

LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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CHERRY BLOSSOMS AND TITANIUM

Tia Fielding

Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

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By Tia Fielding

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.

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Tia Fielding

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Photo Description

One man kneels in front of another man, leaning to his midsection. It looks like a submissive pose, but also like they're maybe comforting one another? Both men are dressed casually, and you can't tell if the kneeling man is wearing a collar or not.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

He's been my Master for a long time, the day he collared me was one of the happiest in my life. But lately I have the feeling that there's a distance between us, that he's withdrawing and I don't know why. I'm doing my best to be his perfect boy, I need him to be happy, and serving him and being there for him whenever he needs me are one of the most important things in my life.

But why is he so cold? Why isn't he happy anymore? What did I do wrong? Should I ask him? What if I don't like his answer? What I can do to help?

Losing him would break my heart; if I lose him, I have nothing... But I know it's within his rights to send me away, to take my collar back... but that would kill me. I love him. He knows that. Does he?

Please give this sub and his master a HEA :)

I like BDSM, angst, and whatever you want to write, the only thing I don't like is post-apocalypse (but I don't see it with that pic anyway).

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Kat

Story Info

Genre: contemporary, D/s

Tags: age gap, tattoo artist, BDSM, sweet no sex, established couples, over age 40, tear jerker, cancer, HFN

Word count: 3,286

CHERRY BLOSSOMS AND TITANIUM

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Hutch leaned his shoulder to the doorframe and couldn't help but smile. His sub, Keenan, was washing the dishes and dancing to the song playing on his docked iPod. The boy was singing too, loudly and beautifully, and Hutch wondered how on earth Keenan could do three things at the same time without flinging soap suds and cutlery everywhere.

He straightened his pose and Keenan saw him from the corner of his eye. The young man whirled around and beamed a smile at Hutch. The smile fell when he didn't get one in return.

"You're early, Sir." Keenan said and wiped his hands on the kitchen towel before turning down the music.

"Yes, the latest client couldn't take more than the outlining today." Hutch explained.

He worked as a tattoo artist downstairs in the redbrick he'd first rented and then eventually bought from his uncle. The upstairs was Hutch's apartment. His and Keenan's. Had been for several years now, but Hutch didn't know how to keep it that way. He was scared, but he couldn't bring himself to speak about his worries with his submissive.

"I was thinking we could order pizza tonight?" Keenan asked, offering Hutch an uncertain little smile.

Hutch hated to see him like this, hated that his handful of a boy had become a timid, almost scared creature who wasn't able to be himself around his Dominant.

"Sure, that's fine by me. Why don't you finish this and order the pizzas while I go and sketch some?" He turned to go and rubbed his chest when he felt the twinge yet again.

“Okay.” The tone of Keenan’s voice told Hutch more than the younger man could ever guess.

Hutch went to the living room and picked up his favorite sketchbook from the coffee table. His box of pencils and the set of Faber-Castell colored pencils were next to the armchair he usually sat in while working on ideas. Today he didn’t have ideas, just worries, and he wondered how his life had gone to shit so fast.

One morning, about a month ago, he felt the strange pull in his left pec. Or so he thought. The pain didn’t go away during his morning shower and he panicked a little. That was the first time he pushed Keenan away. When Keenan, after putting on the coffee maker, had joined him in the shower, he’d left his sub there, looking surprised when Hutch rushed out as soon as he could instead of showering together like they normally did.

He’d thought it was his heart when the pain didn’t go away like a muscle spasm would have. He had always thought that he’d be the first to go since he was fourteen years older than Keenan. He knew he’d have to call his doctor, but he put it off for a day or two just because he was so scared. That, naturally, showed to Keenan who—like any good sub—was finely tuned to his master’s needs and moods.

That had been the second time Hutch pushed him away. He couldn’t help it. If he was dying, wouldn’t it be easier for Keenan to be pushed away now? Set free so that when the time came, he wouldn’t have to grieve so much.

Three weeks ago, he’d finally gone to see his doctor. To his surprise, Doctor Jameson had found a lump in his chest. A lump. Like the one his mother had had. Yes. The two words he’d learned to be afraid of since he was little kid were uttered in his presence again; breast cancer.

“You should tell Keenan. Whatever it is, you’ll need his support to survive this, Hutch,” the doc had said.

Hutch had mumbled something unintelligible and run from the office. The needle biopsy was scheduled for the week after. He managed to sneak away

for it when Keenan was babysitting his niece and nephew in the next town over.

Waiting for those results had been a struggle like no other. He'd lost his temper at everyone from his artists downstairs to a squirmy client to, worst of all, Keenan. Keenan who did nothing but be perfect.

Nothing had changed in his boy's behavior at first. He still wore the titanium collar Hutch had given him in lieu of an engagement ring two years ago. He still did everything he could to anticipate Hutch's every need. He was the best submissive anyone could wish for and Hutch loved him like he'd never thought to love another person.

Gradually, over the course of the last few weeks, things had changed. Keenan smiled less; he began tiptoeing around Hutch as if on eggshells. His confident, gorgeous submissive had become a timid creature who seemed to shrink a little every time Hutch came into the room instead of straightening up and beaming like a flower greeting sunshine.

The first biopsy had been *inconclusive*; that was the word Doctor Jameson had used. They'd needed to do another one, and with the schedule hectic for some reason or another, they'd managed that only four days ago. The results weren't in yet.

"Is something wrong, Sir?" Keenan's tentative voice carried to Hutch's armchair from the doorway.

Another thing Keenan never did before was hover. He knew Hutch hated it, so he never did it, and he had no reason to, before. Now, apparently, he did.

"I..." For a moment, Hutch was lost. He looked at the beautiful man standing there with clear longing in his blue eyes, and he almost cracked.

The impulse went away quickly and Hutch averted his gaze, cleared his throat and shook his head. "No, I'm fine."

"I just came to tell you the pizza is here."

There must've been the doorbell and Keenan talking to the pizza guy... How had Hutch missed that?

“You know what, Sir?” The tone of Keenan’s voice, slightly rough, and decidedly firm, shook Hutch out of the odd stupor he’d apparently fallen into again.

“Huh?” Eloquent, especially for a man who prided himself on his dominant nature.

“I say ‘bullshit’, Sir.” Keenan walked closer and stood next to the armchair, staring at Hutch from above.

“W-what...?” Now Hutch, his mind still somewhere else, was completely lost.

Suddenly nothing made sense. This wasn’t how his boy behaved! Keenan never cursed, especially not at Hutch. He was too respectful.

“I said *bullshit*, Sir.” Keenan repeated, then pointed at the sketchpad on Hutch’s lap. “You’re drawing cherry blossoms.”

Feeling utterly stupid, Hutch looked down and saw that yes, indeed, he’d been drawing cherry blossoms. He hated to tattoo those things, and he certainly never drew them for fun. Keenan had noticed years ago that Hutch only drew them when he was having some sort of inner turmoil about something.

“What’s going on, Sir?” Keenan knelt between Hutch’s feet, most likely blocking the escape route on purpose.

Hutch cleared his throat again and tried to fend off the panic, the sense of imminent loss, without success. He didn’t know what he feared losing, because he’d lose Keenan anyway. Maybe even soon.

“I don’t know what you mean, boy.”

Keenan closed his eyes and frowned just enough for it to show. The boy swallowed hard and Hutch, being so in tune with this gorgeous person he’d called his own for years now, could tell Keenan was going through an inner struggle.

“No,” Keenan finally stated, and opened his deep blue eyes that were suddenly brimming with tears. “No. I’ve had enough.” He swallowed again

and glanced away from Hutch's face, giving him enough time to school his own features.

But no anticipating could have prepared him for what came next.

"Carambola." The word was spoken in a firm tone. Firm enough for it to cut through Hutch's being, his heart and soul and everything that he was.

The conscientious Master inside the man who was worried sick, scared for his life and feeling so damn alone, jumped to the fore.

Hutch scrambled to move the pad of paper and the pencil he'd been holding to the small table next to the chair, his hands flying to take hold of Keenan's face.

"What is it? What's wrong, Keenan?" His whole being reacted to the word much like someone else might have reacted to a hastily called out "Fire!" Hutch was all action now, all for finding out why his submissive had used his safe word.

Whatever it was that bothered his submissive so, it was going to be fixed. Right now. Because his submissive wouldn't be allowed to be in distress for long, not if it was anything Hutch could repair.

The almost-bitter chuckle from Keenan's mouth surprised him, though. The blue eyes turning cool in front of him shocked him to the core.

"What's wrong? *What's wrong?!*" Hutch's boy shouted and leaned back, falling to his butt as he scrambled away. "You! *You're* wrong, you stupid man!" Hutch was opening his mouth, but Keenan stopped him with an angry gesture. "No! For weeks you've been acting weird, Hutch. For *weeks!* You're like a shell of my Master and I don't know what to do because you don't even keep me at arm's length, you keep me on the fucking other side of the room!"

"You barely touch me; you're in pain and I can see it, yet you don't talk to me about it! I don't know what's going on here, Hutch, but you'll have to start talking or I will walk out of that door right now!" The anger radiating from Keenan startled Hutch, chilled him to the core.

He looked away from the submissive shaking with rage and worry on the floor, and saw only mementos from their trips around the country, a painting from Hawaii that was corny but had nice shades of purple—Keenan's favorite color—on it, the tacky statue of a Golden Retriever Hutch had bought from a flea market in Florida... Everything in this room, this whole apartment, screamed their relationship. Everything around them was as much Keenan's as it was Hutch's, and more than that, it was *theirs*. Together.

"You know what, obviously you're not going to talk, so maybe you should get the key right now." Keenan was holding his collar between his thumb and index finger so that the lock was facing Hutch. "You don't see me as an equal partner anymore. You hide things from me. I told you that was a deal breaker for me."

Quietly, Hutch let go of his ego and moved his hands to the collar of his T-shirt. He could hear Keenan inhale sharply, disbelievingly, when Hutch touched the chain on which the key to Keenan's collar was hanging. Instead of pulling the chain free, Hutch made the decision he now realized he should've made weeks ago. He took a hold of the shirt's collar and pulled it over his head.

Once his curiously tattoo-free skin was visible, he turned his torso so that his left side was facing Keenan. For the first time Keenan could see what he'd been hiding under his clothes. Suddenly a whole new kind of fear invaded Hutch's mind. He'd kept it hidden, done everything he could not to show himself shirtless in front of Keenan. With the truth out now, shouldn't he feel relief instead of dread?

It took the boy a few moments to see the tiny Band-Aid over the side of Hutch's pectoral muscle.

"W-what?" Now it was Keenan who was lost. He let go of his collar and crawled back to Hutch, eyes peeled at the Band-Aid.

"I—" Hutch's voice was barely a croak and he coughed once, then concentrated his gaze on the garish painting of a Hawaiian sunset. "I found a lump."

It took a great effort not to move when Keenan touched the bruising that had formed around the spot where the needle had gone in the second time.

“I’m not going to ask why you didn’t tell me. I’m too pissed off to ask.” Keenan stated quietly, still stroking the area around the round piece of plastic.

“I’m so—”

“No you don’t get to say that. Because then I’d have to forgive you for this. For putting us through all this! Hutch, what the hell?” Keenan’s sharp gaze penetrated Hutch’s skull, or so it felt.

“I thought... Don’t have the results yet. If it’s cancer...”

“Let me finish that for you, shall I? You thought that if you have cancer, you’ll die and it’s better for you to drive me away now before I’ll actually be *sad* over you dying?” Hutch had never thought his usually calm and happy submissive was capable of such contempt.

He couldn’t lie. He could omit the truth, but he wouldn’t lie. “Yeah...”

“You stupid, stupid man...” Keenan fell back to sit on the floor and looked up at Hutch. “Do you remember what I wrote in my part of our contract?”

Hutch thought back. They’d written a real contract when he’d collared Keenan. It wasn’t a typical contract between a submissive and his Dominant. It was more like a declaration of what they meant to one another. Almost like wedding vows, but with a few mutually agreed rules about their D/s relationship added to it.

The words of Keenan’s section of their vows came to him easily.

“And even though we didn’t exchange rings, other than the one you put around my neck today, I will be yours in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, until you fuck up so badly I can’t forgive you.” Keenan quoted.

“Can you? Just one more time?” Hutch asked, because he’d fucked up before. Keenan had too, after all, they were both just men and they’d been together for years. Until this evening, he’d never fucked up badly enough he’d seriously thought Keenan might walk away.

“As long as you stop drawing cherry blossoms.”

“Okay.” Hutch nodded solemnly.

“It might not be cancer anyway.” The positivity Hutch had been lacking started to radiate from Keenan slowly but surely. “It might be something else. A benign lump.” Suddenly Hutch couldn’t understand why he’d chosen to go through any of this alone. He needed the man in front of him like he needed air. The hope, the love... It was all there for him still and he couldn’t have been more grateful.

His cell phone began to dance across the coffee table’s surface, and Keenan grabbed it.

“Doctor Jameson’s office.” Keenan read the caller ID and moved closer as he held out the phone for Hutch to take.

Hutch cleared his throat and took a deep breath. “They promised to call me as soon as they had the results, night or day.”

“So go ahead, Sir. Let’s see what the future has in store for us.” Keenan smiled gently and leaned forward, placing his head on Hutch’s lap and embracing his waist awkwardly.

Hutch pressed the button and raised the phone to his ear with one hand. The other found the silky strands of his submissive’s, his lover’s, hair.

“Hutch speaking,” he said into the phone, and then he waited.

THE END

Author Bio

Tia Fielding has been writing for as long as she can remember. It was her dream to have a book published before her thirtieth birthday. She missed that date by one day and is still a little bitter, two years later. Never the one to stick to one genre, Tia has written anything from cowboys to vampires, BDSM to shifters and so on. There are still a few genres she wouldn't mind attempting to bring her own flair to. She's been published mainly by Dreamspinner Press and her fourth novel will be published by Dreamspinner in Aug/Sept of 2013.

Contact Info

[Email](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Website](#)