

LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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IN THE LONELY SEA

Arielle Pierce

Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

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By Arielle Pierce

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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Photo Description

A drowned man is held in the arms of a merman. The man looks as though he could be dead, or he could be asleep. The merman is kissing him on the lips. The man's hands drift in the sea, and his clothes are in tatters.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

Holding on to this wreck is all I can do. The light of the sun is as unbearable as the chill of the night. No land in sight. I'm hungry, thirsty, and I'm tired.

The sweet song I heard all night is luring me under. I must be losing my mind, because I believe it. And I let go.

No BDSM possibly and I like my protagonists BOTH with strong personalities. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Emmanuela Plastic Duck

Story Info

Genre: historical fantasy

Tags: Welsh, merman, Victorian/1880's, first love, sailor

Content warnings: HFN?

Word count: 6,295

IN THE LONELY SEA

By Arielle Pierce

Giving up would be so easy. All he had to do was let go. After all, Cian was the last. All his shipmates had given in to the lure of the sea and gone down. The only ones who bitterly hung on were the boat and Cian himself. And even the boat wasn't long for this world.

It felt an age ago, when the storm had swept upon them and plunged their fragile ketch into the viciousness that was the Irish Sea in winter. Cian could still hear the terrible crack of her keel breaking and the shudder she had given, before listing and plunging her crew into the water.

The six men had hung to her sides as the storm played itself out. With the bitter cold, Cian had known they weren't long for this world. Even with that knowledge they had all clung on, spiring one another as the night descended. Perhaps all would have been well. They might have survived and been saved by another fishing vessel.

But there was the song.

It was no more than a whisper in the ear at first, no more than the faint cry of a gull. As the light faded it carried as a scream upon the wind, this sound from deep in the sea. Fear became panic in the men's eyes as they recognized it as the song of a siren, the lure into deep waters from which there was no return.

Cian had only been to sea in the past year. He was young and naive enough to have scoffed at the tales of the *gwenhidwy*, the faerie folk of the sea. Though his mother had put out fresh milk to ask for good fortune from the *tylwyth teg*, he had gone the way of what he thought was an enlightened man, a proper man. Proper men dressed well, were educated, aspired to live in a place like London, spoke English. Proper men believed in science, not old Celtic fables.

He snorted at his delusions. Proper men clung to the side of a dying ketch, wore strips of rags fashioned by the ragged wood of the ship, prayed to the

heavens in Welsh. Proper men knew the truth of the mer-people. Proper men knew there was death in the sweetness of their song. The shivers Cian felt were only partly from the bitter cold.

And then the men began to slip under the waters.

The song knew of its triumph. It rose in pitch, no longer a mere whisper. It became sweet in tone, like wild honey slipping down the throat on a hot summer day. Or the taste of a kiss. Or Rhodri, beautiful Rhodri, dancing the May dance last spring. Rhodri, who Cian could never have, Rhodri who was married now with a babe on the way, as all young men in the village were expected to do.

The song, it promised him that, if only he let go, he would have the kiss of the beautiful lad. If he only let go he would have more, so much more. All that he dreamt of all those nights, when his skin sweated and his body hardened with longing, all that he could have.

And still Cian clung onto the broken keel.

He clung on as the song promised him caresses more gentle than the pounding of the waves against his body, as it promised him warmth greater than the cold of the bitter seawater. He clung on as it promised him bliss, like death, a small death it said. Let go.

And still Cian clung on.

The night deepened and yet he hung to the boat until, in the harsh light of the morning, he was the only man left. Six had gone out in the ketch, five brave lads lay in Davy Jones' locker now. But they wouldn't have Cian. That he promised himself.

The song didn't leave as the sun beat down. It changed, the pitch becoming higher, more strident. It wailed, it demanded he let go. Though his arms were cramped and cold, still he hung on. The song became a lament, it became a howl. The waves rose, the crippled boat listed and turned on her side. And still Cian clung on. The skies darkened and the wind rose, but still Cian clung to his boat. And then it promised him not just lust.

It promised him love.

Just let go, it said, I will love you. I will hold you to me. I will never let go. And so Cian did.

He let go.

The rough wood of the boat was replaced with the soft submission of the sea. Cian slipped deeper into it, the boat no more than a shadow and then she was gone. As too was the voice and all it had promised. Too late Cian realised he had been tricked, just like the other five. Too late he knew he couldn't get back to the surface.

He thrashed against the pressure of the seawater. He struggled to swim, moving arms and legs too tired to make it back. The more he fought the deeper he fell. The pain in his lungs, the pain in his head was too much to take. Though he knew he shouldn't, he took in a deep breath. The salt water rushed into his lungs. He coughed, he vomited it out, but the instinct to take another breath was too much.

And so Cian drowned.

Dylan was of the sea.

Beautiful. Powerful. Cruel.

He hadn't started the storm, that much was true. But he did drink of it, and drink deeply. One sailor, then two. The third went as the moon reached her height, the sea arching up as though a lover's body to be with her. The fourth was as the stars came out, the last of the storm having reached the shores of Wales. The fifth lasted until the light of the morning could just be glimpsed. That left the sixth.

He sang his sweetest. He sang his cruellest. But still the silly boy ignored him, ignored his empty promises. He caressed the boy's body, traced sea fingers over his chest, along long legs. He promised him release but still he was ignored. He called up the waves, he called down the new storm, but still the boy hung onto his boat.

And then he promised him love.

Under the waves he wouldn't have to be afraid. He would be loved, it would be okay.

And the fool believed him.

With a powerful stroke of his tail, Dylan followed him as the boy struggled under the waves, realising in his last breath that it had been lies, that the *gwenhidwy* had tricked him.

Once the boy stilled, Dylan swam up to him. The boy's eyes were shut as in sleep, his arms trailing above his head as he sank into the deepest blue. Dylan watched the way his fingers danced in the current, the way his long black hair trailed about his face before drifting free.

It was a stunning face. Dylan peered closer at the way the thick eyelashes lay against the white skin as if painted on. And the way his lips partly opened, as a tease for Dylan. They were beautiful lips, full and curved. Smiling would have come naturally to those lips. They pulled Dylan in. For the moment he forgot who was victim, who was trickster.

Leaning in through the cloud of black hair, he kissed Cian.

Air, beautiful blessed air, rushed into Cian's lungs. He coughed, he breathed in. And again, and again. And that's when he felt it, lips around his, breathing into his lungs. Lips surrounding his, lips soft as promises kissing him. Life coming back into his body, he returned the kiss. The skin brushing against his was soft, the hair tickling his face was as silk. Cian wrapped his legs around the firm body between his legs, the body that went far longer than a human's. What was it? Still in a sleep haze, he reached down to touch it, that hard thing that was gently agitating his loins. Under his fingers were scales.

He opened his eyes in surprise.

Blinking hard, he stared into the face of the person holding him. A man, a beautiful man, with features so delicate he could have been a woman. Was his hair black? Or was it a green so dark it could blend into the colour of the sea? And his skin so pale he could be dead. And eyes as dark and cold as a shark's.

And that's when Cian realised he was under the water.

Panicking, he pushed away from the merman, his mind refusing to take in exactly what his saviour was. He only knew he had to get away, he had to get to the surface. Holding his breath, he swam for the surface, not knowing what was up, what was down. A part of him knew it was all in vain, but still he tried.

The monster swam next to him, watching every clumsy movement he made. Those shark eyes took it all in, never mocking but never kind. Cian could feel the pain once again in his lungs, the blinding white light in his brain. Desperately he swam on, his movements slowing.

And then he stopped, and all was still.

The boy looked as though he was dancing. His arms waved over his head, his legs kicked faster than a clogger's. A dance with no music. A dance in a dream. And then a dance stilled.

Dylan peered into the boy's face but he was once more asleep, his lungs filled with water. His eyes were half opened and Dylan could see the blue of the summer sky in them.

And he wondered. Did the boy have a family? Did he have a mother who had tucked him in at night and sung him to sleep, when he had been but a child? Had he had a little sister who had followed him everywhere? Did he have a father who had been torn between doting on him and demanding he take his place upon the waters? Had he wanted to go to sea? Had he wanted to be a fisherman?

In that moment Dylan found himself thinking of his own family, now lost. The family who had taken him in as a mere babe, left for dead after being abandoned by his birth mother. His adopted elderly father and mother who had no children of their own, who had loved and doted upon him with more love than many a child would know. His parents who had died of heartbreak when he had fled back to the sea after being unable to ignore her call any longer.

Gently grasping the boy, he swam upwards, out from the depths of the sea. He swam away from the silence, away from the crushing water pressing down. As he swam he studied the boy closer.

His eyes lingered over the way the boy's neck curved gracefully into his shoulder, with none of the bulk men who had sailed for years held. He lightly traced his fingers over the smooth chest that narrowed into small hips. His eyes drank in the pebble of dark nipples and the arc of erect muscle that pressed against his own hips. A lad like this deserved life.

A lad like this deserved another kiss.

And so he brought Cian back to life.

The sea was lapping at Cian's feet as he drew in breath. The first lungful hurt with a pain like shattered glass, the second not so much. The third was a blessing, the fourth a prayer to God. The fifth brought him back to life. He opened his eyes.

The creature—the merman—was staring down at him. And that's when Cian realised the man was lying upon him.

"You were cold," the creature said to his unspoken question.

At least he had the grace to get off him. And Cian was cold, he could feel it once the warmth of the other body was gone. Bitterly, horribly cold. Cold as the dead are cold. He turned fearful eyes to the merman as it dawned on him that he had drowned.

"You're okay." The creature fully stood and only then did Cian notice that he had legs.

"But I thought you..." His voice was harsh from the salt water.

"Had a tail?" The creature laughed. Cian couldn't help but notice that his voice sounded smooth, despite a life under the sea waves. "I'm Dylan."

Cian stared at the offering hand as if it were poison. Beautiful poison, but deadly all the same. He was one of the faerie folk, after all. They were all tricksters, cruel in their non-human ways.

And the man was naked.

Noticeably gulping—and feeling a flush of shame from that act—Cian tried hard not to look. Not looking meant that he could pretend to be like all the other lads in the village. Not looking meant he couldn't remember the way the merman's soft lips had felt on his, after that first kiss. And the way it had made him feel. From the sly glance the merman gave him, Cian knew that he knew.

Trying to sit up—and failing miserably—Cian curled on his side and watched the man. “W-what happened?”

Dylan ignored him for a moment as he crouched beside the small fire, adding heavier logs to the driftwood. After poking it for a moment he turned and studied Cian. “You drowned, I saved you.” A half smile played on his lips.

“But what are you? I thought...”

“I was mer-folk?” The half smile turned into a proper grin. “I am... but once upon a time I was a village lad like you.”

Cian tried once more to get up. This time he was more successful. That was one victory, at least. He shook his head, miserable in the knowledge that he didn't know what had happened, what was to happen. He wasn't even sure if he was dead and this was some terrible purgatory, here in this sea cave with the water lapping at the opening. Though if indeed this was neither heaven nor hell, at least he had the merman. And he was easy on the eye. Cian chided himself, it would never pay to let his thoughts drift in that direction.

It was hard to take his eyes off the man. He liked to tell himself it was because—as a *gwenhidwy*—it was an unsafe thing to do. He could convince himself of that, almost. It had nothing to do with the way the shadows danced across his high cheekbones, or the full lips soft despite belonging to this creature of the sea, or the way his dark hair shone in the light of the fire. It certainly wasn't because of the fine, lean lines of the man's body or the naked shaft that tucked neatly almost out of sight in the bend of his narrow waist and his long legs. Though Cian noticed that if he looked carefully, he could just make out the soft roundness of his bollocks from just under the tuck of legs.

Looking closer, despite himself, Cian couldn't help but see that he was hairless there. It looked almost like a silken purse. He could feel his fingers itching to touch Dylan, there.

“Like what you see?”

The sound of Dylan's voice made Cian startle. He could feel his face go completely red at being caught looking. The merman must have been thinking along the same lines. He raised a perfectly arched eyebrow and leaned forward. Backing away as he came close enough to tempt him with his full lips, Cian flushed anew.

Dylan's next words came out in a purr. “Are you a catamite? Someone's Ganymede?”

“W-what do you mean?” Cian perfectly well knew what he was implying. He could feel his mouth go dry at the thought of being found out. While the death penalty for being found in another man's bed was no longer British law, he was sure the reality of that would only be in cosmopolitan places like London, or Bath. English compassion might not stretch all the way to a Welsh village. Cian couldn't see how the love of a man towards another man would be tolerated here, and he hadn't wanted to test that either.

Dylan didn't leave him to suffer his fears. The slender creature leaned in further and brushed his lips against Cian's. They were every bit as soft above water as they had been under. The warmth of his naked body radiated towards Cian. He found himself falling into that warmth, falling into that kiss.

Dylan's lips parted and his tongue stroked against Cian's own, asking entry. He opened his mouth, torn between being confused and scared, and longing. He couldn't stop his trembling as the kiss deepened, Dylan's tongue catching Cian's own, and caressing it.

It felt as though all the air that Cian needed to breathe was gone. All that mattered was the softness of Dylan's mouth, the heat of it as he urged him to arousal. In that moment he forgot all of it, all those terrible fears trying to suppress his longings. All that mattered was Dylan and what he was doing. He remembered the promises made to him as he had clung to the boat and, in that

moment, he believed every one of them. Here was a creature that could love him as he desired.

When Dylan placed his hand over Cian's chest, Cian thought his heart would leap out. Certainly the *gwenhidwy* could feel it just under his skin, pounding away in uncertainty and longing. He reached up to touch Dylan's face. The skin under his water-shrunken fingertips was softer than he expected. He shook as he leaned into Dylan's body again.

The kiss deepened as the two pressed to one another. Cian could feel his own blood racing and his shaft growing hard, painfully hard. Release would be a blessing. He fell back into the sand, his arms loosely wrapped around Dylan.

But Dylan stiffened and refused to follow him.

"You really should get your strength back up." The beautiful creature watched him, an unreadable expression on his face.

Though he said that, Cian couldn't help but note that his hips were still pressed up against Cian's own. Dylan placed his hand to Cian's chest, silently warning the boy off and stood up.

The boy was more than willing. Dylan withdrew into himself as he built the fire higher. The cave he had found to rest Cian in wasn't small enough to get warm, not without a blazing fire. He didn't have the proper skills to build it up other than with firewood. Had they been underwater it would have been a different story but he knew Cian had had enough terrors for one day.

Glancing over, he studied the lad. Cian was sitting away from the fire, his face illuminated by the blaze. He reminded Dylan of a boy back in the village of his childhood. Rhys, his name had been. Like Cian, he had been tall and fit, every bit a fisherman, nothing like himself.

Even though Dylan's father had made his living upon the waters of the Irish Sea, Dylan had been deemed too frail as a child to join him in that life. They had encouraged him to be a hilltop farmer, not really knowing what he was.

Or perhaps they had, in their own way. Dylan recalled the way his mother had turned wide eyes to him every time he had been close to the shoreline. Like she was fearful that his rightful mother would come and claim her babe. But mermaids weren't like that, Dylan knew now. They were cruel, heartless. Like he was.

If his human mother could see him now, what he had become, her heart would break all over again. As if he hadn't already put her in her grave, with his leaving all those years ago. He closed his eyes, painfully remembering those times when the sea had called, when he had been taken back to his rightful home. And the weeks and months after, watching his family from afar, watching them die a little more every day that he was no longer with them. His mother had lasted only a few months, his father joined her a year after.

With this boy here, perhaps he had a chance to right at least one wrong. He could make sure the lad got safely back to his family, so at least it would be one less person's death to grieve over. He sighed again. The ways of the water people were so much easier. No feeling, no soul involved. There was no chance of being hurt that way, no chance of feeling the rush of love. Perhaps there had been exceptions in the past. After all, he did hear of them whispered amongst his fellow mer-folk. Girls who had taken on a human lover, other maidens who had been captured in nets and watched over the one who had set them free, protecting him and his children. And there had been others like him, of course. Mer-children abandoned on out-going tides, left to die or be taken in by a kind-hearted human family.

Making up his mind, he turned to Cian. Using muscles long unused to smiling, he thought to reassure the lad, though he probably more looked terrifying. "I'm going to get you warmed up and then you can walk home. There's a village only two miles along the shore, I'm assuming it's yours. Just... don't go back to the sea, it's no place for a lad like you."

Cian just looked puzzled. "Oh," was all he said as he studied the fire.

"Just 'oh'?"

"I'm confused."

“Well, that’s an easy state for a human.” Despite the words, Dylan’s second attempt at a smile was warmer. He motioned the lad over to the fire. It was being built for him, after all.

Cian studied him. “Are you just here to mock me? If you are I think I’ll try for that village now.”

“Oh, don’t be such a child.” Dylan sat back on his heels and sighed. “It’s been a long time... a very long time since I had human company, I apologize for my behaviour.”

If the boy wasn’t going to come to the fire under his own propulsion then Dylan was left with no choice but to grasp him by the upper arm and bring him over himself. And he wouldn’t have said he was rough about it, despite the look on the lad’s face.

“So why...?” Cian jerked his arm out of Dylan’s grasp and stopped, though the warmth of the fire did feel good.

Dylan dropped his hand and suppressed a smirk over Cian’s behaviour. In a neutral voice, he asked, “Why what?”

“Why did you kiss me and then pull away?” Cian gulped at his own boldness in asking. “When you know what I’ll be going back to?”

“Because I like you.” Dylan’s smile finally reached his eyes. “And I remembered what you were longing for, back in the sea.”

“So why did you stop then?”

“You’ve almost drowned. And not just once but several times. Don’t you think you need to get your strength back up?” Dylan watched Cian out of the corner of his eye, a half smile still playing on his lips.

Cian crossed his arms over his chest. “No. Actually, no I don’t.”

“Well, I do.”

“So says the thing that murdered all my friends and tried to take me too.”

That stung Dylan. “I didn’t!”

“So where are they?”

“Sleeping.”

“Right. And I’m the bloody Queen of England.”

“Well, Your Highness, if you don’t get closer to this fire soon it won’t matter what you think because you’ll be dead of the cold. Now, what is it to be?”

With that, Cian had enough. No more mocking, no more teases. He’d had enough of the way he was supposed to act, the way that was proper. He’d had enough of being proper. Grabbing Dylan roughly by the arms, he pushed him to the sandy ground.

Dylan let himself go, momentarily catching Cian out, causing him to fall on top of him. Pushing the slender man into the ground with the weight of his body, Cian laid on top of him, forcing his legs open with his knees.

“You don’t have to be so rough.” Dylan panted, pinned as he was under Cian, his arms above his head, though he wasn’t trying to get free.

Cian didn’t answer him, he couldn’t answer him. He was lost to the rising lust that said he had to claim this man. He took a deep breath, and then another, savouring the salty taste it left in the back of his throat. This would never do, taking Dylan in such a manner. He had to get in control of his body, if not his emotions. It didn’t help that he could feel the merman’s erection pressing against his own.

When he glanced down at Dylan, the man looked not at all upset about the rough way that he was being handled. His long hair fanned out around his head, more black in the soft light than the dark green Cian had first thought it was. His eyes were half-closed, his thoughts seemed far away.

“What are you thinking?”

Dylan blinked and gave him a slow smile. “I was wondering if you were actually going to have me or just lie there using me as a mattress.”

“You don’t mind?”

“Being used as a mattress? Yes, I do. I’m just a touch too slender to make an efficient one, don’t you think?”

Cian snorted, a small grin tugging at the corner of his mouth. “No, I meant... this...” Rather self-consciously he pushed his hips against Dylan’s.

The merman raised an eyebrow. “Like I said, I’m waiting.”

That was all Cian needed to hear. Settling onto his elbows, he leaned over Dylan’s face. His breath was sweet on Cian’s lips, his kiss was that much sweeter. Feeling confident, he edged his tongue along the corner of Dylan’s mouth. His reward was a gentle opening, a caress of soft tongue against his.

He drew his lips along the curve of Dylan’s neck, touching the soft skin along his chest. With a shiver that had nothing to do with the cold, he moved down Dylan’s body, tracing over the lean muscles of his stomach until he reached his shaft. As he admired the merman’s body, Dylan worked on Cian’s trousers, loosening them so that they fell around his hips.

Dylan was beautiful. In all his daydreams and all his longings, Cian couldn’t have dared hoped for such a man. His breath caught in his throat as he looked at his erection. The tip of it was deeply red, the rest a muted golden tan, just a shade darker than the rest of the merman’s complexion. Dylan smelled of spicy musk as Cian touched his lips to the shaft, kissing then licking it. Dylan sighed and ever so slightly pushed his hips up. His hand curved around the back of Cian’s head, encouraging him to envelop him within his mouth.

This moment was all Cian had dreamt about, all those lonely nights. With more vigour than skill, he worked his mouth, hoping to satisfy Dylan. The merman kept his hand entangled in Cian’s hair, working the long strands into knots.

“Come here.”

Cian blinked and looked up at Dylan. The merman’s hands slid from his hair and settled onto his broad shoulders. Cian needed no more urging. Straightening up, he lay fully over the smaller man, his trousers slipping down with the movement to settle along his thighs. His eager shaft rubbed against

Dylan's own. He moaned and arched his head back, just that touch was almost too much.

"No... no, wait." Dylan's soft voice brought him back from the edge. The merman bent his knees up so that Cian had full access to his body. "Take me."

Dylan smiled and guided his hand to his bud. Cian's fingers brushed against the tightened opening, causing Dylan to sigh softly. Pressing, Cian pushed his index finger in, causing Dylan to moan louder. The merman spread his legs further, encouraging Cian. He arched his hips into Cian's as the lad pushed another finger in.

With a look in his eyes that said he needed Cian at this moment, Dylan guided Cian to him, encouraging him to push into him. With a shaking that had nothing to do with the cold winds outside the cave and everything to do with the beautiful man under him, Cian complied. Almost as though he were underwater once again, he ground his hips to Dylan, penetrating him in one slowly exquisite thrust.

Dylan arched his back, and cried out as he was taken. With his hands he encouraged Cian to command his body. His dark eyes were shut, his mouth slightly open, exposing the white tips of his front teeth. Nothing in his face showed the strain of the way in which he was being taken. Cian, for his part, simply couldn't stop once he began. The heat, the tightness surrounding his shaft, luring him in, was more than he could take. This being as one with another man was so very much more than he had thought it would be. A beautiful man under him, open to him, letting him be as inexpertly brutal as he was. That warmth enveloping him pulsed and massaged his shaft. Giving up what little control he had, Cian lost himself to the melting pleasure of coming deep inside Dylan.

Spent, Cian collapsed onto the smaller man. His heart pounded in his ears and it took him moments to begin to hear or feel anything else. Dylan's own heartbeat was almost in time to the faint sound of the surf.

"Are you okay?" Dylan's voice sounded as faint as everything else.

It took Cian long moments before he could answer. "I... think so." It was then that he noted that his body was dead weight on top of Dylan. "Sorry about that." He propped himself up on shaking arms.

"There's nothing to be sorry for." Dylan smiled and cupped Cian's cheek in his hand, before leaning up and kissing the lad.

Nothing more mattered.

Dylan watched Cian as he slept. His eyes traced over the rangy body that promised heavy muscle if he stayed at sea. They lingered over the erect shaft that had so recently been inside him.

It had been a long time, too long since he had been loved. His surrender to the sea had been so long ago, and his love of the merman who had found him and lured him back into the surf, into the world of coldness and dark. That too seemed to have happened to someone else, someone who had been able to be loved, who had been happy. Life under the waves had seemed a shadow of what he had once known. But now...

He reached over to lightly trace his fingers over Cian's bare chest. He rested them just over one dark nipple, its skin wrinkled. Under his palm he could feel the lad's heartbeat. Cian sighed ever so slightly at the touch of his lover. It wouldn't take much to wake him.

Cian's shaft lay hard against his belly, ever so slightly darker than the rest of his complexion. Dylan ran his fingers over the head, tracing along the edge of the flared hood. He smiled to himself, remembered each thrust, each frenzied movement from the lad.

They were well matched, an innocent and one as cold as the fish he swam with. Or perhaps once as cold as that. Now? Now he felt a spark of humanity within his heart. Just in time to leave. He sighed to himself as he traced his fingers on the sand close to Cian.

And then he was gone.

Cian shouldn't have been surprised when he woke, cold. The fire had gone out, the *gwenhidwy* had long fled back to the sea. His first response was to throw some unused driftwood against the side of the cave, hard. His second response was to cry, a little.

What had he done wrong? Why hadn't Dylan stayed? He searched about for the tatters of his clothes. It wouldn't do to go into the village naked, after all. He just hoped it wasn't a long walk, he had no boots and the state of his clothing were poor, to put it politely. It was as he was at the edge of the cave that he spotted it, the trace of words in the sand.

Dylan's words.

Meet me here in one week, evening time. Your shipmates are waiting in the village for you.

Deep within, something burst in Cian. He might have called it joy, maybe hope or perhaps even love. It could have been all those, and more.

It would be the light in the darkest days ahead. It would be a holding hand, a gentle caress, a tender kiss.

It would be a journey, the beginning of a long journey he little knew he was about to embark upon.

Never looking back, he walked to the village. He never should have doubted his lover. Waiting were all five lads from the ketch, all full of cheer and ready with a pint for him. Waiting were his mother and baby sister with tears in their eyes. And his father and brothers, all with smiles on their faces.

And waiting in the lonely sea was another, that he knew.

One who would love him.

THE END

Author Bio

Arielle Pierce currently resides in both southern Spain and in Wales, ensuring that she doesn't miss the worst of the rains and gales of one country, nor the blazing heat and droughts of the other. When not merrily scribbling away about the adventures of two men in love (or lust, more likely) she can be found sewing sock kitty cats for her small son or gardening in her back yard, where she is locked into a losing battle with the weeds (and with the sock cats, for that matter).

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