

LOVE Has NO Boundaries



Don't Read in the Closet Event 2013

SMOKY GLIMPSES

Nicole Forcine

Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

SMOKY GLIMPSES

By Nicole Forcine

Introduction

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

What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

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

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

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

Words of Caution

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

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.

All rights reserved worldwide.

This eBook may be distributed freely in its entirety courtesy of the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group*. This eBook may not be sold, manipulated or reproduced in any format without the express written permission of the author.

Smoky Glimpses, Copyright © 2013 Nicole Forcine

Cover Design by Goodreads M/M Romance Group

This ebook is published by the *M/M Romance Group* and is not directly endorsed by or affiliated with Goodreads Inc.

SMOKY GLIMPSES

By Nicole Forcine

Photo Description

Eight hunky, half-dressed firemen of assorted nationalities and hair color stand in a parking lot, all looking up at the camera, which is obviously positioned at an elevation well above the group. It looks like the cover for a sexy firefighter calendar, with an attractive bald fireman in the front middle spot. The caption reads “Please excuse me while I light my house on fire.”

Story Letter

Dear Author,

The setup for this scene is a firemen calendar shoot. The photographer knocks on the main character’s apartment door to request shooting some photos from the apartment balcony. The MC follows the photographer out to the balcony and sees [the setting described in the photo description above].

I’m pretty open to whatever the author wants to do with the story beyond the setup. (This doesn’t have to be the beginning of the story. It can be later on in the story. That was just the setup for this image.)

I would really like for it to be a paranormal story. (Pick your paranormal element.) And you can take your pick of the firemen as the other MC.

It does not have to be HEA.

Sincerely,

Adara

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: firemen, sweet, psychic ability, paranormal, humorous

Word count: 7,921

Author Interpretation

When I looked at this photo, the first thing I thought was, well, exactly what the caption said— “Excuse me while I set my house on fire” because RAWR. Once I’d calmed down, I had to pick my guy and you know what? Not enough love for dudes with shaved heads. Or blue collar psychics for that matter, so Smoky Glimpses was born.

SMOKY GLIMPSES

By Nicole Forcine

“So, you can’t tell me any lotto numbers?”

Kaden sighed and shook his head. “I told you, I can only see glimpses, and your glimpse didn’t tell me a single thing about the lottery.”

Kaden’s customer, a young punk who paid him with three greasy five dollar bills, sucked on his teeth and stood up. “I want my fucking money back.”

Kaden arched his eyebrow and pointed to the sign he knew was right over and above his shoulder. He also knew it displayed rule number one: No refunds. “Maybe you should actually listen next time someone tells you their limitations.”

The punk shot up and smacked the table that separated them, making the candlesticks on it rock until one tipped over. “This is bullshit!” he roared, storming out of the booth and hitting the purple cloth acting as a door hard enough to make a muffled punch sound.

Kaden managed to catch the other candlestick before it toppled over, and snarled at the boy’s back, “Try buying a lotto ticket, I hear that helps your chances!”

Thank fuck his shift was over. It was time for someone else to take his place entertaining the rubes of the world, one ungrateful hissy-fit at a time.

He picked up the candle that had hit the floor, tossed the broken parts away and carried the brass candleholder out of the room. A row of purple velvet curtains flanked the hallway, each one with a psychic practitioner behind it, plying their trade. Lucky him, he got the room closest to the waiting room and reception.

“That guy was an idiot,” Max, the pink-haired receptionist said derisively, taking all the cash Kaden earned during this four-hour shift. “He won’t be back. I think you were one of the last readers he hadn’t seen yet.”

“Why didn’t you just cut him off before he got to me?” Kaden asked, watching as Max compared the stack of cash against the list of customers and took out the house’s cut.

“Because he was dumb enough to pay up every time.” Max handed Kaden his take with a huge winning grin. “Pity he’s also too dumb to figure out when he’s pissing off the ‘real’ thing.”

“And what if he comes back with more than just a bad attitude? It won’t matter if I’m real or not if he flips out on us.”

Unless he could predict the confrontation. And sadly, that level of detail was beyond Kaden’s own abilities. He only saw random Glimpses, and even that required skin contact and concentration. Which worked perfectly, since he billed himself as a “palm reader”. All he had to do was speak the lingo—life lines, love lines, whatever—deflect the usual questions about life span and future gorgeous partners, and he usually managed to convey what he actually saw. For the most part, it wasn’t a bad gig, even when the news wasn’t all sunshine and happiness.

As for Punky McTantrum, Kaden sure hoped he paid close attention to his nuts next time he wanked off. Testicular cancer was a real bitch if caught too late. Then again, by the time that dipstick found the little lump, it would probably only render him infertile instead of killing him outright, thus benefitting society as a whole. Kaden felt better already.

“Say, Kaden,” Max checked his cell phone. “Teresa’ll be here to take over soon and the Twisted Sister’s doing two-for-one well drinks until ten o’clock. We should have a few and see what fresh meat’s about. When was the last time you got out?”

“I dunno, when was the last time some asshole mooed at me when I offered to buy him a drink? Granted, his hair looked like it had been styled by a cloud of locusts, so what would he know about what was attractive? He really shouldn’t have gotten so mad when I told him that. If he was going to judge on appearance, why couldn’t I? Besides, I’m not looking for another hook-up.”

Max shook his head and tut-tutted, used to Kaden's usual babble. They had been friends for years, after all. "My poor soft-hearted, bitter-tongued little bear cub. You're gonna let one queen bee sting you and that's it? Back to your books and your sports and your Netflix?"

The answer popped out of his mouth before Max had stopped speaking. "Yes. Anyway, it's Thursday, and I'm here all day tomorrow. Rent's due next week. And my books are way more interesting than drunk and rude 'fresh meat'."

"And the guys in your books get laid more." At Kaden's glare, Max held up his hands in defeat. "Fine, then let's go to dinner on Saturday. I'll have my advance for my newest project in my pocket and that means better than well drinks. You can return the favor after this month's rent emergency."

Kaden nodded. Dinners with Max were never dull. It was nice hearing about someone else's love life at the very least. "Sounds like a deal. Call me."

As he turned to leave Mystic Readings, Kaden noticed Max's eyes shift from blue to bright green, the iris long like a cat's. Not surprising coming from the morpher, but it never failed to creep Kaden out just a little when his friend suddenly shifted his look right in front of him. Max could be careless at times, risking some quick explaining should a mundane notice him altering his appearance. Exposed Gifted were never seen again. No one ever knew where they would go, just that occasionally a supposed "real" psychic or miracle worker would just go "poof". Mundanes would talk about them as frauds, but the Gifted would know why. Best to keep their secrets among family and other Gifted.

At least with Kaden's line of work, if a mundane suspected that his readings came from a natural Gift and not just simple cold reading and confirmation bias, it was easy to play it off as a series of lucky guesses. He'd only had to outright make up a reading to shake a mundane off the trail once. Avoiding discovery was the price to pay for being born with a Gift.

Kaden's "weekends" were usually on weekdays, and he found himself curled up in a wingback chair in his bedroom early Tuesday morning. His eyes were bleary but his mind was determined to finish the heavy book in his hands. Once the plot had hooked him around nine that previous evening, he knew he had to finish it. Mysteries did that to him; made him give a damn. He had a need to find out how normal mundanes figured shit out without the blessing and curse that was a Gift.

Loud staccato taps from the door shook Kaden out of his nice warm book bubble and his body promptly reminded him that it had gone nearly twenty-four hours without sleep. It was eight A.M., and he knew who was at his door before he unlocked and opened it. He just wished he had the energy to kill his friend.

"...Max, what the hell?" Kaden grumbled at his friend once the door was opened. Today was apparently Bright Red Day, and Max sported the color in both his hair and eyes. "And no one has red eyes naturally."

"I just tell people I'm wearing those costume contacts. Silly mundanes." Max walked into the apartment, peppy as usual, carting one of his very expensive and very bulky cameras on his shoulder with the matching bag at his side. "I'm thinking I'll go albino next week."

"Lovely. What are you doing here? I was reading."

Max wandered to the living room window that led to the wrought iron fire escape and opened the curtains, allowing early morning light to wash over the sparsely decorated room. "You could really use some fresh air in here. I know you've been practically living indoors for days on end, so it's time to take a break and let the sunshine in."

"Max..."

"Besides, I need your fire escape for a few shots." Max shoved the window open. "I promise I won't get in the way, and it's really very important. For charity, even."

"I'll never understand you artsy types." Kaden stepped closer to the window, not sure what Max could find so interesting out there, other than

rooftops. Maybe the sky, the Poprocki's windowsill flowers, about a dozen shirtless firefighters on the street below...

Wait a minute...

"Is there a fire?" Kaden sputtered, staring at the men who stood in some orderly formation, some talking to their neighbors, and others looking apathetically in their direction. "I didn't hear an alarm go off. And since when did firefighters fight fires bare chested? That can't be safe."

"No, but if you want, we could torch your apartment and yell for help. That would make for some great action shots." Max grinned like a Cheshire cat and hefted the camera off his shoulder, setting it down on the loveseat next to the window. "These boys are from the station down the street, and they're doing a calendar with all the proceeds going to a charity for burn victims. Appropriate, no? I haven't had the chance to get all of them together for a cover shot until today, and I thought the view from here would be perfect." He peeked out again. "And as usual, I was right. So let me get to work so I can let these guys get back to being big damn heroes, okay?"

Kaden could hear Max speaking. But the only thing going through his mind was, *please excuse me while I light my house on fire*. He could even surmise the meaning of the words if he thought about them hard enough. Unfortunately, most of his attention was glued to the miles of smooth, bare flesh of various shades on display below. Damn, it had been a while since he'd gotten laid, and here came Max bearing what would be the newest entry into his spank bank. He guessed that would be thanks enough for allowing Max to use his fire escape, especially since from the sounds of fumbling and clicking next to him, Max was setting up his tripod as if Kaden had already agreed.

To a man, they were all nut-bustingly hot in their bunker pants and big heavy boots, though from the third floor Kaden couldn't see some details, like eye color. That was, until a pair of bright eyes caught and held his gaze. Those blues he could see clearly, staring up at him underneath bushy light brows. Blond? He couldn't tell from where he was, and since the man's head was shaved completely bald, and his chest hairless, Kaden couldn't figure out the color.

The man looked older than the others, mid-thirties if Kaden could guess, and stood like a king, not fidgeting or even speaking to anyone. Waiting patiently, probably for the skinny queer photographer to snap his pics so he could go back to doing more important things like pulling people out of fires. He sure looked equipped for that job, all big and bulgy and cut. The bulky bunker pants did nothing to hide legs as thick as tree trunks. It took monumental will for Kaden to not glance at his package.

This was fortunate, because when Kaden aimed his gaze back on the man's eyes, he was surprised to see him smiling. It was one of those cocky, one corner of the mouth crooked up sort of smiles; the kind that let Kaden know he had been caught checking the man out, and he wasn't completely disgusted. Or maybe he was just so proud, *hey, even the queer's buddy wants me*. For some reason, Kaden didn't really care about the why of that smile—it wasn't like he'd have the balls to ask anyway—it just made the guy look sexier.

Max's voice broke him out of the spell. "Are you done ogling my subjects, because I'm on the clock."

Kaden backed up so fast from the window that he nearly knocked over the tripod. "Guess I could get in another chapter while you're 'working'. Just lock the door on your way out."

With Max cackling at his back, Kaden was running back to the safety of his bedroom. As he heard Max start to give instructions to his "subjects", Kaden couldn't help but recall what Max had told him days ago about this very same thing, hiding in his bedroom, and just what a monkey wrench that threw in his love life.

Whatever. Kaden was very much not the sort of guy that could pick up a firefighter anyway.

After about fifteen minutes of listening to Max, Kaden slipped in earbuds and turned his iPod on for distraction music while he plunged back into the whodunit. That lasted for about fifteen more minutes before Kaden found that he was too tired to keep reading. Besides, he was more interested in peeking out of his bedroom window at the men outside. Max had to be taking his

photos, as they were all nice and still, presenting rows and rows of teeth like sexy sharks. His attention zeroed in on the bald man. Watching him stirred up so much above and below Kaden's equator, but fortunately he could "ogle" in peace from this vantage point.

That is, until the men started moving from one pose to another, clustering close together. Kaden had to lean against the window to keep tracking the bald firefighter which apparently got the man's attention. Kaden jumped back from the window like it was electrified, the curtain swishing shut. *Maybe if I got some sleep, I wouldn't be so insane as to openly drool over a stranger*, Kaden thought, moving to the safety of his bed. He lay there, letting the music distract him from thoughts of the hot firefighter with the blue eyes. Some useful counter-thoughts—"he's probably straight", "he was just being polite", or even "you can jack off when they're gone"—helped calm him down enough before exhaustion took over and his eyes drooped shut.

Maybe an hour later, a car alarm loud enough to permeate the earbuds woke him up way too soon, chasing away traces of a dream involving him bent over the front of a fire truck. He had to be alone in his place by now. It wouldn't have taken Max that long to take a few pictures from out there, but it was a good idea to check things out. Just in case his friend had forgotten to lock the front door. Then he would grab a shower and take care of the erection tenting his sweats.

He stepped out of the bedroom and from down the hall he could hear Max, but he sounded far away. Kaden followed the muted chatter and saw that while his front door was closed, the window was wide open. There was a shadow beyond the window, on the fire escape, partially hidden by the curtains. Couldn't be a burglar, could it? No, Max didn't sound panicked. Maybe he didn't even see the guy and was running his mouth to the horde of bunker-panted hotties. All while this guy crept through the open window with every intention of robbing Kaden blind. The fear caused every muscle in his body to tense except for the one in his pants, which promptly fled for cover.

The shadow shifted, and Kaden took a step back, hand on his pocket. He could pull out his phone and call the cops while running into the closet. But...

there was a baseball bat in the hall closet, hidden behind his clothes. Maybe he could get that instead. Though it would be useless if the burglar had a gun or a knife.

Fuck it, Kaden would go down bravely defending his home. He had the bat in hand by the time the curtain parted and someone climbed backwards into the living room. Heavy boots, bunker pants, nice tight ass, no shirt, bald head.

The man turned around and his hands were up the second he saw the bat. “Whoa, easy there, guy.”

Blond. His eyebrows were blond. So were his eyelashes. From up close, the firefighter he’d been eyeballing an hour ago looked even more devastatingly out of his league. Fuck he was tall, with at least three inches on Kaden—who wasn’t a small guy at about six feet, but he felt small by comparison.

And he felt very much out of shape with his broad shoulders, little belly, pecs that were more hints than actual muscle, and an ass that would be more fitting in a Sir Mix-A-Lot video. His last boyfriend described him as a “cub”, which confused him for two weeks until Max described what the hell that actually was when Barry dumped him for a much hotter gym rat. Apparently being “cuddly” wasn’t enough to keep his attention. And right now, “cuddly” would have been a vast improvement. In a ratty pair of sweatpants, a torn T-shirt, and three days of auburn stubble making his usually close cropped beard look downright unkempt, Kaden knew he couldn’t compare with the man he was mentally dubbing Captain Nice-Ass.

And yet, Captain Nice-Ass smiled at him, hands still up, moving slowly towards him. “You gonna put that bat down or what?”

Bat? What bat? Kaden turned to the now unfamiliar piece of wood in his hands and promptly dropped it like it had suddenly caught fire. “Shit, I’m sorry. I thought Max was done, so I wasn’t expecting anyone up here. Not that I’d be able to get a hit on you, of course, ’cause you look like you eat baseball bats for breakfast. I was just surprised, is all.”

“Guess your friend didn’t tell you his plan, huh?” Captain Nice-Ass chuckled and offered his hand. “Lieutenant Jeremy Miller. Thanks for letting us use your place. This calendar really means a lot to my crew.”

Lieutenant Nice-Ass, Kaden mentally corrected as he took Jeremy’s hand and considered cheerfully killing Max for allowing strange hot men to traipse around his living room without warning him first. He could have had time to change pants, maybe shave a little and not look like a hobo. “Kaden Harris, and I’m glad I could help. Anything for burn victims, right? It’s really fitting, you know, with the theme. Firefighters fighting burn injuries with bare chests.” *Shut up*, Kaden thought to himself. *You’re babbling again.* “Are you guys taking turns getting your picture taken up here or something?”

That hand was warm and firm in his, like Jeremy either didn’t notice the elevator eyes earlier or didn’t care about the sudden barrage of sound that just came from Kaden’s mouth. “Nah, I’m the only one with the time for my solo shot, ’cause I’m not working again until this afternoon. I’ve got to cover a shift for my friend, but I’ve got plenty of time until then.”

“Lucky you, huh?” Kaden chuckled, trying to sound relaxed even as his heart threatened to beat out of his chest. He clamped his mouth shut, biting back any more. It was a problem he had, especially in the presence of guys like Jeremy. Hot, confident, completely out of his league. The floodgates would just open up and suddenly Kaden became Chatty-Fucking-Cathy and before he knew it, he’d say something embarrassing. Psychic readings for a rube were more relaxing than this.

“You could say that. I got lucky that this place is owned by somebody so damned cute.” Jeremy’s smile turned into the cocky smirk Kaden found himself liking a whole lot. Cute? Did Jeremy assume the apartment was owned by Max? “Excuse me if I’m being forward here, but do you have plans for lunch? I’d like to thank you for your help and there’s this great little pizza joint down the block.”

It took a few seconds for Kaden to realize the man was actually talking to him. “Uh, yeah Donatello’s, I know the place.” *Look at me, man. I’m very familiar with Donatello’s and every other pizza joint in a ten-mile radius.*

“Good. I gotta go change out of my uniform, so how about we meet there?” Jeremy looked around the apartment. “You’ve got a nice place, you know. I love this neighborhood.”

Oh well, it was just thanks after all. Kaden managed to hide his disappointment as he answered. “Thanks, you’ve got a nice... ah... everything.”

Jeremy threw back his head, exposing his thick neck, and laughed. Kaden wanted to go hide in the bathroom. Was that laugh amusement at the random compliment, or prelude to Kaden being thoroughly shut down. “Shit, my mouth ran away with me on that one. It does that a lot.”

“It’s all right.” Jeremy was looking at him again, the twinkle in his eye making it perfectly clear that the man was—for some fucked-up reason—interested in more than lunch. “Your mouth can run in that direction all it wants, as long as it gives me a yes for lunch.”

Kaden had that “yes” on his tongue, but the sound of Max opening the door kept him from saying it out loud. “All done, Mr. July—oh hi, Kaden, I see you’ve met Lieutenant Miller. We were just finishing up.”

Suddenly, the thought of cheerfully killing Max was gone in the wake of having scored a date. He owed the man flowers or something. Bright red ones. “No worries, man. Didn’t know my fire escape was that photogenic.”

“Well, it made perfect sense to use it.” Max tossed Jeremy a shirt, then went to his camera bag, packing up his equipment. “You’ve got to see some of these shots. Can we get my friend here a copy of the calendar when it’s done, Lieutenant Miller?”

“I’ll deliver it myself,” Jeremy replied, pulling the shirt on over his head. The “Liberty City FD” logo stretched enticingly over his chest, and as far as Kaden was concerned that made up for covering up all that sexy pale skin..

“That’s okay, you don’t have to do that.” Max looked up from his packing, paused, and turned from Kaden to Jeremy. Then he turned back to Kaden and gave him a huge *I’m so going to give you shit about this the second we’re*

alone grin. “On second thought, we’ll talk about who gets that honor when it’s released.”

“I’ve got to get back to the firehouse and change out of this before lunch. We doing Donatello’s?” Jeremy pressed his hand on Kaden’s shoulder and instead of the “butterflies slam-dancing in his belly” reaction Kaden was expecting, a completely different and very familiar sensation came over him instead. Fuck, this was a very shitty time for a Glimpse.

His entire body flushed hot, then cold, then a more intense kind of hot. Like fire. Kaden could feel fire and heat surrounding him, but it was so dark that he could barely see. Smoke poured all around him. His lungs burned even as the mask around his nose and mouth fed him precious oxygen. How long would this tank last? They’d been fighting this fire for about an hour and he was already on his second one.

Someone shouted from his radio, “The building’s gonna come down! Get outta there!”

Two directions lay ahead. Right—the way they came in—or left. His captain had gone right, should he follow?

“Hurry!”

“Whoa, Kaden, you all right?”

Max was at his side, pulling him off the wall and smoothly lying for him before Kaden could eke out a word. “He’s fine. Just gets a little lightheaded from time to time. Bet he was reading all night, again. Give him some sunshine, and he falls right over.”

Kaden wanted to say something to ease Jeremy’s concerns, to seem normal, all without revealing his Gift, but once again, his mouth engaged before his brain could fully process what he’d seen. “Go left. Take the left.” That was the last coherent thought he had for a while.

Sometimes a friend can help too much.

The Glimpse left Kaden dizzy and unfocused, and Max got him back to bed. By the time Kaden recovered, Max had sent Jeremy off with assurances that Kaden would be “fine,” “not to worry,” “don’t call him, he’ll call you,” and so on. Problem was that they didn’t exchange numbers and Kaden was way too embarrassed to do anything about that. What would Lieutenant Nice-Ass think if he tried to take him up on the lunch offer after that weird display? Kaden couldn’t remember the last time he’d had a spontaneous Glimpse, and certainly not one that threw him for such a loop. It wasn’t like he did much touching outside of his day job in the first place.

The spontaneous ones were the worst. Life-altering decisions were revealed in front of his very eyes, and there was no way to convey what he’d seen without sounding like a nut—or revealing his Gift.

At the same time, Kaden was worried. As usual, the Glimpse didn’t give him much detail as to when Jeremy would have to make that life-altering choice. He hated those kinds. It wasn’t like the punk with the tumor in his nuts, where he could figure it out at any time. This was specific, and, damn it, useless without any kind of time frame. If Kaden warned Jeremy too soon, he could take the left in the wrong emergency. A warning that was too late was, well, too late.

Which was why Kaden did nothing for the rest of the afternoon. Well, not exactly nothing. He tried to finish his book, then tried to watch some talk shows. He avoided picking up his phone when Max called. The last thing he needed was Max’s concern—not about how he was feeling, and not about the lunch date that didn’t happen.

And he watched the news each time it came on, even switching between channels, looking for anything involving devastating fires in all of Liberty City. He kept looking for signs that his words were too confusing, that he’d lost the chance to connect with Jeremy, much less save his life.

Around three in the afternoon, Kaden actually got off his ass and took the bus to the firehouse. He arrived just in time to see one of the engines pulling out of the oversized garage, with sirens wailing and men loaded up inside. Off to save lives, no doubt. Dread chewed up Kaden’s insides—he was too late.

Despite all logic and probability, his mind seemed determined to assume the emergency the crew was roaring off to was the fire in his Glimpse.

And there wasn't a damned thing he could do about it now.

“Breaking news, an inferno at an Eastside apartment complex leaves twenty people homeless and one firefighter fighting for his life.”

The newscaster's voice made Kaden's blood run cold. *One firefighter fighting for his life.*

He had been standing at the stove, adding a pot of meat sauce with extra garlic to a pot of freshly drained spaghetti. A simple dinner for a Tuesday night that had started with torrential rain. He set the empty pan on a cold burner and ran to the TV just in time to see said inferno, burning bright orange and reducing a building into ash.

“The blaze started around 2:45 this afternoon, with faulty wiring as the probable cause, pending investigation. Two separate fire departments were on the scene, and even with their joint efforts, the fire took out seven apartments altogether. Were it not for the sudden rainfall, the entire housing complex would have been in danger.”

Kaden sat on the couch, listening to devastated witnesses talk about the speed of the fire, the extreme heat, and the loss of their homes and belongings. He felt like such a heel, because all he wanted to know was the identity of the fallen firefighter. Why didn't he risk the discovery of his Gift and just explain his warning to Jeremy? Was saving his own fat ass more important? Selfish fucker.

“The Liberty City Fire Department is keeping mum on the injured firefighter's identity until his family arrives at Mordin Memorial Hospital.”

Maybe Kaden could go to the hospital, pretend to be a cousin or something. It worked in movies and soap operas, right? Pretending to be a “brother” or a “cousin” so you could sit at your loved one's side? It made for

great drama, but there was no way he'd be able to pull it off. He was a round fat redhead and Jeremy looked nothing like him.

He sat on the loveseat, ignoring his supper as the five o'clock news came and went. He barely noticed *Wheel of Fortune*, *Jeopardy*, and two syndicated shows while he waited for the ten o'clock newscast in hopes for more details. Dinner went cold, but it wasn't like he had any appetite anyway. The ten o'clock news had just started when there was a knock on his door, a banging loud enough to make Kaden jump. It didn't sound like Max's staccato taps. Maybe they had the wrong door. Kaden considered ignoring it, but the knocks were loud and insistent and if he didn't see to it, his other neighbors would complain.

"Jeez, I'm coming, lay off the door already!" he grumbled, eying the TV screen as he unfastened the locks and opened the door.

The smell of rain and smoke quickly turned his head. Jeremy stood there, leaning on the door frame, looking the complete opposite of the cocky man Kaden had met just this morning. Soaked, eyes frantic, chest heaving as if he'd been running. His gray T-shirt clung tight and wet against his chest, only half tucked into dark jeans. Water dripped off his nose and chin.

"You're okay." Kaden took a step back, letting his eyes rake over Jeremy's un-scorched body.

"You were right." Jeremy's voice was rough and raspy, probably from the smoke.

"What?" *Play dumb, Kaden. You're good at playing dumb. As long as you don't start rambling, you can play dumb! Christ, you're rambling in your own thoughts. Just shut up!*

Jeremy walked past the threshold, dripping water on the carpet. He stared at Kaden in complete wonder as Kaden closed the door. "You were right. About the left, I mean. You said 'take the left', and I didn't know what you were talking until I was in that blaze, and it felt like *déjà vu*. You saved my fucking life."

That look was filled with a gratitude Kaden was certain he didn't deserve, even if he could cop to his powers. A small part of him—okay, a lot of him—was so happy he could help. Finally his powers actually did someone some good, but he could never tell the man how it worked.

“Look, Jeremy, man, I'm so glad you're all right. I was watching the news just now and when I heard about the guy in the hospital, I was really worried. I was just babbling when I said that before, honestly.” *I'm babbling now, fuck!* “I get tongue-tied in front of very hot guys and it was just the first thing that came out of my—”

Jeremy's mouth slammed over his before he even knew the man had come closer. The scents of smoke and rain filled Kaden's nose with one surprised inhale even as Jeremy's tongue invaded his mouth. It was exactly four heartbeats before Kaden's brain caught up with what was going on, and by then his arms were already tight around Jeremy's narrow waist, pulling him tight. His shirt and the front of his pants were getting wet with the rain Jeremy brought in, but the kiss was so unexpectedly hot that Kaden swore he saw steam when they finally parted.

“I know,” Jeremy whispered against his lips, his fingers rubbing over Kaden's beard, which Kaden had actually managed to neaten up before his pointless trip to the station. Kaden held back the urge to purr outright and beg for another kiss. “My Nan, she always knew what folks were thinking. Had a gift, we'd say, but she'd never cop to it. You had the same look she often did. I couldn't place it at first, since she's been dead for nearly ten years. I wanted to come back earlier and tell you that I got it, but we got the alarm for that fire first. When I was in that building and I had to decide which way was out...” He shook his head and gave Kaden another kiss, this one soft and quick.

Kaden melted into that kiss with relief. Jeremy knew. He KNEW. “I couldn't tell you. I wanted to tell you! I just didn't know how to tell you to be careful without looking like a complete wacko. I went to your firehouse but your fire truck had just pulled out. We, folks like your Nan and me, we can't tell too many folks. Hell, my family doesn't really know. Your Nan was real lucky. God, I'm so damned glad you're okay and in one piece.” The palms of

Kaden's hands pressed into Jeremy's sides and he suppressed the urge to pull the wet fabric up and touch the skin he'd drooled over just that morning, before he worried himself sick about the man's fate. "How'd you get here?"

Jeremy grinned, cupping the back of Kaden's head with both hands. "I ran from the firehouse. I was at the hospital until I was sure my captain was gonna make it. He'll be out of commission for a while. After that, I knew I needed to find you."

"No umbrella, no car?" It was almost five miles to Kaden's apartment and the rain hadn't let up.

"I was running on adrenaline, wasn't really thinking," Jeremy murmured, and Kaden was surprised that the bigger man wasn't shivering. Until he gave a little tremor. "Not the best way to ask you out again, I know."

Kaden laughed and nodded at the stove. "It's not Donatello's, but I've got pasta and red sauce that I haven't touched yet." He moved his hands to Jeremy's arms and started to rub them, trying to warm the man. "And you're freezing. I've got a shower and a dryer, if you want 'em. It would suck if you survived a fire only to catch pneumonia or something."

Jeremy pulled Kaden closer by the back of the neck. "Mmm, food and a shower? Is that all you're offering?"

"You also get all of my babbling that you can stand." Kaden managed around a suddenly dry mouth.

And before he could say another word and ruin the moment, Kaden leaned forward, pressing their lips together once more.

Soft kisses against his shoulder woke Kaden the next morning. Was it morning? he room was still very dark, so he wasn't sure. It took him a minute to remember that he wasn't alone in his bed having a sweet and sexy dream.

Should he lie still and savor Jeremy's kisses on his neck and warm body against his back? Or should he move and press his ass along the very enticing erection and maybe coax the man it was attached to into making use of it?

“...early riser?” Kaden murmured, deciding to lie still and let Jeremy know that his attentions were appreciated.

Jeremy’s morning stubble scraped against Kaden’s spine as he kept kissing. “Part of the job. Sorry I passed out on you last night. Promise our next date’ll end better.”

Date? Last night when Jeremy’s shivers broke their series of kisses, Kaden had offered Jeremy use of the shower while his clothes tumbled in the dryer. Then they shared his dinner while Jeremy made himself entirely too tempting with just a towel around his waist. They changed the channel from the news to *Criminal Minds*. The conversation wandered from crime procedural shows, to books, then sports, but even before Kaden could switch over to ESPN to catch the highlights, Jeremy’s eyelids were drooping. Funny how the combination of hours of fighting a huge blaze, dealing with nearly dying, worrying about his boss in the hospital, and then running five miles in the pouring rain completely drained a man.

Jeremy was so apologetic when Kaden led him to bed, and by the time Kaden returned from his own shower, Jeremy was completely passed out. Kaden thought him dead to the world as he slid next to him between the sheets, but once he was settled, Jeremy reached for him. Two things immediately became obvious. One, the hot firefighter was a cuddler, managing to pull Kaden practically under him while still asleep. Two, they’d forgotten to pull his clothes out of the dryer before going to sleep, leaving Jeremy gloriously nude. Kaden found himself wishing he’d thought to pull off his own sleep pants so they could sleep skin on skin, but that would have required moving from the cozy cave that was Jeremy and the blankets.

It wasn’t the first time Kaden managed to fall asleep with a hard-on, but he could vouch that it was probably the most memorable.

The way Jeremy was currently rubbing his cheeks against one of Kaden’s soft flanks made Kaden’s dick wake up and protest last night’s neglect. It definitely made him completely forget about dates, this one or the next. “Fucking hell, how are you into someone like me?”

Great, his mouth was fully engaged in *say the first thing on his mind* mode. While apparently useful in revealing life-saving omens, Kaden feared it was going to fuck up this “thing” if it kept going.

And it kept going. “I mean, damn, you’re surrounded by hot-as-fuck dudes all day long! And have you looked in a mirror lately? Shit.” He took in a sharp breath as teeth grazed his hip. “I just can’t believe you’re here, kissing on me. You’re not just here out of gratitude, right?”

Jeremy’s mouth left his skin, and Kaden felt the firefighter pull on his shoulder, guiding him onto his back while Jeremy loomed over him. Kaden’s mouth kept going, because he needed to know before he could allow himself to relax and fully enjoy the attention. “It’s not, right? You asked me out of gratitude for letting you guys and my bat-shit crazy best friend use my fire escape, and last night and all the kissing and stuff was because my fucking Gift went haywire. It’s usually not spontaneous like that. I usually have to concentrate. I don’t even know why I’m even telling you any of this.”

“Kaden.” Jeremy leaned down and kissed him, giving his bottom lip a bite hard enough to make Kaden stop talking and moan. His hips jerked up to brush his equally needy erection against Jeremy’s, and Jeremy chuckled. “I’ll have to remember that kissing you is the only way to shut you the hell up long enough for me to get a word in.”

Kaden opened his mouth to object to the kiss-him-quiet method, but Jeremy employed that method again, and again, and again, until all Kaden could do was melt into the mattress and listen.

“First of all, I don’t know what kind of guy you think I am, but you turned me on the second I saw you in the window. I was so disappointed when at first I didn’t see you when I got up here for my solo photo. And after you warned me... well, I’ve got a serious thing for sweet guys who worry about my hide.” His fingers mapped out the hair on Kaden’s chest, lightly scratching and pulling. “Does *this* feel like gratitude to you?”

Kaden tried to speak up again, but this time Jeremy shut him up by grinding their cocks together, his bare and Kaden’s covered by flannel sleep

pants. Nope, that didn't feel like gratitude at all. That felt like wonderful and the way Jeremy kissed his fuzzy jaw made it so much better.

"Still owe you a proper date, though." Jeremy directed his attention to Kaden's neck while his hips kept rocking and grinding. Fuck, if he kept that up, Kaden was going to come his brains out like a teenager having his first wet dream. And yet, with all that hard muscle sliding against him, he was quickly starting not to care.

"I think we're way past *proper*." Kaden panted, reaching out in the dark to touch Jeremy's smooth back, his neck, the slight prickle of new growth on Jeremy's head.

Normally, Kaden would be just a little worried about falling into bed with a man he'd barely known. It was the kiss of death for any sort of relationship outside of fuck-buddies, and he was pretty damned sure that wasn't what he wanted. Even with a ridiculously hot firefighter who was glad to have survived another inferno. The urge to babble his way into asking Jeremy's intentions nearly outgrew his urge to spill into his pants.

Then that urge to come gave way to the hot-cold flash of another Glimpse.

Dark tan sheets. A soft, warm body spooned against his side. The sun streamed through opened black-out curtains. Kaden gave in to the irresistible urge to squeeze the body close and bury his nose into the mass of dark red curls pressed against his cheek. Damn, just lying next to his man turned him on more than anyone ever had before. Maybe if he woke him right now, they could have another go-'round before work.

His lover turned his head and Kaden found himself staring into his own sleepy, love-drunk eyes.

"Kaden? Kaden!"

Kaden blinked once, twice, three times as the slight dizziness passed and his vision cleared. The lamp near his bed was on, and he could see Jeremy in all of his naked glory. It helped that the man was sitting up with both hands gripped on Kaden's shoulders. It was a nice up-close view.

“You left me for a second, man.”

Kaden recalled the Glimpse and his lips curled into a calm smile as he leaned into Jeremy’s arms, happy to share. “What color are your sheets?”

“According to my fancy-pants sister-in-law, ‘chestnut’. They look brown to me.” Jeremy’s breaths blew against Kaden’s auburn hair as he spoke. “Why?”

And the smile threatened to split Kaden’s face in half. Sure, it had been another spontaneous Glimpse, but it was all he needed to ease his concerns about this so-far unconventional courtship. It didn’t matter if what he saw through Jeremy’s eyes would happen next week, next month, or ten years from now.

He reached for the lamp to turn it off, plunging the room back into near darkness. “I could babble about that now,” he murmured, gently pushing Jeremy back down on the bed and kissing up his jaw. “Or you could shut me up.”

THE END

Author Bio

Nicole Forcine was born a strange child, probably with composition book and pen in hand (from the hordes that still haunt her trusty trunk), and way too many voices in her head. When two of them talk loud enough to overshadow the rest, a story is born. Currently she resides in Minneapolis with one of the most laid-back men in history and his even more laid-back cat. She's also very excited and nervous about her very first book, This Little Whatever, coming out this fall from Dreamspinner Press. Send help and gummi worms

Contact & Media Info

[Email](#) | [Webpage](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Goodreads](#)