

LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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STRAIGHT MEN CAN'T COOK

Anna Birmingham

Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

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By Anna Birmingham

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.

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STRAIGHT MEN CAN'T COOK

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Photo Description

A cute twenty-something guy with damp blond hair chops vegetables in his kitchen. His only clothing is a towel wrapped around his middle.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

I'm running out of time to prepare something delicious, errr... edible for my date. I mean, friend. I mean... Okay, okay, I had a bet with a friend, whom I've been infatuated with since... forever! We've been roommates in college. He's an out and proud and smart gay guy. But not so smart since he never figured out my secret or that I've been lusting after him all those time we've been roomies.

Anyway, we haven't seen each other since college days and yesterday I bumped into him at the supermarket. I was there helping my pregnant neighbor with groceries and he with his own list to buy. He just moved a few blocks down from my place. We talked while queuing to pay, and I don't know how he turned up challenging me to prove that straight men can cook. It just did. I'm not straight. And I can't cook. And why the hell did I have to prove anything to him?

Please help me out with this. And if you can somehow make him eat his words, or eat me, I would be delighted!

Sincerely,

Didi

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: college graduates, light hearted, in the closet, secret crush, friends to lovers, clueless male, shameless use of pop culture references

Wordcount: 9,799

STRAIGHT MEN CAN'T COOK

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“Nice melons.”

I jumped as the husky voice whispered in my ear and almost caused me to drop the fruit I held.

“Sorry?”

I turned to look at the owner of the voice and promptly did a double take: the last person on earth I expected to see in the produce aisle of my local grocery store. “Tristan?” I said in disbelief. “Damn, I haven’t seen you... wow, it must be nearly three years?”

“Two years and nine months.” Tristan flicked his long, dark hair out of his eyes with a grin. “But what’s a couple months between friends?”

We did the manly embrace thing—or actually he did, since my hands were occupied with two rather large cantaloupes.

“You’re looking good, Russ,” Tristan said, as his green eyes raked over my body.

I felt a familiar heat rush through me, a heat that I hadn’t felt for nearly three years and had hoped I would never feel again.

“Uh... thanks. You too.”

Tristan lifted an eyebrow and cocked his hip out. “Think so?”

He laughed at my expression and smacked the back of his hand against my chest. “Dude, I’m only messing with you. I know I look good.”

He was right; he always looked good, and nothing had changed. I first met Tristan during my sophomore year at college when we roomed together for six months. I recalled being somewhat nervous to meet my new roommate, because my previous one had been a complete psycho. Tristan had opened the door to me wearing nothing but a pair of low-slung, faded Levi’s. I had gawped at the vision of perfect manhood standing before me, all tall and lean

with dark hair flopping into his eyes. I told myself that I wasn't attracted, just admiring his physique. I studied biology at college, so being interested in anatomy was natural, or so I had convinced myself at the time.

"You must be Russell," he had said, extending a hand and breaking the silence. "Pleasure. I'm Tristan."

The pleasure had been all mine, but I had never told him that. I had never told anyone what I truly thought of Tristan McDonald.

I had known who he was before I took the room. It was no secret that the guy was gay but even if I hadn't known, the posters of half-naked men on the walls had been a bit of a giveaway.

"Do you mind?" Tristan had asked, gesturing at said naked beefcake.

"No, not at all," I had replied.

And I didn't mind, not in the slightest. But none of the guys on the walls had been half as hot as Tristan, in my humble opinion. The guy was plain gorgeous, and he knew it, and used it. He wasn't one of those effeminate gays, he was simply... eccentric. It wasn't unusual to find Tristan doing an impromptu strip tease in the student bar on a Friday night, twirling his shirt above his head as he gyrated on a table top. He drew the attention of every girl and guy in the place with his fun-loving spirit. That's just the way he was. He was smart and cute and everyone adored him.

Me? I was just plain Joe Average. I played some football, but never made the team. I was kind of smart, but never won a scholarship or even a spelling bee. I liked computers but had never learned to program. I was average height with average dark-blond hair and average brown eyes. I would say that perhaps my body bordered on "good" and girls seemed to like me, but generally I just drifted along with the crowd and struggled to make my mark on the world.

Back in college, Tristan and I seemed to operate at opposite ends of the spectrum. Our worlds didn't cross much and often the only times I would actually see Tristan would be first thing in the morning when I got up early to

go for a run, and he was still sleeping. He was never in bed before two am, so I rarely saw him before I hit the sack.

We had coexisted perfectly happily for the months we roomed together. To be honest, I was a little in awe of Tristan. I'd never met someone so completely at home with who they were and where they wanted to be, gay or straight. The fact that he had a banging body, too, was just plain unfair.

Now as we stood in the grocery store, I was once more struck dumb while Tristan grinned at me. I stared blankly back, desperately trying to think of something witty to say to keep him here, talking to me.

"Do... do these feel ripe to you?" I thrust the two cantaloupes at his chest and he reached out automatically to grab them before they fell.

His hands ran over the rough flesh, gently squeezing and stroking them. It was pretty sensuous and I gave myself a mental slap. Since when had touching fruit become erotic? I was clearly not getting out enough. Tristan watched me watching him and his lips quirked in amusement. "You should know that I'm hardly qualified to comment on these things... but they seem fine to me."

"Thanks." I took the melons back and gently placed them in my shopping cart.

"You're welcome."

I watched him again, wondering what conspiracy had brought him back into my life. "What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Shopping," Tristan said, lifting up his basket.

I rolled my eyes. "I know that, dumbass. I meant *here* here."

Tristan smirked. "Yeah, like that's so much clearer. But I know what you mean. I live here now. Moved into a place off Philly Avenue a couple of weeks back."

"Really? You're not far from me."

"Excellent. So Russ, what about you? You working?"

"Yeah, down in D.C."

Tristan nodded. "Me too. Still playing football?"

"Sometimes."

"Married? Kids?"

"Nope. Neither," I said with a smile, just as Lauren appeared at my side and dropped a bag of apples into the cart.

"Ah, you got the melons. Good," she said.

Her eyes immediately locked onto Tristan and she gave him a slow up and down. I knew what she was thinking because I'd seen it a million times before. Yes, the guy was a walking wet dream. Think Adam Levine crossed with Channing Tatum, with a bit of Matt Bomer thrown in for good measure.

"Russ, who's your friend?"

I made the obligatory introduction. "Lauren, this is Tristan. We roomed together at UMCP for a while."

Lauren nodded and held out her hand.

Tristan took it and pressed it to his lips with a wink. "Pleasure."

Lauren practically melted into the floor.

Tristan pulled back and his eyes dropped to her very pregnant belly. "Wow! Look at you, girl!" He cocked his head at me. "Are you guilty?"

"Guilty? What? No. NO! Lauren's my neighbor. I'm just helping her out by being the chivalrous gentleman in her current situation, carrying heavy bags, you know."

"I do."

Lauren peered into Tristan's shopping basket. "That's a lot of healthy stuff you have in there," she noted with approval. "You like cooking?"

That's something I've always disliked about supermarket shopping: the way you can be judged for what you have in your basket. So I had a shitty day and have a cart full of Doritos and Ben & Jerry's; that doesn't make me a slob. Well, I kind of am, but that's not the point.

“Russ here wouldn’t know a healthy meal if it jumped up and bit him on the ass,” Lauren continued, smiling up at me affectionately.

“Yes, I do seem to recall a lot of trips to Taco Bell when we were at college. Beefy 5-Layer Burrito with extra cheese, wasn’t it? Usually for breakfast,” Tristan added with a grin.

Lauren gave a mock shudder.

“And he can make a pizza last for three days.”

“Ugh. All that saturated fat.”

Tristan laughed. “Tell me about it. Terrible, isn’t he?”

“Terrible.”

My head swiveled between them, like I was watching a tennis match. “Uh, hello? I *am* here, you know?”

“We know. But come on, Russ. When was the last time you cooked? And I don’t mean reheating last night’s takeout,” Lauren said.

“Cook. You know, with a pan, ingredients, vegetables...” Tristan gestured at the produce around us.

Lauren snickered.

I bristled with indignation. “Hey! I can cook, you know.”

“Really?” Lauren said.

“Yes! I made... uh... pancakes the other morning.”

Lauren patted my shoulder. “Oh, honey. Mixing powder and water together doesn’t constitute cooking.”

“It doesn’t?”

Tristan laughed and shifted his grocery basket to the other hand. “Don’t worry, Russ, it’s a well-known phenomenon. Straight men can’t cook.”

“What? Hang on, I’m not... I mean I CAN cook!” I insisted.

Tristan bit his lip and looked at me thoughtfully. “Prove it,” he said.

I blinked. "I don't have to prove anything."

"Okay. If you say so."

"I don't. I mean, I do. I mean..."

Tristan just cocked an eyebrow at me. "Dude, I saw you eat a year's supply of Ramen noodles in a month. Remember that?"

Well, they had been on sale at the local discount store. What was a poor student to do?

"That was food. Noodles are real food."

"Not the way you ate them."

"Fine," I threw up my hands in defeat as Lauren and Tristan exchanged a triumphant look. "What do I have to do?"

"Make a real dinner. From scratch. No microwaves, no mixes, no pre-packaged meals," Lauren said, ticking the requirements off on her fingers.

"Okay," I sighed. "When should I make you this culinary masterpiece?"

"Not me." Lauren pointed at Tristan. "Him."

Tristan looked smug and winked at me. I'm not going to even begin to explain what that did to me.

"I'm game, Chef," he said. "Your place or mine?"

"But... but..." I looked at Lauren helplessly.

She backed away with her hands in the air. "Oh, hell no, I'm not eating your food. Pregnant woman with heartburn? Not on your life."

"I'm free tomorrow night," Tristan said. "That'll give me a whole day to recover."

I gave him a withering look. "Glad you have so much confidence in me."

Tristan put his grocery basket on the floor and pulled out his cell phone with a flourish. "Give me your number, Russ. No way are you ducking out of this one."

I sighed again and reeled off my number. A few seconds later my own cell pinged in the back pocket of my jeans and I knew I had Tristan's number, too.

"Oh, one more thing," Tristan said. "I'm a vegetarian."

I groaned and rolled my eyes. "Great, so I can't even grill a steak. Can't believe you don't eat meat."

Tristan dropped his eyes to my crotch and gave me a leer. "I didn't say I don't eat meat. I'm just a vegetarian."

I felt my face flush and heard Lauren snort behind me. "Oh, I'm so gonna like you," she said.

And so the challenge was set. Tristan had somehow invited himself over to my place tomorrow night and I had just over twenty-four hours to think of something *vegetarian* to cook for him. No pressure, then. I followed Lauren to the checkouts, taking one last glance at Tristan over my shoulder. He waved at me and disappeared in the direction of the deli counter. I couldn't believe that I had been maneuvered into this situation and had to spend an evening alone with Tristan, a guy that I had more than a passing interest in. And I wasn't into guys. I wasn't.

If I kept telling myself that then I was sure I'd be okay.

To be completely honest, Tristan wasn't the first guy who had made my body react in the way that it had, but he was definitely the one who had had the most prolonged effect. I'd managed to ignore my feelings during college and had dated girl after girl—it had been pretty easy, after all. Girls were cute and I liked being with them, so it was the obvious choice for someone like me. I fully intended to keep it that way.

That night I had a dream about Tristan: a dark, sensuous and erotic dream, which involved the two of us writhing against each other, all hot and sweaty; naked limbs intertwined, heavy breaths ghosting across damp skin. I awoke with a start, my heart hammering as waves of pleasure rolled over me again and again. As I gasped for breath, I slid my hand down to my boxers and, just

as expected, encountered wet and sticky fabric. Oh, hell. My other arm flopped across my face as I lay there in disbelief. I hadn't had a wet dream in years.

It was the middle of the night and everything was deathly quiet outside. I flung the covers off the bed and padded cautiously to my bathroom. I flicked on the light and tried not to notice the post-orgasmic flush on my cheeks or the slight tremble to my hands. I peeled off my damp boxers and flung them into the laundry basket before cleaning myself up. Damn it, I needed to find a new girlfriend, and fast. I didn't want to feel this way about Tristan, I really didn't, but it seemed like my body had different ideas.

I splashed cold water over my face and finally looked at myself in the mirror, taking in my messy dark blond hair and slightly hazy brown eyes. Could Tristan tell that I had all these erotic feelings about him? That I thought about him naked and yearned to touch him, or have him touch me? Part of me desperately wanted to find out if the reality was half as good as the fantasy, but the other half of me was scared as hell, wondering if I dared to cross the line in the true light of day and dive into those dark, sensuous dreams for real.

My disturbed night meant that I overslept the following day and didn't wake up until nearly noon.

"Fuck!" I scrambled out of bed and glared at the clock, as if it were somehow to blame for my tardiness. I was instantly on edge because I still needed to go back to the grocery store and pick up some stuff for dinner—that was, *after* I had decided what to make.

I flipped open my laptop and scoured the internet for easy vegetarian recipes. It wasn't as simple as I thought. Even the so-called easy ones looked complicated to someone whose idea of fine dining meant having wine with their chicken nuggets rather than beer. How much of asparagus was the tip? And what the hell did *al dente* mean? Scrunching my fingers into my hair in frustration, I admitted defeat and reached for the phone.

"Russell! How nice to hear from you. I didn't realize it was Tuesday?"

It wasn't, but I always called my mom on a Tuesday. Just one of things she seems to find amusing about me.

"No, Mom, it's Saturday. And I'm fine, thanks for asking."

We exchanged pleasantries for a few minutes before I finally got to the point of the call. "Mom, look, I need your help. I... uh... kind of agreed to cook dinner for a... friend tonight."

I heard my mom laugh, which she tried to disguise with a cough. Badly. "Cook? Oh my goodness, does this friend know what they are doing?"

I rolled my eyes at the ceiling. "Yeah, thanks for the vote of confidence, Mom. Thing is, they're vegetarian and I don't know what to do. Can you help me?"

"Is this a date?" my mom asked hopefully. "It's about time you found someone else. I knew that Stacey wasn't right for you. There must be plenty of lovely girls out there looking for a nice boy like you."

Nice boy, yeah, that was me. Just nice. "Uh... I'm sure there are, but no, not a date. Only a friend."

"Oh." My mom sounded disappointed. "Well, never mind. There's still time."

"Yes, anyway, what can I make?" I said. "Something simple that even I can't f... I mean mess up."

"Vegetarian pizza? Egg fried rice? Kebabs? You should be able to manage that; just chop up some veggies, skewer and grill them. Maybe make some rice, too?"

That sounded promising and not too tricky.

"This must be a very good friend if you're going to all this trouble, Russell," my mom continued.

"I... ah... well, kinda."

"I hope she appreciates it."

“Hope so.” I didn’t bother to correct her on her assumption. “So, tell me more about these kebab thingies. What do I need?”

Some time later, I was back in my apartment with bags of groceries dumped haphazardly all over the small kitchen table. Tristan was due to come over around six pm, so I still had a couple of hours to prepare myself—and my culinary masterpiece.

I took the world’s quickest shower and returned to the kitchen with just a towel wrapped around my waist. I chopped up the vegetables as my mother had instructed, then set about cleaning up the kitchen. I was assuming that Tristan would prefer to eat at the table, rather than sprawled on the sofa in front of the TV like I usually did.

Two hours to go.

I decided to vacuum the living room, just in case Tristan hung around after dinner. I figured I should really clean the bathroom, too, if I wanted him to think I had grown up a bit since we had left college and didn’t still leave my underwear on the floor. Even if I did, most days.

Ninety minutes to go.

I rummaged through my closet, trying to find something half-decent to wear. Where had all of my clothes gone?

Sixty minutes to go.

I scrubbed my hands through my hair as four discarded outfits lay crumpled on the bed. Why the hell couldn’t I find something to wear? I finally decided on my favorite pair of jeans and a black henley. Didn’t want him to think I was trying too hard. After all, this wasn’t a date or anything.

Thirty minutes to go.

I went back into the kitchen and began stabbing skewers through the veggies I had chopped earlier. I nearly blinded myself when the juice from a cherry tomato squirted into my eye. Cursing loudly, I went into the bathroom

to wash my eye, then swore again as I saw the splatter of seeds all over my shirt. I scrambled to change and the black henley got replaced by a brown one.

Ten minutes to go.

I realized I hadn't turned on the damned grill, so I rushed out to my tiny balcony to fire up the gas. Fuck, I needed a drink. I popped a can of Bud from the fridge and sank down into one of the kitchen chairs.

At exactly six pm, my doorbell rang.

I clumsily put the Bud down, not caring when the beer foamed over the top and spilled onto the table. I paused for a breath before opening the door.

Tristan was lounging against the doorframe, looking like he had stepped from the pages of *GQ*. He was dressed in snug jeans and a white button-down shirt, his dark hair all floppy and gleaming. He looked amazing as usual.

"Well, hello there, handsome," he said with a grin, taking in my appearance as he thrust a six-pack of beer into my arms.

I snorted in response and juggled the box while trying to prop open the door. "Hi yourself... want to come in?"

"Guess that'd be a good start." Tristan winked at me and tapped the pack of beer as he passed. "Still drinking Bud, I assume?"

I nodded in the direction of the can on the table, swimming in its own little pool of beer. "Uh huh. Old habits die hard."

I wrestled the bottles of beer into my fridge and watched Tristan out of the corner of my eye.

He pushed his hands into the back pockets of his jeans and wandered across the kitchen to look out of the window, taking in the view of the park across the street. "Nice place."

"Yeah, it's okay I guess." I lived in a one-bedroom apartment in Silver Spring, not far from where we had once gone to college. "At least I know the area. Where to go, where to avoid and so on."

“True.” Tristan turned to look at me and flicked his hair out of his eyes. “Where did you put the beers, Russ? Can’t a poor thirsty guest get a drink around here? Do you know it took me all of twenty minutes to walk to your place? In this heat! What kind of a host are you?”

It couldn’t have been more than fifty degrees outside and I opened my mouth to protest, but on seeing the sparkle in Tristan’s eyes, closed it again. I laughed nervously and fetched him a bottle from the fridge, popping the cap before I handed it to him. “Need some liquid courage before tasting my cooking, huh?”

Tristan grinned around the top of the bottle before downing a mouthful and wiping his lips with the back of his hand. “Nah, if I was that worried I’d have brought tequila.”

A memory from my college days popped into my brain and I felt my cheeks flush in embarrassment. “Aw, hell.”

Tristan saluted me with his bottle and raised an eyebrow. He clearly remembered. It had been the night after my finals and there had been a tequila promotion in the student bar. I had taken full advantage of that fact and consumed at least one too many shots, eventually passing out on the floor of the men’s bathroom. Allegedly, Tristan and some of my football buddies had carried me back to our dorm room, where I had promptly stripped naked, told everyone I loved them and climbed into Tristan’s bed. No one had the heart to move me when I’d started snoring immediately and I didn’t stir for fourteen hours. Of course, I don’t remember any of this, apart from the waking up in a strange bed. My friends had gleefully filled me in, probably with countless embellishments, and I’d never touched tequila since.

A horrible thought suddenly occurred to me and my eyes snapped to Tristan’s face. “I didn’t... uh... throw up, did I? That night?”

Tristan cradled his beer in his hands and watched me in amusement. “Nope, don’t think so.”

“Thank god.” I slumped against the kitchen counter. “I can’t think of anything worse.”

Tristan just smiled and took another mouthful of beer. "So, speaking of barfing, what delights are you cooking for me tonight? Tempted though I was to stop at Chipotle on the way over, I figured I'd give you the benefit of the doubt."

"Geez, thanks for the reassurance." I lifted the cover off of the kebabs and crooked my finger at him. "Come see. These look okay, don't they?"

I was achingly aware of how close he was as he leaned over my shoulder. I could smell the subtle scent of his cologne and feel the warmth radiating off him. I did all I could to ignore the flush of heat to my body and tried to suppress the urge to shiver. I moved slightly away to give him more space.

Tristan nodded in approval and poked a finger at a green pepper. "So far, so good, but you haven't actually cooked anything yet, pal."

"I'm confident," I said, although I wasn't. At all.

We talked a little about what we had been up to since college, people we had kept in touch with and so on.

"You ever see Kathy Conrad these days?" Tristan asked me.

"Oh, hell no. We only dated for a couple of months 'til she moved on to the quarterback. I think I was her in," I added, taking a swallow of beer.

"Oh, come on now, Mr. Optimistic! You're not that bad." Tristan slapped my arm and I felt the tingle all the way to my groin. He had always been a very touchy-feely guy. How could I have forgotten? "Apparently, your friendly quarterback got her pregnant shortly after graduation and they now live up near Baltimore. With twins."

"Twins? Oh, boy."

"Actually, two of them. Minor detail." Tristan grinned at me.

"Great."

"So, no girlfriend, huh? I always figured you for the type to be married with kids by twenty-five."

“Me? I dunno. My mom would love it, but I don’t really see it yet. One day, maybe, but there’s still so much I want to do first.” *Like you*, said a little voice in my head. I quickly smothered it under a virtual pillow and sat on it, hard. “So, enough about me; what about you? I could never keep up with all the men you were or weren’t dating.”

Tristan leaned back in his chair and folded his hands behind his head. “What can I say? I enjoyed my college time very much.” He closed his eyes and smiled. “Happy days.”

He stretched his legs out and I was hyperaware that I only had to move my knee an inch and we would be touching. “So... you seeing anyone right now?”

Tristan opened one eye and squinted at me. “Don’t think so.”

I blinked. “You don’t think so? Don’t you know?”

Tristan shrugged. “I kinda had a thing going with a guy in D.C. for a while. You ever see them dancers, the DC Cowboys?”

“Weren’t they on *American Idol* or something?”

“Or something. Anyway, I dated one of them for a while. Just a casual thing. We hooked up here and there.”

My eyes bugged out. “Seriously?”

“Seriously.”

“But those guys are smoking hot! How did you...?” I stopped suddenly as I realized both what I had said and what I had implied about him.

Tristan caught his lower lip in his teeth and held back a laugh. “Smoking hot, indeed, Russ.”

Crap.

“Uh... I guess I should start cooking?” I grabbed the plate of kebabs and went outside to check the heat on the grill before I said anything else to embarrass myself.

I heard the door slide shut as Tristan followed me and once again peered over my shoulder. “I have to say, they look pretty good,” he said.

“Yeah, say that after you’ve eaten them.”

He laughed and lounged on the railing, rolling his beer between his hands. “I have some confidence that even you can’t fuck this up. You did say you could cook—even if I don’t believe you. But what is there to do, anyway? Just grill them, job done.” He swallowed another mouthful of beer and nodded at me. “And get to it. I’m hungry.”

Despite all my concerns, the meal didn’t turn out as badly as I feared. The peppers got a little too charred and the rice was a little too sticky—but it was edible and we ate it. I made a mental note to call my mom again the next day to let her know that I had pulled it off. Martha Stewart I may not be, but at least I hadn’t poisoned my guest. Tristan had even complimented me on how evenly I had chopped the vegetables. Okay, so he didn’t comment on how delicious the food was, but at least he didn’t gag when he ate it. I considered that a success.

Tristan stacked the dishes in the dishwasher after dinner while I washed the pans. As I lay the last one to drain and dried off my hands, I could feel the moment coming where he would either leave, or I could ask him to stay. It was almost nine o’clock so I could understand if he wanted to head off and hit the clubs or a bar, pick up some guy, and take him home. I didn’t want to think about that too much; I was enjoying his company more than I cared to admit, and I wasn’t ready to say goodbye to him just yet. Yes, I had cooked for him tonight as a challenge, but it wasn’t really about the food anymore.

I dropped the towel on the counter and turned to face him. Tristan had propped his ass against the kitchen table and was chewing on his thumb nail, watching me.

“So... guess we’re done?” I said.

“Yep, guess so.” Tristan replied. He pulled his thumb from his mouth and pushed his hands into the front pockets of his jeans.

“You gonna head out?”

Tristan shrugged. "Hadn't planned to."

I seized the moment. "Or... do you want to hang here for a while? Watch a movie or something?"

Tristan smiled and nodded slowly. "Sure. Sounds great. I'd love to."

I almost sagged in relief that the night wasn't over. "Great! Grab us some more beers and go in there," I gestured over my shoulder at the living area. "I've just gotta go piss."

I heard Tristan laugh as I went into the bathroom and shut the door. I took a deep breath and leaned my hands on the counter, looking at myself in the mirror. My eyes were too bright, my cheeks were flushed and I could feel my stomach squirming. Was I actually turned on by thought of watching a movie with this guy, in my apartment, sitting on the same couch? Or was it just the beer and my bad cooking making me feel that way? The anticipation was killing me, and it wasn't like I had done anything, or he had done anything. I may have thought about it, but there was a world of difference between thinking and doing. Tristan may not even like me in that way, especially considering he thought I was one hundred percent straight.

I washed my face, then went back to the living room to see him sprawled on my black leather sofa, four beers lined up on the coffee table.

I cleared my throat and dragged my eyes away from the sight of his denim-clad thighs spread against the black leather. "So, what're you in the mood for?"

He looked up at me through the hair falling into his eyes and I felt my stomach drop another couple of inches. He flicked his hair back and gave me a stern glare, pointing a finger at me. "No mushy crap, no rom-coms and no animals. Just 'cause I'm gay doesn't mean I'm into chick flicks, babe."

I smiled and sank down beside him, subtly trying to keep my distance. "Works for me. How about guns, cars and explosions?"

Tristan pursed his lips and pretended to consider this. "Are they big guns?"

“As big as you can handle,” I said, picking up the remote and turning on Netflix.

We eventually agreed on some space-aged, post-apocalyptic thing, which was entertaining enough, although I kept glancing over at Tristan way too much, watching the white and blue lights from the TV caressing his face. When the movie hero suddenly got attacked by an alien monster, it caught me off guard and made me jump.

Tristan looked over and caught my eye. “Scared, huh?” he said with a grin.

“Me? Hell no,” I scoffed.

He poked me with his foot. “Yeah, you are. I can tell.”

“No, I’m not.”

“Are too.”

I sighed and shook my head. “It’s like arguing with a five-year-old.”

Tristan looking pleased with himself, and wriggled around to get more comfortable in his corner of the sofa. I watched in fascination as his shirt rode up a little, exposing a bit of bare skin on his belly. I couldn’t take my eyes off it, wanting to stroke it and see if it was as warm and smooth as it looked.

I jumped again as Tristan suddenly snorted with laughter at something that had happened on the TV. “Shit! Russ, did you see you that? Oh boy, that was classic! I swear these people get more stupid. How the hell did they become space pirates?”

I blinked at the TV, having no idea what he was talking about. “I... no... I think I need more beer.”

I stood and went to the kitchen, my heart still racing as my mind turned over and over, refusing to ignore what my body wanted to do. I couldn’t stop thinking about it, which was crazy. Tristan was clearly not seeing through me and was oblivious to all the turmoil I was feeling inside. Did I have the nerve to just take the plunge? I definitely needed more alcohol if I was going to even consider it.

I grabbed another couple of beers from the fridge, then hesitated, looking at the freezer. Despite only having eaten a couple of hours ago, I was starving again, so I pulled out a half-full tub of Ben & Jerry's ice cream before returning to the living room.

Tristan eyed me curiously as I put the beers down on the table, followed by the ice cream.

"What's that?" he said.

"Last time I checked, it was ice cream."

"Ice cream? With beer? Seriously?" Tristan said.

"Uh huh. Why not?"

"You are so uncouth," he said, leaning forward to peer at the tub. "Hang on, is that Cookie Dough?"

"Yep." I scooped a big lump out, curled my tongue around it and slowly sucked the ice cream off the spoon. Tristan watched me with a small smile.

"So where's my spoon?" he asked.

I shrugged. "Kitchen's in there."

He shook his head. "Some host you are... Hey! What's that?"

I automatically turned to where he was pointing, only to feel the spoon being swiftly yanked from my grip. Tristan dug into the ice cream with glee and winked at me. "Thanks."

I flopped back onto the sofa and watched as he licked ice cream off my spoon. I couldn't get over the fact that something that had been in my mouth a few seconds ago was now resting inside of his, his warm tongue sliding over where mine had been.

Tristan sucked the spoon clean and handed it back to me with a grin. "Filthy, but delicious."

I didn't trust myself to speak, just nodded and took back the spoon, pausing for a second before spooning out more ice cream and eating it slowly, savoring it with a shiver.

We watched more of the movie, quickly exhausting his supply of Bud and moving on to mine. He didn't seem in any hurry to leave, so I figured that keeping us both as fuelled up on alcohol as possible was for the best, if anything was going to... happen. On my next trip to the fridge, I pulled out some strong European beer I had been saving and dangled a bottle of it in front of Tristan's face.

He peered at the label suspiciously. "What is this shit?"

"It's Belgian. Try it."

"Belgian? Well look at you, Mister Cosmopolitan."

I laughed and popped off the caps, watching as Tristan took a small sip. "Like it?"

He smacked his lips together and smiled at me. "It'll do."

We watched the end of the movie, but I couldn't tell you what happened. Some things exploded, some bad people died, someone saved the world, yada yada. My mind was kind of occupied elsewhere. I knew that I had to do something since Tristan would no doubt be heading home soon. I was feeling a little buzzed from the alcohol and wanted it to continue. My stomach started to squirm again and as the credits rolled, I went back to the kitchen to get a refill.

Tristan eyed the beer bottle I placed in front of him on the coffee table. "Another one? If I didn't know any better I would think you were trying to get me drunk."

I laughed nervously, but didn't confirm or deny his accusation. I sat back into the sofa cushions and just looked at him.

"Well, are you?"

My eyes dropped to his mouth, lingering on the lush fullness of his lips. I couldn't stop myself from wondering what it would feel like to kiss him, hoping he would finally get the hint and make the first move.

"Russ..." Tristan's voice had lowered to a whisper and he licked his lips slowly.

I tore my eyes away and looked up at him, only to see him fixated on my own mouth.

“What?” I croaked. I barely noticed that I had unconsciously leaned in closer to him.

“Are you... are you trying to seduce me?” Tristan said quietly.

We locked eyes and, once again, I didn't answer him. I couldn't. I inched a tiny bit closer until I could feel the warmth of his breath caressing my cheeks. I closed my eyes and scooted my hand across the sofa cushion until my fingertips grazed his outer thigh.

“Oh my god... you are.” Tristan's breath caught in his throat.

A second later I felt the sofa move as he leaned in and his lips brushed softly against mine for the first time. A low whimper escaped me as he moved his lips slowly, gently tasting me, sucking slowly and rubbing back and forth. It was intoxicating and I felt like my heart was going to explode. I slid my hand up his chest and wound it into his long, dark hair, pulling his mouth more firmly against mine. He opened his lips and I felt a bolt of lightning to my groin as our tongues swept against each other.

Tristan let out a strangled moan and pulled away slightly, pushing a hand against my chest. “Russ... wait. You sure you want this?” he asked huskily, breathing hard.

Was the guy crazy?

“Oh, hell yes,” I burst out, grabbing him back to me as fast as I could, plunging my tongue into his mouth. He kissed back with equal fervor and desperation and all I could think about was why the hell hadn't I done this three years ago? I'd never been kissed like this in my life, with such hunger and passion. I came up for air and Tristan looked at me fiercely, eyes glittering with desire. At that moment he was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen and I raised my hand to cup his cheek, rubbing my thumb gently over his lips.

Tristan closed his eyes and swallowed hard before burying his face into my neck and biting, then sucking hard. He shoved me back onto the sofa and lay

on top of me, letting out an animalistic growl as he hooked a hand under one of my knees and hauled it upwards, so he could cradle himself between my thighs. He kissed me again and ground his hips down so that I could feel his erection rolling over mine. His weight above me turned me on more than I could ever have imagined. This gorgeous guy was lying on top of me, pressing against me and kissing me into oblivion. I was so aroused that I felt I could come any moment. I slipped my hands underneath his shirt, smoothing them over the warm skin of his back, moving down so that my palms slid into his jeans and caressed the top curves of his ass. His skin was so soft, but I could feel the hard muscles bunching below the surface as he moved against me.

Tristan lifted his hips up slightly, pushing his hand between us so he could grope at my dick. "Damn, Russ," he moaned, caressing my hard length through my jeans. "I gotta see this. Can I?"

"Please," was all I could manage as I arched up against him in invitation, shivering at the thought of him touching my flesh.

He undid my jeans with one hand and quickly shoved them down, curling his hand around me, hot and naked, stroking slowly.

"Oh, fuck," I groaned at the contact, squeezing my eyes tightly shut.

I felt the sofa move again as Tristan shifted his weight and slid his body down mine, his tongue licking across my stomach before raising his head to study my groin. I squirmed under his scrutiny.

"Russ..." he said again, my name thick in his throat. "You have the most luscious cock. Do you have any idea how long I've wanted to do this?" He licked the top of my dick and my hips jerked upwards in response.

"You... you have?" I panted.

"Oh, yeah."

"Why? How?"

"Talk later..." he mumbled as he licked again and my hips thrust towards his face. He dropped his hand to caress my balls and took the whole length of me in his mouth, sucking me in deep, devouring me.

“Oh fuck... oh fuck...” I chanted, not quite believing the sensations as he swirled his tongue around me and sucked me long and deep. I held on to his shoulders, trying not to come too soon, wanting to make this last and last. It was a pointless exercise; the feelings were too intense, too delicious and I couldn't do anything to stop the huge rolling orgasm that crashed into me and left me reeling, spurting stream after stream into his throat.

Tristan lay his head against my stomach and rutted against my leg. “Goddamn it, Russ. I want to fuck you so bad,” he groaned.

I was feeling so high on emotion, and he looked so damned sexy that at the moment I almost let him. Instead, Tristan surged up my body to capture my mouth again and rolled his hips against my thigh. It didn't take long for him to jerk in pleasure, and I felt the wet warmth of him spread against my leg.

Tristan groaned again and kissed my neck as my fingers trailed over the damp skin of his back. It was only then that I realized Tristan hadn't even undone his jeans. I wrapped my arms around him and squeezed him tight, loving the heaviness of him on top of me and never wanting him to ever move again.

I must have drifted off because I awoke some time later with Tristan's head resting on my chest, my shirt fluttering slightly as his breath huffed in and out. He was still asleep and I took the opportunity to slowly comb my hands through his hair, threading my fingers through the dark strands and watching them flop back down. I loved his hair; it always seemed so... strokeable.

“Mmm,” Tristan mumbled sleepily and wriggled around a little to get more comfortable, not even opening his eyes.

I smiled down at him and gently ran a finger across his face, admiring the curve of his jaw, the length of his eyelashes and the rough stubble on his skin. I couldn't believe how amazing it was, just lying here with him; a quiet contentment that I'd never felt before. I liked this guy. A lot.

A bubble of affection burst inside of me and I couldn't stop myself from leaning down and kissing the top of his head, nuzzling my cheek against his hair as I wound my arms tighter around his middle.

Tristan stirred again and raised a hand to scrub at his face before opening his eyes and blinking up at me. "Russ?"

I nodded and smiled. "Hey."

"Hey." He smiled back. "How are you doing?"

"Good. You?"

Tristan yawned and cuddled himself closer into my neck. "Perfect. You smell damned good, you know. Feel even better."

"Thanks."

"My pleasure. Truly."

I kissed the top of his head again. "Nah, at least half of the pleasure was mine."

I could feel Tristan's body shake as he chuckled. "Can't believe you're not freaking out over this."

"I've had plenty of time to think about it."

That made him sit up. Well, partially. He leaned on one elbow and watched me closely. "Yeah? So tell me about it, straight boy."

"Well that's it... I guess I'm not *completely* straight."

Tristan raised an eyebrow and gave a pointed look to my still-naked groin. "No shit, Sherlock."

"So I may have had these... thoughts. About guys. About you."

"Really? Dirty thoughts? Were they kinky? I want to hear them!"

I just looked at him, not sure if he was making fun of me or genuinely wanted to know.

His eyes flicked over my face and he seemed to sense my uncertainty, as he sighed and leaned back down onto my chest, snaking a hand up under my shirt to caress my stomach. "I had them too, you know. About you."

“Me?”

“Hell yes.”

“But *me*? I’m nothing special. You can have anyone you want.” My stomach muscles clenched as he hit a ticklish spot.

Tristan’s hand inched higher. “I wanted you. From the first day I met you. You were so cute and uncertain. I wanted to jump your bones, ravish and corrupt you. But you were straight—or so I thought. I did catch you watching me sometimes and I wondered what was going through your mind—but it wasn’t my place to question you. I didn’t want to make you uncomfortable, but boy, you made it hard. No pun intended.”

“I did?”

Tristan pushed himself up on one elbow again and looked at me, his eyes dark with intent. “You just don’t see it, do you? You’re fucking gorgeous, Russ. You’re so unassuming you never know when people are hitting on you. This hair”—he combed his fingers through the hair that curled below my ears—“these amazing dimples, your eyes, your body. It’s all so edible. That night? You know, of the tequila incident? I couldn’t believe you were naked in my bed. It nearly killed me. I had to go sleep on a friend’s couch because I couldn’t be in the same room as you. This...” He smoothed his hand down my torso to circle my half-hard cock. “... has tormented me since I saw it that night. So perfect. You have no idea how often I tried to sneak a look after. I dreamed about this cock.”

His words, and his touch, were turning me on again. I squirmed under him and felt my breath hitch as he squeezed me gently. “Tristan.”

“Right here.”

“I wanted you too. Just didn’t want to admit it.”

Tristan hummed in approval and started to stroke me, a maddeningly slow up and down, up and down.

I huffed out a laugh. “Trying to talk here, but you’re not helping.”

The couch moved as he released my cock, but then he loomed above me and bent to kiss me hard. “Can’t help it. You’re too damned delicious. But go on... please.”

I pushed against his chest, trying to give myself room to think. I felt I owed him some kind of explanation. “Stop it! Just sit there and don’t touch me.”

Tristan made a pouty face but obeyed and half sat up, his arms resting across the top of the couch.

“I knew I liked men—you—but I liked girls, too, and that was the easier option, you know? I just didn’t expect to like you quite as much as I did. Also, I didn’t think I stood a chance. You were so damned popular and crazy and everyone loved you.”

Tristan smiled and trailed a hand over my shoulder. “People loved you, too, Russ; you just didn’t notice. You were this super cute boy next door who never had a bad thing to say about anyone.”

I made a dismissive gesture. “Oh, please.”

Tristan rolled his eyes. “Well, if you insist.” And then he launched himself back on top of me, pinning my hands above my head. “Can I touch you now?”

I could see the desire burning in his eyes and could also feel the swelling in his groin. Heat flooded through me once more and it suddenly dawned on me that I had everything I ever wanted right here, right now. Only I wanted it naked.

“Yeah, you can,” I said huskily, “but only if you strip first.”

I’d never seen clothes disappear so fast. I watched in awe and mounting arousal as Tristan tore off his jeans and shirt. He moved to lie back over me, but I put a hand out to stop him. “No, stand there. I want to see.” Now that my guard was down, I let my eyes feast on him; the sculptured planes of his chest and abs, his muscled thighs, the sexy trail of hair low on his stomach that led down to his straining cock. He was beautiful. I wanted to touch all of him at once and was suddenly a little overwhelmed.

“Russ, you’re killing me here,” Tristan almost whined, his hands twitching at his sides.

I slowly stood up myself, letting my jeans finally fall to the floor. I kicked them off and shrugged out of my henley, tossing it behind me. I stepped close to Tristan, our naked bodies a fraction of an inch apart. I could feel myself starting to tremble; the desire to wrap myself around him was overpowering. Tristan's breath was puffing over my cheeks and I knew he was struggling with his own self control. I finally gave in and pulled him to me, crushing our chests together and holding him tight.

Tristan groaned and clamped his hands onto my ass, grinding into me. The roll of our cocks against each other made me shiver and I pushed my hands down between us to grab onto his hard length.

Tristan groaned again and nuzzled my neck. "Please... do anything you want."

I pulled back a little to look down at him, dropping to my knees to get a better view. I ran my fingers gently over his groin, marveling at the feel of his wiry pubic hair, the softness of his balls and the hot, tight skin over his dick. I leaned closer and licked the slick head of his cock.

"Look at me." Tristan's demand caught me by surprise and I raised my eyes to his, my mouth hovering over his cock.

"Oh, yeah." Tristan's eyes glittered darkly, the lust radiating off him. He blew out a breath and threaded his hands through my hair. "Fuck. I can't believe you're actually doing this."

"Me either," I said, licking him again. It felt as amazing as I had imagined it would. All those times I had secretly eyeballed Tristan when we roomed together, and now here he was, all warm and naked in front of me. I slid my hand up his thigh to grasp the base of his cock. "I want to do this right," I said. "Help me?"

Tristan laughed shakily. "Damn, Russ. You could just kneel there and look up at me and I would explode. Anything is good, believe me. Just go with it."

And I did.

That night I learned to suck cock, and boy was it fun. True to his word, Tristan didn't last long, pulling out of my mouth at the last moment to shoot over my chest and his stomach. We must have fallen asleep again soon after,

as I woke with my head on his chest, the both of us sprawling on the carpet, our limbs intertwined—much like the erotic dream I had had about him the previous night. The room was dark, the only light a faint yellow glow from the kitchen across the hall. I closed my eyes again and snuggled in closer, feeling the exact moment that Tristan woke up.

“What time is it?” His voice rumbled sleepily above me.

“The fuck if I know,” I said. “Can’t move. I think you broke me.”

I felt Tristan stretch and heard the rustle of fabric as he rummaged in what I assumed were his jeans. I turned my head to watch. The blue-white light of his cell phone illuminated his face and I was once again struck with how beautiful he was.

“Three thirty,” he said, dropping the phone back onto the pile of clothes next to us with a soft thud.

“What?”

“Yeah.”

“Fuck.”

“Uh huh.”

I laughed and stroked my hand down his chest. “Want to stay over?”

“I think I already have.” I felt his fingers thread through my hair. “But I wouldn’t say no to a more comfortable location. I’m not as young as I once was; these old bones need a nice mattress.”

“That I can do.” I pushed myself up and extended my hand. “Come on, bring your old bones to my bedroom.”

Tristan smiled. “Thought you’d never ask.”

We collapsed into my queen sized bed and huddled under the covers, lying on our sides, watching each other. I could see Tristan’s eyes gleaming in the darkness as he looked at me. He was biting his lip and holding back a smile.

“What?” I asked.

“You,” he said. “I can’t believe you never said anything before. Can’t believe I didn’t *do* anything before. We had our own room for months for Christ’s sake! I could’ve fucked you every night... and twice on weekends.”

“I know, I’m sorry. Wasted opportunity.” I shifted closer to him and hooked my arm around his middle, stroking his lower back.

“Never mind, I’m here now. In your bed. And a very nice bed it is, too, I must add. Does it come with breakfast?”

“Breakfast?”

“Yeah, I’ll need feeding up after all this excessive activity.” Tristan grinned at me. “Need to keep my strength up.”

“Dude, you want me to cook again?”

“Oh, hell no.” He gave a mock shudder. “Starbucks will do nicely.”

“Thank god for that,” I let out an exaggerated sigh. “Dinner almost killed me.”

“I know.”

My fingers stroked up his back to play with the hair at the nape of his neck. Tristan leaned in to kiss me, his lips soft and gentle against mine.

I hummed in contentment and he pulled me closer, enveloping me in his warmth. “Can I tell you a secret?” he whispered.

“Yeah,” I breathed.

“I’m not really a vegetarian. I was just fucking with you.”

I smiled. I really couldn’t bring myself to care. “I should’ve known.”

“You should. Breakfast on me?”

“Deal.”

THEEND

Author Bio

Originally from the UK, Anna Birmingham has spent the last few years in the USA and loves all things that come with living across the pond (pancakes, baseball, bagels...) She has been reading and writing m/m stories for around three years. It's a not so new guilty pleasure! Anna used to work in finance but is currently a stay-at-home-mom to two young children under the age of five, so free time doesn't come along that often. When it does, writing about hot guys doing sexy things is the perfect antidote to the "terrible twos"!

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