

LOVE Has NO Boundaries



Don't Read in the Closet Event 2013

PLAYING THE FIELD

Penny Brandon

Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

PLAYING THE FIELD

By Penny Brandon

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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Photo Description

An athletic, muscular man, aged about twenty-seven, with short, dark hair, is looking sideways at someone only he can see. Tribal-type tattoos adorn his shoulders and biceps, and a large scroll tattoo covers his ripped abs. He's wearing white briefs and nothing else.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

He was the one that finally broke through the walls of one of the most successful young soccer coaches, who was secretive with his personal life. The coach was seen a few times with women in public, but no one really knew about the coach's secret true desires... until he came along and there was no denying the sexual tension between them.

Contemporary, with no paranormal or shifters.

The other M/C is open to the author, preferable would be someone also in the sports industry. HEA please, with lots of sexual tension and sex, of course... lol.

Sincerely,

Shiri

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: sports, soccer, coming out, tattoo, athlete, first time, two alpha males

Word count: 8,385

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“Hey, Ref! Are you serious? You’ve gotta be blind, man!” Danny looked up through spiked lashes, seeing red, literally. “Fuck, I’m bleeding!” Swiping away at the flow coming from the cut in his eyebrow, Danny faced the referee who was holding up a yellow card. “I didn’t do anything! That motherfucker elbowed me!”

“Danny!”

Glancing left toward the sidelines, Danny grimaced. Rick stood there, looking as furious as Danny felt, but his fury was aimed at Danny, not the ref. Shoulders slumped, Danny let his anger drain away as he realized why. Swearing at the ref would earn him a red card if he wasn’t careful. He glanced back at the balding guy in his black jersey and ridiculously short shorts, and pulled in a deep breath. The ref didn’t look as if he’d be open to an apology, but Danny tried one anyway. “Sorry,” he mumbled, dabbing at his eyebrow again.

“Another one of these and you’re off, Bateman. Now get the bleeding stopped or you’re off anyway.”

Danny just nodded and trotted over to the sideline, averting his gaze from the man he’d been trying to impress the last few months. Losing his temper on the field was embarrassing enough; what was worse was Rick had witnessed it.

“What the hell are you trying to do, Danny?” Rick’s deep voice stopped Danny from wincing as the medic slapped on some gauze to stem the flow of blood before peeling it away and smearing some muck over the cut.

“Win the game.”

“Well, you’re not going to do that by getting yourself sent off.”

“Yeah, I know. I’ll be careful.”

“You’d better, or I’ll pull you off myself, and you won’t be going back on for the rest of the season.”

“Coach!” Finally drawing enough courage to look Rick in the eye, Danny had to stop his normal response of sucking in a breath and letting it out on a soft moan. Every time he saw those deep-brown eyes, Danny wanted to grab the man and devour him. Mouth, cock, ass, Danny didn’t care as long he had a chance to taste the man who was quietly driving him insane.

“Six more wins, Danny. That’s all we need to sit at the top of the league.”

“I know.”

“Then get back out there and reduce it down to five.”

As the medic stood back after doing his job, Danny started to turn to trot back onto the field. A light touch on his arm stopped him. “It doesn’t look bad. You won’t need stitches or anything.” Danny wasn’t concerned about the cut. He’d almost forgotten it, though he’d probably be reminded of it later when the game was over. What concerned him was that Rick was touching him; his warm fingers almost a caress as they rested on his forearm.

Body tightening in a way he couldn’t control, Danny mentally wondered what would happen if he leaned in toward Rick and breathed in his scent. That might last him a few nights of fantasies, or it might wreck his chance of proving to Rick he was a good pick for the team.

Being gay and a sportsman didn’t often go hand in hand, but Danny had decided being one wouldn’t hinder him from being the other. Out, and proudly so, he nevertheless had to push himself harder than most when it came to proving himself on the field. Not that he wasn’t a good striker, but opinions about his sexual orientation still wavered, and though he was never openly judged, he felt that sometimes he wasn’t taken as seriously as others with his skill. That was, until Rick had chosen him above everyone else trying out for the position, and forever made him an idol in Danny’s eyes.

However, Danny knew the difference between idolizing a man and wanting him in a bed with his ass in the air. It seemed Rick did, too, but Rick definitely didn’t want anything to do with the latter, and he pretty much disregarded the

former, which left Danny not knowing how to react to the man. He wasn't allowed to flirt, and he wasn't allowed to idolize, but every time he was close to Rick, Danny needed to do something.

Clearing his throat, he dared another look into those bedroom eyes and smiled. "It's all right, Coach, it's not my face guys think about when I've got them where I want them." With that, Danny turned and ran onto the pitch, feeling the burn in the middle of his back as Rick stared after him.

Eyes closed, breath heaving, Rick Saunders silently counted repetitions, all the while trying to forget the look in Danny's eyes, the words he'd said, and the smile that promised so much. No way could he give in to the desire burning through his body, or to the need tearing a hole in his heart. As the coach responsible for his team's successful rise in the A-league, he couldn't indulge in personal needs. The team came first. The game came first; everything else was secondary. And anyway, no one knew he was gay.

Maybe Danny did.

"Shit!" Losing count, Rick flopped back on the bench and threw an arm across his face. Of course Danny knew he was gay, it was in every glance, every touch, every smile he gave. He knew, and it was also obvious Danny was interested in him. Obvious to Rick anyway. Thankfully no one else had noticed; at least in that Danny had curbed his usual exuberant self and hadn't made an actual move on him.

Wiping the sweat off his face, Rick remained lying on his back. He didn't need to open his eyes to know he was alone in the gym. He only came here when everyone had gone home to their families, their lovers. It was easier that way, because then he had no one to distract him, to remind him he didn't have anyone to go home to. So he kept them closed and instead indulged in a fantasy he knew was as dangerous to him now as it was three months ago when he'd first surrendered to it.

Picturing Danny was easy; the man's image was printed permanently on his mind. However, what was a little harder was visualising him naked. Not

because Rick had a problem with Danny standing in front of him with no clothes on, but because he had no way of knowing how long Danny's cock was, how it would look when hard, how Danny would wrap a hand around it and stroke himself. All that was pure imagination. Thankfully his imagination was pretty vivid, so he drew upon it now and pretended Danny was straddling him, his cock already dripping, that smile on his face, and the same desire in his eyes Rick had seen aimed his way more than once.

Reaching into his shorts, Rick pulled on his dick, getting it hard, which didn't take more than a few seconds, not with the way he could almost see Danny leaning over him, closing the distance between them, bringing their cocks together.

Groaning, Rick pushed his shorts out of the way and moved his hand faster. He arched his back, muscles tensing, his feet planted firmly on the floor. Danny's scent seemed to surround him, that fresh tang which came from hard exercise, mixed with a dark musk Rick assumed would be the way Danny would smell when turned on. He licked his lips, tasting salt, and wondered if that would be the way Danny would taste. He also wondered how Danny would feel, but before he could imagine more than just the tip of Danny's cock sliding into his mouth, his body tightened, his orgasm imminent.

Having never experienced anything other than the touch of his own hand, Rick still wanted to believe it was Danny's palm gripping him, pleasuring him, and it was that last phantom impression that tipped him over. A familiar tingle shot down his spine just before another familiar sensation hit his stomach and chest. Holding back on a cry of completion, Rick still moaned, softly whispering Danny's name—cutting it off abruptly the instant he heard the distinct click of the gym's door falling shut.

Snapping his eyes open, Rick almost fell off the bench as he hastily sat up, scouring the room to see who had entered. The room remained empty of everything but him and the gym equipment. No one else was there, yet Rick quickly realized someone had been.

Cursing, with fear pumping adrenalin into him far faster than any cliff-hanger of a game ever had, Rick scrambled to his feet. Ignoring the sticky

mess on his skin, he threw on a T-shirt, then grabbed his bag and headed toward the door. He dreaded opening it, positive his silent witness would be waiting for him. Summoning up the courage, Rick pressed his hand against the door. It swung open easily, revealing no one on the other side or lingering in the passageway. His relief, however, was temporary. He had no idea who had been in the gym with him, or what their reaction to what they'd seen or heard would be, but whomever it was, whatever it was; it wasn't going to be good.

Danny sat on the bench massaging his calf muscle while trying to discreetly eye up Rick. The coach was giving last minute instructions to Lawson, the goalkeeper, while everyone else filed out. Danny waited, knowing he would get his chance the second Lawson left for the training field.

Rick glanced his way, then deliberately turned his back. Danny grinned, until he spotted the frown on Lawson's brow. Lawson didn't like him. Usually that wouldn't bother Danny. They played on opposite sides of the pitch, and they very rarely trained together, even though Danny was the team's best striker, but the dislike wasn't professional. Lawson disliked Danny because he was gay, so that made it personal.

Focusing on his calf, though in reality there was nothing wrong with it, he nevertheless knew the moment Rick stood alone in the changing room.

"You okay, Danny?"

Rick's concern, though unwarranted, had Danny smiling. "Yeah, just a knot." He stood and shook his leg, then put all his weight on it for emphasis. "It's fine."

"Are you sure? I don't want you going out there and tearing up a muscle." Rick took a couple of steps toward him, coming eye to eye.

Stomach flipping, though he managed to control that hitch in his breath as he met Rick's warm gaze, Danny nodded. God, he wanted to kiss him, more so after he'd caught him in the gym the other night. It had been pure torture walking away from the most erotic sight he'd ever seen, but he hadn't wanted

to alarm Rick, hadn't wanted to confront him about the name Rick had whispered during his climax. Not then anyway. Now was a different matter.

He'd had time to think over the past couple of days, and time to consider his options. If he kept tiptoeing around Rick, letting the man pretend they didn't want each other, then it would remain that way forever. Someone had to grow some balls, and if Rick wasn't going to, then Danny knew he must.

"I think I'd like to come round to your place tonight," he said, forcing himself to keep his gaze steady and not allow it to drop to Rick's mouth.

"Pardon?"

"Your place. Tonight. I think it's time."

"What the fuck are you going on about?" If he hadn't just spotted Rick licking his lips a split-second before his eyes filled with desire, Danny would have believed Rick didn't know. As it was, Rick's cheeks tinted a light pink and he took a step closer, not further away.

"How about eight o'clock, after training?"

"You're not coming to my house." Rick's dark gaze raked Danny from head to toe and back again. The look in his eyes this time was fear. Danny knew that fear; it was the fear of discovery, of being found out. He'd got past it. Rick would too.

"Then come back to mine."

"I don't know what you're playing at, Danny, but whatever it is, stop it."

"I'm not playing at anything. I want you, and you want me—"

"No."

"I'm not blind, Rick; neither am I stupid. If you didn't want me, you would have walked away by now. You wouldn't be standing here, waiting for me to convince you it's okay."

"Convince me that it's okay to lose my job and the respect I've earned as coach? Not in a million fucking years, Danny."

Blowing out a breath, Danny fought back a grin. At least Rick had finally admitted to being gay, even if it was in a round-about way. “It’s not like that, and you know it. You can’t get fired from your job because of your sexual orientation, Rick. And would you want to lead a team of men who couldn’t respect you for who you really are?”

Shaking his head, Rick ran a hand through his hair, but he was mute as he stared at Danny. There was a war going on inside that head, a war of desire and denial. Danny waited to see which one won, not sure how much more he could push. When Rick started to walk away, disappointment tore at Danny; not because he wasn’t going to get what he wanted, but because Rick wasn’t.

“No one will know why I’m there,” he challenged as a last resort.

Rick stopped, but he didn’t meet Danny’s eyes. “Everyone knows you’re gay.”

“So? That doesn’t mean they’ll automatically think you’re gay. Even if you are.” Danny waited to see if Rick would deny it again. It really was pointless. Danny only needed to remember Rick in the gym, hard cock in his hand, body tight, moaning out his name, to know how pointless it was.

Jaw tight, uncertainty written in every line of his body, Rick stood motionless. Realizing they were at an impasse, Danny sighed. “I’ll be at your front door at eight. It’s up to you if you want to let me in.”

Despite expecting it, Rick jumped when he heard the bell ring. He didn’t need to check his watch to know it was dead-on eight o’clock. If nothing else, Rick had to admit Danny was punctual, and persistent.

He glanced at the door, as he had every night for the past week. He wasn’t going to open it. He couldn’t. To do so was to admit he’d lied to Danny. He didn’t fear losing his job. What he feared was losing his heart.

Three minutes after the first ring came a second. Rick closed his eyes and tried not to imagine Danny standing outside his door, waiting patiently, or impatiently.

It had been impossible to avoid him during the week. Their work day was intricately interwoven, but Rick had done his best not to be alone with him, or to look at him directly. Yet he'd felt Danny's gaze on him whenever they were together, as hot and as potent as a physical caress, causing his skin to pebble, his heart to beat faster, and his groin to tighten in ways he couldn't control.

"Dammit, Danny, stop. Please stop." His whispered entreaty came after Danny rang for a third time. Another minute and Danny would walk away. In the week he'd been trying to persuade Rick to allow him in, that had been his routine. That minute was always the longest, because that was when Rick was at his weakest.

He wanted Danny—wanted to kiss him, hold him, touch him, wanted to plunge into his utmost fantasy, one which had continuously built over the past few months, but one which he knew could never be fulfilled. Insecurities kept Rick rooted to the spot, even when he heard Danny's retreating footsteps. It took every ounce of willpower not to go after him, to not succumb to the need that tested every personal restraint he'd ever inflicted upon himself. But this wasn't about a physical need; it was about an emotional one.

When his phone beeped to indicate he'd gotten a message, Rick picked it up, hesitating only a second before reading what had been sent.

Can we just talk, please?

It was from Danny. For some reason, Rick wasn't surprised Danny had changed tactics, but this could only be a delaying one. Danny's interest in him wouldn't last. Eventually Danny would find someone else to play with, and then he'd leave Rick alone. That, however, wasn't the comforting thought it should have been.

Rick knew it was best to ignore the message, but there was something about it that implied desperation, as if Danny really didn't understand why Rick was saying no to him. Giving in, he typed back.

There's nothing to talk about. You've got my answer.

It's the wrong answer, Rick. Just talk to me. Tell me why.

Because you'll hurt me.

Seconds later there was a loud banging on the door. Startled, Rick dropped his phone, even before he registered what his subconscious had given away.

“Rick! Rick, let me in.”

Panic flooded Rick’s limbs, and in reaction, he quickly pulled open the door to stop Danny from shouting any further and alerting the neighbours. “Shut up!” he said, grabbing Danny by his shirt and yanking him into the house. He slammed the door and leaned up against it, cursing as he realized what he’d done. Danny stood inches away, his eyes wide, confusion etched upon his face.

“What do you mean I’ll hurt you?”

Shit! How could he have been so stupid? What idiotic thing compelled him to answer Danny so honestly? “You have to go,” he said, pushing himself away from the door. Expecting Danny to move back, he was surprised when Danny stood his ground.

“I’m not going anywhere.” As if to prove his point, he threw his keys on the table situated next to the wall.

Rick wished that were true, but he’d already said too much, and he wasn’t going to make it more difficult for himself. “You have to. You can’t be seen here.”

“You’re kidding.”

Holding onto his excuse of earlier, Rick forced strength into his voice he didn’t really feel. “You know what will happen when people find out.”

“Yeah, they’ll say it’s about time. Rick, I don’t know if you’re aware of this or not, but people have already begun to talk, and it hasn’t all been negative.”

Looking straight into bright-blue eyes, eyes he’d been dreaming of staring into just as he was about to come, Rick found it hard to concentrate on what Danny was saying. “What?”

“It doesn’t matter. What does is why you think I’ll hurt you.”

Feeling his skin prickle as heat rushed from head to toe, Rick thought back to every single reason he’d thought Danny wouldn’t be right for him, but he wasn’t sure how he was supposed to voice them now. Danny needed to hear something, however, so Rick gave him the one he reckoned Danny couldn’t argue with.

“I don’t do casual.”

“Who said I wanted casual?”

“You have a reputation for it, Danny.”

“Years ago, maybe, but that’s changed as I’ve gotten older.”

“You’re twenty-seven.”

“Exactly, and I’m ready to settle down.”

Settle down? Yeah, as if that was likely. Just before Danny had transferred from his old club, there had been rumours in which Danny had been caught in a three-way in the dressing rooms. Rick didn’t try to hide the sarcasm in his voice as he mocked Danny’s statement. “So you’re looking for Mr. Right?”

Danny’s eyes locked on his, and the inches that separated them became a chasm. “Yes, I am. And I think I’ve found him.”

“No.” Rick didn’t want to believe what Danny was telling him, *if* that’s what Danny was telling him. He didn’t want to believe it, because he didn’t want to start hoping.

“Yes. God, Rick, I’ve been waiting for you to come round, to admit you want me.” The light lift of Danny’s mouth showed both warmth and slow understanding. “But you wouldn’t, because you thought I only wanted sex, didn’t you?”

“What else was I to think?”

“You could have asked me. Could have opened up to me. Instead you’ve made me constantly question whether I was good enough for you.” Something in Danny’s eyes darkened. “*Am* I good enough for you?”

Heart not beating to a rhythm Rick was used to, but knowing he couldn't give Danny the answer he wanted, what he probably deserved, he prevaricated. "I don't know you."

"No?" Danny's smile widened, and he closed the chasm between them. Being this close to Danny, Rick's body had a mind of its own. Instead of pulling away, he allowed Danny to gently draw him closer.

"You picked me," Danny said. "You've studied my game, my tactics, my reactions. You know how I work in a team, how I lead, how I play. You know I don't like to let anybody down, that I try my hardest to do the right thing. You know I've struggled, I've hurt, I've triumphed." Danny lifted his hand and placed it at the back of Rick's neck. Rick shuddered at the light touch, leaned into it. "You picked me, Rick. You know me."

Maybe, but did he know all of him? The most important part of him? Scared beyond measure, afraid to give in, Rick still couldn't push Danny away, not anymore. The thing was, Danny knew it too.

"Have you ever kissed a man, Rick?"

"No."

"Do you want to?"

Rick was sure he didn't need to answer, but he gave Danny one anyway. "Yes."

"Me?"

"Only you."

Still scared, though knowing it was do now or forever regret, Rick didn't move as Danny brought his mouth to a bare millimetre away. Anticipating his kiss, wanting it more desperately than he'd wanted anything in his life, Rick almost whimpered when Danny didn't close that final, infinitesimal gap.

"You're trembling." Danny's breath whispered across Rick's lips. He licked them, but tasting Danny second hand wasn't enough. He moaned, right before he pressed his mouth to Danny's, and understood why it was he had to make that ultimate decisive move.

Surprised at how much effort it took to stop his legs from collapsing beneath him, Danny also had to stop himself from devouring Rick's mouth. God, he never thought he'd taste that good, or feel so right. Though tentative, the way Rick parted his lips and slid his tongue against Danny's had him groaning and allowing Rick inside.

Slanting his head just a little, helping Rick, Danny hesitated before pushing up against the man's hips, not sure how Rick would take it. Rick sucked in a short breath and awkwardly pulled back to look at him.

Brown eyes suddenly narrowed, and Danny thought Rick was going to start denying this was what he wanted again. Instead, Rick moved toward a short hallway that turned off to the right. Danny noted a large room on the left which he assumed was the living room. On the opposite side were the bedrooms, and as Danny followed, nerves fluttered through his stomach.

Though he'd anticipated this moment for so long, he also dreaded it. He'd been serious when he'd asked if Rick thought he was good enough. Rick hadn't answered, not in the way Danny needed, and he worried he'd never really be what Rick wanted.

Entering the bedroom, he paused at the sight of Rick slowly peeling off his shirt. Mesmerised, Danny watched, half-wanting to go to him, but enjoying the show as each patch of skin, each long limb, each cord of muscle was revealed.

When Rick finally stood beside the bed, naked, Danny managed to pull himself out of a lust-induced stupor and, without any preamble, pulled off his clothes and let them pool around his feet. Rick turned to look at him, nervousness written in every line of his body.

Closing the distance between them in just a few short strides, Danny placed his hand on Rick's arm. Muscle bunched beneath his touch as Rick almost flinched. Not all that surprised, he slid his hand up to Rick's shoulder—mostly to steady him, but partly because touching Rick was something Danny needed to do.

Rick's skin was so soft, but it barely held in the tension that stiffened his body. Slowly curving his arm around Rick's waist, gently sliding their hips together again, Danny was all too aware of how careful he had to be, how cautious. One wrong move, one wrong word, and all this could be over.

However, the feel of Rick, the hard length of him pressed alongside Danny's own aching cock almost had him throwing caution to the wind. He released a slow groan and tightened his hold, grinding up against Rick a little harder. Rick's low moan had Danny ready to push him down to the bed, but he held off—just.

Instead, he leaned in to kiss Rick, relieved when Rick kissed him back. At least he was okay with having their mouths joined. All Danny needed to do now was convince Rick to get their bodies joined.

Rick's lips were warm, and soft, and this time more demanding. Once again Danny opened up for Rick, feeling that silky glide of his tongue and losing himself in the sensation of it. When he felt Rick's arms sliding around him, holding him, Danny couldn't help but relax a little, until Rick pulled back to stare at him. Uncertainty still lingered in Rick's eyes, something Danny was experiencing himself, but his uncertainty lay in a different place.

"You don't have to do this," he said, offering a way out, even though it would hurt like hell if Rick changed his mind.

"No, I want to. With you." Danny wasn't going to ask Rick if he was sure. He only had so much restraint, and having Rick in his arms like this was pushing it to the limit.

"Then can we get on the bed?"

Rick's smile was answer enough, so Danny hauled himself into the middle of the firm mattress, lying on his back. Rick slowly climbed on after him, but he did it self-consciously, as if he worried any move he made would be the wrong one.

Spreading his thighs, Danny urged Rick between them. "Touch me," he instructed. Rick's gaze flicked to Danny's cock, just before he licked his lips and took a deep breath.

Expecting Rick to shyly reach for him, he was pleased when the hand that wrapped around him was both firm and confident. Precum already oozed from the tip of Danny's cock, and as Rick slid his thumb across the top, they both groaned.

"You feel so silky, and hard, and I can't believe I've denied myself this." Rick's low tone rumbled through Danny's body, causing his stomach to tighten and his heart to trip. Or maybe it wasn't Rick's tone, but the look in his eyes as he lined up their cocks and gripped them both in his callused palm. "Want you," he said. "Wanted you so much for so long, Danny."

"I know," Danny whispered, instinctively pushing up into the tight grip. "I've wanted you for a long time, too."

Dark eyes, blown with both lust and a much deeper need, regarded him carefully, then Rick nodded as if he finally accepted the inevitable. Danny pulled him down for another kiss, relief making him a little rougher, but Rick didn't seem to mind. In fact, he squeezed them both hard, before starting to rock his hips.

Perfect friction—as well as a sharp tingle racing down his spine—had Danny closing his eyes and arching his back.

"Don't. Don't close your eyes. I want you to watch me when I come."

Under that directive, Danny had no choice, but he didn't want Rick coming yet. Not like this. He slid his fingers into Rick's short, thick hair, stopping him. "Do you have supplies?" he asked.

Rick's low curse told Danny two things. One, Rick knew why Danny was asking, and two, no.

"I've got some in my bag," he offered.

"Your bag?"

"In my car."

"No. You're not going out to your car."

“Because someone might see me?” Danny asked, knowing exactly what was putting that look of fear back in Rick’s eyes.

Rick moved out of Danny’s hold, sitting back on the bed. Danny instantly felt loss and regret. Rick wasn’t going to continue this, not now, not ever.

“Rick—”

Rick shook his head, silencing any argument Danny might have. “Just give me a second.” He hadn’t thought of that, hadn’t realized Danny would want to fuck him, which was stupid, really. Danny was the type of man who would take others, not allow himself to be taken. The thing was, so was Rick. He’d only ever envisaged himself inside Danny, not the other way around. Shit. What the hell was he supposed to do now?

Staring at the man who looked both stricken and resigned, Rick knew he had to make a decision. A new one.

He slid off the bed and grabbed his jeans. “Stay there,” he said to Danny as he headed out the bedroom door.

The moment he let Danny in, he knew it was over for him. Resistance was as futile as him thinking he could ever play soccer again. He had accepted one; he may as well accept the other. Danny wanted him, and he wanted Danny, and no matter how much he thought he could deny it, or hide from it, he couldn’t.

Grabbing Danny’s keys from where he’d left them, Rick ignored the prickle down his spine and opened his front door. The house was secluded to some extent, but an unknown car in his driveway would garner some attention, and if it was left there all night it would start speculation. It wasn’t as if he was newsworthy, but with the team so close to winning the league, reporters were looking for interviews, and it wasn’t uncommon for one or two of them to be waiting in the morning for him to arrive at the stadium. It also wasn’t out of the question for someone to be waiting outside his house, and if they saw the car...

Pushing back the fear of discovery, and the look of disappointment he'd seen in Danny's eyes when he'd moved away from him, Rick opened up Danny's car and grabbed the bag sitting on the front seat. He almost laughed as he realized Danny had packed for an overnight stay. Even after a week of Rick not opening the door to him, Danny hadn't given up. Rick should have known he wouldn't; he never gave up when playing a game.

Pausing, bag in hand, Rick had to stop himself from taking that last thought to heart. Danny had said he wasn't playing with him, that he wasn't just after a casual affair, that he was after something more. Rick wanted to believe him; he had to, because if he went through with this and was dumped, he wasn't sure if he'd ever have the strength to try this with anyone else.

Trusting his instincts, trusting Danny, Rick locked Danny's car and headed back to the house.

Danny was still sitting on the bed where Rick had left him, tension etched across his face. Rick smiled, feeling his own tension drop away.

"Here." Rick dropped the bag on the bed and waited while Danny took a moment to stare at him before opening the bag and rummaging through it. He produced a bottle of lube and a box of condoms, and put them beside him.

Slipping off his jeans again, Rick crawled back onto the bed. "How do you want me?" he asked.

Danny's blue eyes widened. "What?"

"I assume you want to fuck me."

Danny laughed, the sound as full and as genuine as Rick had ever heard it. "Oh, I want to fuck you all right, and trust me, I could really make it good for you, but I think, this time, my ass is yours."

Rick almost fell off the bed. Danny was giving himself up? For him? Before he could question it, Danny pressed a condom in his hand. "I'll get myself ready for you," he said.

Not able to move, awestruck, he watched as Danny snapped open the lube and poured a generous amount of it onto his fingers. He nearly let his draw drop open as Danny started to thrust his fingers into his own ass.

“Jesus!”

Danny’s grin was augmented by his groan. “Glove up, Rick.”

Quickly changing focus, Rick ripped open the condom packet, and after a couple of seconds of fumbling managed to roll it on.

On hands and knees, Danny waited.

Realizing what this meant, what Danny was showing him, giving him, Rick laid a hand on Danny’s back. “I won’t hurt you either,” he promised.

Danny looked over his shoulder, the light in his eyes bright and as beautiful as Danny was proving to be. “I know.”

Changing his position to put himself behind Danny, lining himself up, Rick had to work hard to stop his knees from giving way. “Danny.”

Danny was still looking at him. “Go for it.”

Not sure how he managed to control the urge to simply thrust in hard and deep, Rick took subtle directions from Danny and slowly eased inside, praying he wasn’t going to fuck this up. About halfway there, Danny’s low groan stopped him.

“Are you okay?”

“Fuck, yes. Don’t stop, keep on going.”

Gripping Danny’s hips, following Danny’s order, and grinning, Rick pressed in harder, until he didn’t have another inch to give. He looked down at where they were joined, not quite able to believe he was buried inside Danny, or that Danny allowed him to be there. He felt so tight, so hot, and better than Rick ever imagined.

“You going to move, or just admire the view?” Danny quipped.

“Move,” he answered, but as he pulled out slightly, he couldn’t help but be distracted by the long length of Danny’s back, and the way it arched when

Rick slid home again. Danny was in top physical shape. Fit, athletic, perfect, and as Rick explored the contours of that smooth expanse of tanned skin and hard muscle, he decided he wanted so much more of him.

Picking up on a rhythm that seemed to suit them both, Rick continued to move, sometimes slowing when the incredible feelings mounted too quickly and threatened to overwhelm him. However, it was just a matter of time before an all-too-familiar tension started deep, expanding until Rick knew the end was closer than the beginning.

Suddenly stopping, he forced a surprised grunt from Danny. “Don’t stop, I’m fucking close!”

A hard, fast rush of pleasure rippled through Rick, but this wasn’t what he wanted, what he needed. Without warning he pulled out and pushed Danny onto his back.

“Want to watch you coming, Danny. Want you to watch me.”

Danny’s eyes lit up, and a warm smile curved his mouth. “Yes.”

He hooked his legs over Rick’s shoulders, putting himself into position. Rick took a moment to eye Danny’s impeccable chest and abs, and the unusual tattoo that was inked there. He would have to ask him about it later. For now, all he was interested in was the tight heat waiting for him. He slid smoothly inside, quickly picking up where he left off, noticing as he did so that Danny was tightening up around him.

“There! Oh, shit, Rick!” A shudder ran through Danny. Rick grinned, making sure he stayed at the same angle, but thrusting harder, faster. Danny curled his hand around that impressive cock, matching Rick’s pace, which only encouraged him to speed up.

“Fuck. Fuck, Rick I’m coming.”

So was Rick. As Danny groaned, Rick leaned over him putting his weight on his arms. He stared into those bright-blue eyes, eyes that stared into his own, and knew then that no matter what, he would never regret this.

That was pretty much his last thought, except to acknowledge that every fantasy he'd ever known had just come true. As Danny stiffened beneath him, Rick emptied himself. Not just of seed, but of every doubt, every fear, every repressed dream.

Strength gone, Rick collapsed, not caring if he squashed Danny. Anyway, Danny could take it.

“Get off me you big oaf.” Danny’s hard hands ineffectually pushed at his shoulders. Rick hardly noticed, until Danny punched him. “Seriously, Rick, you’re fucking heavy.”

Feeling freer than he ever had in his life, Rick laughed, shifting to the side, but not before he swooped in for a quick kiss. “I weigh the same as you.”

“As if. You’re all muscle. I’m all lithe sleekness.”

Rick had to concede the point. Danny was built for running fast, which made him a great striker. Rick’s career had been as a defender, and his mass usually helped when it came to putting strength behind a tackle. That was before his knee blew out.

On his back, he contemplated his life and the changes he’d had to make to it, and the ones he may still have to make.

“Just so you know, I usually like to fall asleep after sex,” Danny remarked, turning on his side. The blue eyes regarding him were wide-awake, however, and Rick couldn’t see Danny falling asleep anytime soon.

“So what’s different this time?”

“This time it was with you, and you’re interesting enough to keep me awake.”

Not hiding his contentment—there was no point—Rick smiled. “Interesting how?”

A frown formed between Danny’s brows before he reached over and ran a finger down Rick’s chest. That simple touch was enough to have him wondering if Danny really intended to stay the night, and if he wasn’t, how he could ask him.

“Can I ask you a question?”

Expecting to be asked why he'd never admitted to anyone he was gay, Rick nodded.

“What made you want to be a coach?”

“Really? You want to ask me that?”

As if he was reading his mind, Danny smiled. “I don't need to know why you've stayed in the closet, Rick. I understand how difficult it is to come out, especially in our profession. So don't worry about it.”

With no hint of censure in Danny's tone, Rick had to take him at face value, but he wondered how long Danny would continue to allow him to keep his orientation hidden. Surely, if Danny wanted a relationship he'd eventually want to make it known? Unless Danny didn't want a relationship, and everything he'd said had been nothing but bullshit.

Not sure how to broach a subject like that, not sure he wanted to, because he didn't think he was ready to out himself, Rick answered Danny's question. “I loved soccer too much to leave it completely. And you know what they say, if you can't do, teach.”

“So when you were told you could no longer play, you just decided to coach?”

“Pretty much.”

“I'm glad. If it wasn't for your passion to stay in the game, I would never have met you.” Danny's rich smile eased a little of the tension that had seeped back, but Rick still wasn't sure where he lay in Danny's plans. It was difficult, not having that control, not calling the shots. Danny was dominating everything between them, and Rick felt adrift, unanchored. Not a feeling he liked at all. Then Danny reached over to grab a condom from the box that had fallen to the floor. “I want you, Rick.” And Rick forgot about anything else but being back inside Danny, until he realized what Danny meant.

“Oh.”

“You don't want to?”

“Yes, yes I want to. I want to do everything with you.” Rick moved to pick up the lube, but Danny took it off him.

“I’ll do that for you,” he said. “I want to do everything with you, too, Rick.”

“I don’t know what the fuck you’re doing here, Bateman. Why don’t you look for a transfer? Or better yet, get your faggot ass out of soccer altogether and leave it to real men.”

Danny stared at Lawson, not quite believing the man had just said that to him. Over the past few weeks, Lawson’s attitude toward him had been appalling, but tolerable. This, however, was way over the top and unacceptable.

About to say something, he stopped as Rick stormed over to Lawson and faced him. “You’re off the team, Lawson. Pack your stuff.”

“What? We’ve got a game. It’s the final!”

“And you’re not playing in it.”

“You can’t do that. I have a contract.” Lawson’s face turned a nasty red, and he clenched his huge hands into fists.

“I’m breaking it. I’ll not have that kind of bigoted insolence in any of my players.”

“He’s gay,” Lawson declared, pointing at Danny.

Danny watched the exchange, not surprised by Rick’s defence of him, but he was surprised he was doing it in public and with so much animation. He could have taken Lawson into his office and done this in private, but instead he was showing that homophobia was not going to be something he would tolerate. More than that, however, he was showing that being gay was okay.

“So? That’s no one else’s concern but his. He doesn’t hit on you or anyone else on the team, so why should you care?”

“I’ve seen the way he looks at you. It’s wrong.”

Though fifteen men stood in the locker room, it went quiet as Rick turned to look at Danny. Danny thought his heart was going to stop. He hadn't pushed Rick into announcing their relationship, such as it was. They'd spent most of their nights together, but Danny always had to be careful he wasn't seen, and he was even more careful not to show any sign of how he felt whenever they were around anyone associated with the club. It hadn't been easy, but he was willing to do as Rick wanted, simply because if he didn't, he might lose him.

But the way Rick was looking at him right now, with affection and, Danny didn't want to say that was love, but he was sure it was damn close, then maybe he didn't have to be so careful in the future. Rick smiled at him, then turned back to Lawson.

"It's not wrong. It's perfectly normal. And in case you haven't noticed, I look at him the same way."

Danny was sure he would have been able to hear the proverbial pin drop if it hadn't been for one of the officials breaking the silence by wondering why the hell no one was on the pitch. Sudden pandemonium ensued as everyone made a mad dash to the tunnel that would lead them out to the final game of the season, the one that would determine if they won the league or not.

Taking one last look at Rick as he ran out with them, Danny grinned. He and Rick were due for a talk, and Danny was seriously looking forward to it. He honestly hadn't expected Rick to reveal he was gay, certainly not yet, and he hadn't intended to make Rick feel obligated to do so. But if Rick loved him, Danny wasn't going to question it, or put off making their arrangement permanent.

Just over two hours later, with cheers and congratulations still ringing in his ears and hard slaps still stinging on his back, Danny was only interested in one thing. Finding Rick.

It took a while, but he managed to corner Rick in his office. There had been a lot of celebration going on, but now most, if not all, had gone home, or to celebrate somewhere else. Rick glanced up at him as Danny entered, his smile turning into a full-on grin.

“Danny!” Rick hugged him, nearly pulling Danny off his feet. “That last goal, man! It was beautiful! The way you did that scissor kick, it won us the game, you know that don’t you?”

Danny grinned back, but he wasn’t here to talk about his final goal of the season. “Yes, I know. But I don’t care about the game. I care about what you said in the locker room.”

Rick’s smile dropped a little, but it was only a little. “I meant it.”

“And what are you going to do about it?” Danny asked.

Something dimmed in Rick’s eyes before he let Danny go. “That depends on you.”

Surprised by Rick’s answer, it took Danny a couple of seconds to respond. “I told you I wouldn’t hurt you, Rick. I told you I’d found the man I wanted.”

“You really mean that?”

“You know I do, otherwise you wouldn’t have admitted you were gay to all and sundry. You came out because of me. Only because of me.” Danny put himself back into the circle of Rick’s arms. “You love me, don’t you?”

Rick’s gaze didn’t shift as he nodded. “Yes, but I wasn’t sure you’d want a man who still hid behind closed doors.”

“You’re not behind closed doors any longer.” Danny laughed, leaning in to kiss Rick, tasting the man he’d lusted after for months, and now had forever. “You should have seen Lawson’s face,” he said as he released Rick’s mouth.

“I did, but I didn’t care about Lawson’s reaction. I only cared about yours.”

“And what reaction were you hoping for?”

Rick’s smile gave Danny his answer, but Rick told him anyway. “I saw how proud you were of me. How much my coming out meant to you. I don’t want to hurt you either, Danny, remember?”

“You won’t. You haven’t.” Sliding his arms around Rick’s neck, Danny laid claim to Rick’s mouth once more, knowing this was the man who was

giving him everything he ever wanted, and he no longer had to try and impress him.

Then again.

“You really liked my goal?”

THE END

Author Bio

Penny's been a lover of books since before she could read and a maker of stories before she knew how to talk properly, so it was only natural that she started writing when she could hold a pen. From fairy tales to teenage romances to the hot, erotic stories she writes now, she's always held the same belief—to love what she puts down on paper, which means she doesn't love cooking, cleaning or weeding the garden. She does, however, love to travel and has lived in England and Ireland and now resides in Australia, where she intends to stay and discover all that she can of this beautiful country.

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