled, the other lean and short and bookish.

It had been a long time since anyone asked him on a date.

“Where should we go?” Kyle asked.

“Sushi? There’s a good conveyor belt place nearby,” Danny suggested. “Do you like sushi? It’s kind of fun on the conveyor belt, though it isn’t the best... I mean, there’s nicer places with better food, but the fun is half the fun. You know what I mean.”

“Perfect,” Kyle agreed, grinning at Danny’s rambling. He loved hearing that Scottish accent at every chance. “Where are you from, then?”

“Glasgow. Actually, a little outside it, but close enough. What about you?” Danny led him across the street and around a few corners to the sushi joint as they chatted.

“Newfoundland, Canada.”

“Oh, really? You don’t have as much of an accent as... you know...”

“The stereotypes? Oh, you should hear my family.” Kyle laughed. “I’ve lost it a little—or rather, I tone it down because a lot of people here have trouble understanding it.”

“You speak very formally,” Danny observed. “I thought that was the nerdy part of you... that’s not a bad word, right? You don’t mind being called it? I didn’t mean it to be.”

“No, I don’t mind,” Kyle assured him with a smile. “I definitely am. What about you?”

“I’m a little nerdy myself,” Danny admitted with a laugh. “I mean, who buys poetry just to memorize?”

“I’ve heard of lots of tricks. There’s that movie where the guy has to... I think he holds a paper clip in his hand or something.” Kyle frowned. “I don’t remember which one.”

“One of the usual romantic comedies, I’m sure,” Danny smiled. “You like them?”

“Don’t tease me too much, but... yeah.” Kyle laughed. “Romantic comedies and horror novels.”

“Why not the other way around?”

Kyle made a face as Danny led him through the door of the sushi place and held it open for him. “Thanks. I can deal with horror in text, but not on the screen... and I don’t like romance novels because the cover always spoils them.”

“But you can ignore the cover!” Danny exclaimed and then lowered his voice as a server approached them. “Sorry. Table for two, please.”

Kyle couldn't help but laugh giddily, already charmed at the way Danny's enthusiasm got the best of him now that his nervousness seemed to be fading. Kyle felt less nervous around Danny now.

The conversation flowed easily between them as they picked sushi plates off the belt, dared each other to eat a few of the stranger dishes, and finally settled up. The bill wasn't quite enough to make Kyle cringe, but Danny still waved their host over and insisted that he was paying for it all.

“No, no, I can't...” Kyle tried to argue.

Danny shook his head. “Please, let me. It's an apology for frightening you off last night.”

By now, Kyle was just about leaning into Danny, but he resisted physical contact *just* yet aside from the little brushes of Danny's hand on his shoulder or arm when he got overenthusiastic. “Okay.” Kyle gave in. He didn't think Danny was the type to hold it over him.

“Great,” Danny answered, slipping a bill into the receipt book and setting it down. “That was... that was really fun.” They started to wander towards the door together, each slowing down a little more than the other until they were ambling towards it.

“Yeah, it was,” Kyle admitted. He hadn't felt so comfortable around someone in months, and he found himself reluctant to leave and head home. “So, should I ask for your number now...?”

“Of course,” Danny agreed, handing his phone over after creating a new contact. Kyle did the same as they typed their own numbers into each other's phone.

When they exchanged phones and pocketed them, they headed out to the street. They shared a quiet smile before Danny nodded at the bus stop. “I've got to catch a bus from here, then.”

“My stop's around the corner, I think,” Kyle answered. “So I guess I'd better be going.”

Danny nodded. “Could we meet up tomorrow, maybe? I don't know if that's rushing it, but I'm not working...”

“Neither am I. I have that night off. I'd like that,” Kyle admitted, relieved that Danny had asked first. He hadn't wanted to seem *too* desperate.

“Oh, bloody hell—”

Kyle realized before Danny could even say it what the problem was. “The class.”

“You know about that?”

“Your English friend dropped off the poster, and I... couldn’t help but ask who was teaching it,” Kyle admitted with a laugh.

“And that’s how you found the club.” Danny nodded. “Of course. Er, yeah, I’m teaching that tomorrow evening.”

It was a ridiculous idea—ridiculous enough that Kyle didn’t want to linger too long on it before saying it out loud. Something about Danny’s boisterous attitude made Kyle feel more daring than ever. “I could come. I mean, I don’t want to infringe on it or anything if you don’t feel comfortable, but... I’ve been wanting to get out of my comfort zone...”

“Oh, thank God,” was Danny’s enthusiastic response.

Kyle was taken aback for a moment. “You was hoping I’d say that, sure, b’y!” he lilted.

Danny’s eyes brightened at the momentary slip in his accent. “I was. I didn’t want to sound sketchy...”

“No, no, I know.” Kyle smiled. He could see why Danny hadn’t suggested it.

“You wouldn’t have to pay. You’d just be my plus-one, if you like.” Danny smiled. “It’s not too bold?”

“I’d like that. What time is it again?”

“Seven to nine tomorrow night,” Danny answered.

Kyle nodded firmly. “It’s on, then.”

“So we’ll see each other tomorrow night. Thanks for going out with me tonight. I had a lot of fun.” Danny smiled, glancing over. “That’s my bus there.”

Kyle decided to follow his impulses. He leaned in to press a quick, warm kiss to Danny’s lips before pulling back. His cheeks still felt hot from even that momentary contact.

Danny’s face lit up in another grin as he waved and then trotted onto his bus and turned around to wave again.

Kyle waved him off. He waited for the bus to pull away before striding off down the street towards his own bus stop. He could hardly wrap his mind around everything that had just happened, and more confusing yet was a familiar face approaching him through the crowd.

Louis was walking up to him, his lips quirking up into a smile. “So there you are.”

“I... sorry, what?” Kyle stammered, trying to wrap his mind around seeing his roommate here.

“For drinks tonight. You know, we don’t care that you’re gay—my friends or me,” Louis said simply and then moved past it. “That guy looked hot, you’re doing well. Coming down the pub with us? My friends will be there already.”

All Kyle could do was helplessly raise his shoulders in a shrug. “Yeah, of course, mate!”

“I came to look for you at the shop but you weren’t there—of course, because the shop was long closed by then.” Louis laughed, already chatting with Kyle as he led him off. “But since you weren’t answering your phone...”

Kyle nodded along as he walked. It was like losing his footing and stumbling into a whole different world—one where he didn’t go straight to bed with a book at ten PM. But his spontaneous date had gone well, and perhaps it *was* time to live a little.

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Kyle was exceptionally glad for his day off the next morning, what with the hangover he got after months of barely drinking and then a night of pub antics with his roommate and three or four new friends. Even so, he couldn’t forget for a moment what he had to look forward to the next evening.

Louis greeted him with a cheerful smile once they both recovered enough to emerge for lunch—an easy pasta casserole Louis cooked in a few minutes flat—and then invited him to play computer games for a while. The distraction was welcome, but when it was finally time to get ready for the date, nothing could stop the tremor in Kyle’s hands.

“It’ll go fine, mate,” Louis assured Kyle as Kyle made his excuses to get up and get ready to go out.

“The... how did you know?” Kyle smiled.

“You look like I do before every date.” Louis grinned. “He likes you already, I could tell. You’re a good bloke, just let him give you a chance, yeah?”

The advice was simple enough that Kyle felt like he was overthinking the date already.

“I will,” Kyle answered as Louis nodded and then headed to shower and change into comfortable jeans and a T-shirt. While part of him wanted to dress up to impress Danny, he also figured jeans must cling to the pole well if Danny wore his button-up jeans on stage.

When he arrived from the bus stop a few minutes before the class, he found the club door already open and Danny talking to a few other male students. All of the other students looked nervous, but Danny seemed at ease already. Kyle tried not to smile, privately wondering how many poems Danny had recited beforehand.

“Ah, there you are. Come on in,” Danny greeted with a warm smile. “This is Kyle. Kyle, Mark and Brian.”

The other two nodded, and before long, four other students had shown up. They ranged in age from barely eighteen to early thirties, and a few of them seemed to be already friends while most of them didn’t know the others.

“Time to introduce you to this object—though I’m sure most of you are familiar with this shape already.” Danny winked, glancing straight at Kyle for that one as he ran a hand up and down the pole.

Kyle blushed, shifting from one foot to the other.

“We’re not going to do anything too in-depth,” Danny assured the men once the chuckle or two had died down. “No need to be nervous. This is just getting familiar with your body and the pole, learning to move around it a little. That’s why it’s an intro course.”

Kyle couldn’t believe how quickly he found himself pulled into the exercises—stretching his muscles thoroughly like he was about to play sports and then starting to rotate his hips through four points in smooth circles. The next exercise was about each of the students learning to grip the pole with his thighs and do a smooth circle around it, and Kyle nervously watched as they each did it, one at a time.

He was the last to go, and Danny waved him up to the pole. “So, like you saw them do, one leg up there—perfect—grip it with your hand...” Danny

reached up to touch his hand and reverse his grip. “Hold on the other way, or you’ll twist your wrist when you go around.”

The shock that passed between them wasn’t static electricity, but a tingly jolt felt only by them as those green eyes looked into his from just inches away. Kyle was reminded of how good the quick kiss had felt the previous night.

Danny stepped back slightly. “And now slide around...”

Kyle had almost forgotten what he was doing. He hastily slid and then stumbled, but just before he could smack his mouth into the pole, Danny’s hand shot between his lips and the metal pole, causing him to land a solid blow on the back of Danny’s hand.

“Mmph!” Kyle quickly recovered himself and leaned back. “Sorry!”

“It’s all right.” Danny laughed amidst the polite chuckles from the other students. “I’ve done it too. Try that again.”

This time, Kyle managed a simple spin around. The moves Danny had made look so effortless two nights ago seemed impossibly out of reach now that he knew how hard even this simple action was.

“That’s a great start,” Danny approved and then stepped off the stage. “Okay, next up, we’re going to shimmy around the pole and do a little back-on grinding...” He winked at the other gathered students.

“Oh,” Kyle murmured and quickly stepped down and off the stage.

When Kyle let go of the pole, Danny showed what he meant by effortlessly sliding around the pole and sliding down as he did so and then shimmying his way back up and rolling his head back until he ended with his hand on the pole above his head like Kyle had seen the previous night.

One by one, the students demonstrated this move, too, and then it was finally time to put all the moves together.

Brian, Mike, Jason, Mark... one by one, the other men tried the routine to varying degrees of success and laughter, each ending up shirtless by the end of it.

“Kyle?”

By then, Kyle had relaxed enough that he’d hardly noticed he was the last one to go again. *Oh, man, make it good.*

He stepped up onto the stage to the light, encouraging applause of the other students. He tried to picture Danny sitting in the front row of the seats instead

of the other students and then set himself into motion stepping around the stage, swaying his hips, gripping the pole with his knees, spinning, dipping down, rising up...

His knees cracked a little as he slid up the pole, but nobody seemed to notice as he gripped the pole above his head and then did another little twist and shimmy with his front against the pole before gripping his T-shirt and pulling it up and off.

And just like that, he was done. His cheeks flushed as he realized he was topless in front of the others.

"Yeah!" someone exclaimed.

"Whoa, well done," he heard Brian add.

"Very good." That was a distinctly Scottish accent, and he knew exactly who it had to have been. After their two-hour workout, most of the others still had their shirts off, so he left his off and just pushed his glasses up his nose as he retrieved it.

"And that's all," Danny said. "You all did brilliantly this week! If you come back next week—same time and place, ten pounds per week—we'll be continuing with the class. I hope you all enjoyed it either way."

One by one, the students thanked him and headed out. Kyle hung around Danny until they'd all left and the two of them were the only ones around.

Danny smiled as he turned to take Kyle in. "You did wonderfully."

"What else are they going to learn?"

"You want to see the full routine?" Danny teased, that glint back in his eyes. "I'll show it to you. Go sit down there..."

Kyle dropped into the front row of seats and watched as Danny mounted the stage effortlessly and then started to saunter around the pole just as they had done. Instead of ending by stripping his shirt off and grinding back against the pole as he tossed his shirt aside, Danny kept on going by stepping quickly back around the pole, shimmying around again, hoisting himself off the ground and then falling sideways until he caught himself.

His tattoos and muscled flesh moved effortlessly as Danny spun around the pole, lifted himself up and off the ground a few times and then hit the ground and walked around and shimmied instead. Danny ended by jumping off the stage, approaching Kyle, and straddling his lap to lean down for a quick little lap dance.



“Oh,” Kyle breathed as he leaned back in his chair, keeping his hands to himself.

“Mmm, naughty, hm?” Danny winked.

“Are they really learning that?”

“Guess you’ll have to come back next week to find out... and the week after...” Danny teased, their lips scarce inches apart now. His breath was warm on Kyle’s lips, and Kyle felt so hot all over, his heart racing. He was still shirtless, and now Danny’s hand was pressed up against his shoulder, his thumb rubbing small circles against Kyle’s skin.

“Tristan! Club’s about to open,” someone called out from the back, jolting them both to reality again.

“Let’s go outside,” Danny murmured, sliding away from Kyle and offering him a hand up. Hand in hand, each of them holding their shirts in the other hand, they walked out the back entrance of the club and into the alley to circle around to the street.

The night air was chilly, but Kyle hardly felt it with the warmth of Danny’s hand in his own. Before Danny could lead him to the bus stop, he stopped him with a tug on his hand and then turned to face him and tucked his shirt into his belt. That freed up his other hand to press against Danny’s back.

“Thank you for the class tonight,” Kyle murmured. Somehow, he stood taller now than he had even a few days ago, and he felt bold—excited about the future, wherever this led, and even about the present moment. He had so much more to look forward to.

“You’re welcome,” Danny murmured back, glancing between Kyle’s eyes with those beautiful green ones.

Kyle leaned in to close the distance between them and Danny matched the movement until their warm lips met, the bare skin of their chests pressing together at the same moment. Their bodies seemed to mould together perfectly as Danny turned his head a little more to the side and parted his lips.

The way Danny’s eyelashes fluttered, his eyes still closed, made Kyle close his eyes and kiss a little harder. He was bolder now than perhaps ever before, even catching Danny’s lip between his for a few moments and gently pulling it before drawing back from the kiss.

Danny looked breathless, almost unsure what to do. Despite his confidence on the stage, the quiet uncertainty had utterly charmed Kyle. He knew it might be a fleeting romance, but it might also last much longer. The only way to find out was to follow his heart, and he knew exactly where his heart lay for now—in London, in the arms of this man.

**The End**

## **Author Bio**

*I've been writing erotica for years, but only got around to publishing it in 2013. I focus on writing hot M/M erotica and erotic romance, with the occasional romance. I'm a big believer in character-driven plots, so there's usually a touch of romance even in my erotica stories! This is an unusually short and sweet story for me (no sex scene at all!), but the characters demanded it!*

## **Contact & Media Info**

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