

# *One Love, One Mistake*



*Kelly McGrath*

*A Love Has No Boundaries Story  
M/M Romance Group*

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# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## ONE LOVE, ONE MISTAKE

By Kelly McGrath

### 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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# ONE LOVE, ONE MISTAKE

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## Photo Description

A tattooed man with short, dark, spiky hair holds an adorably chubby baby. They are both in profile, faces pressed together, and the man is blowing a comical kiss to the delighted baby.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*One night of mistakes... and I lost him.*

*I loved him and seduced him for months (I am a notorious player,) and when we tried to have a relationship, my past came back to haunt me. One random consolation fuck with a co-worker, and here comes a baby. The responsible thing to do would be to marry the mother... right? But my lover will not go along with being put in the closet, so he left.*

*But we finally meet again... and now he is my son's paediatrician. I never thought my son would be the one who put us together again. I finally have the second chance to prove that I'm ready to settle down with him and build a family.*

*Thanks son!*

*Sincerely,*

*Jann29*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** medical personnel, sweet no sex, men with children, reunited

**Content warnings:** off-screen m/f noncon/dubcon

**Word count:** 10,888

# ONE LOVE, ONE MISTAKE

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## PROLOGUE

“Oh God! Oh God, oh God, oh God.”

The heart-crushing whimper came from somewhere near the door as Sean’s mind pulled him from sleep. Looking over to the doorway he saw Anthony leaning against the doorframe with a stricken look on his face.

“What’s wrong, babe?” Sean asked in a voice gravelly from the desert that had taken root in his throat, the sound sending shooting pains through his head. If anything, Ant’s face went even more pallid as he wavered on the spot. Just as Sean was about to pull his ass out of bed to go to Ant, he felt the mattress shift before he had even found the strength to lift a finger. *What the Hell!*

Thoughts raced through his head as he looked over his shoulder, belatedly realising there was a woman next to him. *A very naked woman!* What the hell was Cho doing in his bed? She was the bane of his existence at work. Looking down at himself, it was blatantly clear that he was also naked, and, even worse, judging by the cum stains on the sheets—making them stick to him in odd places—and the dried fluids on his cock, he had very recently had sex. *With a woman!* No wonder Ant was now practically being held up by the door frame, Sean felt like he was going to pass out himself. What the hell had happened?

He didn’t remember much of the work party the night before. Ant had been on shift at the hospital and hadn’t been able to make it, so Sean had gone on his own. Still not used to being in a relationship, he hadn’t thought much of it even though Ant had seemed a little peeved, even going so far as to mention the wicked witch currently lying next to him as a reason not to go. Ant liked her even less than Sean did, and judging by the current situation, he seemed to have every right. How the hell had this happened?

Jumping up out of the bed with more speed than he had thought himself possible of, he rooted around the floor for his boxers. Falling over a pair of women's shoes, he landed flat on his ass, jarring his already aching limbs and brain into full-blown wakefulness. Not good. Before, they had only been dull aches as if they hadn't woken up yet either, now they were definitely making themselves known. With the sound of the thud as his body hit the floor came the louder sound of the door slamming and stumbling footsteps down the hall.

Pulling himself off of the floor and taking a final glance at the woman in the bed, he stumbled his way out of the room on legs that were so wobbly that he bounced off of every wall along the way. He didn't care how much he hurt, how confused he was over what had happened; Sean just knew that if Ant walked out the door there was no way that he would come back. Racing after Ant as fast as he could through the house, Sean saw, out of the corner of his eye, the breakfast stuff on the side table that Ant had obviously picked up on his way to see him after his shift. Finally catching up to Ant as he fumbled with the locks on the front door, Sean grabbed for his arm, making him turn around to look at him.

The droop in his shoulders and the tears streaming down Ant's face tore something in Sean chest. They hadn't been together long, only about six months, but it had been long enough for Sean to fall head-over-heels in love with him, contrary to what he had wanted. From the moment they had met, he had known that there was something different about Ant, and for a man that had only ever wanted to get laid and sow his wild oats in as many greeneries as he could, he had been swept away. Ant was sex on legs without even realising it—he didn't flaunt himself like all the other guys that Sean had been with, he was more natural.

Before Sean had a chance to say anything, though, and still not quite sure what he had planned on saying, Ant took a deep, ragged breath, seeming to get himself under control and to quell the tears, he looked Sean straight in the eyes.

When he spoke, his toneless voice nearly brought Sean to his knees. "How could you? Why would you do it? You don't even like women—you're gay,

for crying out loud. Or was that a lie? I knew you were a player when we got together but I thought we had something. Was I wrong? Do you feel nothing for me—is this your way of getting out of this relationship? You could have just said that you didn't want to be with me anymore. You didn't have to—to—to do th-th-*this!*" At that Anthony broke, covering his mouth with his hand as he turned and practically sprinted from the house.

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Over the next few weeks Sean tried talking to Ant, but he wouldn't take Sean's calls and wouldn't even acknowledge him when Sean showed up at his door.

He had tried talking to Cho at work, but she just kept avoiding him as well—even though the few times he saw her looking his way, she seemed extremely pleased with herself for some reason. As much as he tried to remember how he had ended up in bed with Cho, he just couldn't. The last thing he remembered was being on the dance floor after a few too many drinks, but after that, there was nothing. He didn't even remember leaving, and he certainly didn't remember how he had gotten home.

Just as he was about to make one last try at getting Ant back after two months, Cho finally came to talk to him. And talk to him she did, telling that she had been after him for years, even knowing that he was gay, but figuring that if he had the right woman he wouldn't be anymore. *Delusional woman!* But she also revealed that she had spiked his drink, and that was why he didn't remember anything. She said that he had been great in bed and that they should stay together. When he asked her why she had been avoiding him if she thought they should be together, she simply replied that she had gotten what she had wanted and didn't want to listen to him whine and moan.

"Why are you here now, then! You can't honestly think that we would be together?" Sean bellowed at her, shaking with rage at the woman who had caused him to lose everything.

"It seems that after our little tryst, something very unexpected happened. Even though I was on the pill and thought that we were safe, it seems that the

alcohol in my system and the leftover antibiotics from the week before when I was sick inhibited the pill.”

At this point Sean thought he might pass out with what she was saying. He had a feeling he knew what was coming but there was no way in hell that it could possibly be! Hands sweating, he clenched them in front of him, waiting for her to continue.

Taking a deep breath, she finally put her hands at her sides and raised her head to look up at him with what could only be described as a smirk on her face.

“I’m pregnant.”

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## CHAPTER ONE

He loved his son, AJ, he really did, but there were just times that Sean wished that he wasn't on his own with him. Three o'clock in the morning, with only three hours of sleep in the last twenty-four was definitely one of those times. He had thought that by doing the right thing by Cho and the baby everything would be okay. *Damn!* He had been so wrong! Yes, he had felt trapped, but there was no way in hell he would leave any child of his to grow up without him. He hadn't planned on having a kid, feeling that for that to happen he would need to settle down and stop playing the field. Granted, that had started to change.

Anthony had been the start of that, come to think of it. He *had* started to settle down, he just hadn't realised it fully at the time. Too bad the settling down had been with the wrong person, let alone gender. Anthony had been a great man, a doctor in Waterford University Hospital, and a total hottie to boot. He was a kind, generous man that everyone who knew him looked up to. In the time since Sean had found out about the baby, he had been trying to forget about Anthony, though, because what was the point? Anthony was never going to be in his life again. Between his past and now AJ—no, it was better just to let go of the memories of a life that was no longer available to him.

He had done the right thing in marrying Cho, or at least he thought so at the time. Now he was left without the one thing that he had grown to crave since being with Anthony—the love of a good man.

Cho left him not long after the baby was born; she hadn't wanted to be a mother and had no maternal instincts what-so-ever. The only reason she kept the baby had been in hope that it would bring them together the way she wanted. Once she finally realised that would never happen, she gave up.

Being stuck in a loveless marriage, well, that part Sean understood, but he still couldn't forgive her for leaving their child. He hadn't loved her, not by any stretch of the imagination, but he had thought that they were in this together, raising their child together so that AJ would have two loving parents.

That was all he wanted for his child. He knew that he could and would make a go of it on his own—he would do anything for his child.

From the moment AJ was born, Sean loved him. He hadn't expected to have quite the connection with his child as he had, but there it was. He couldn't explain it, but it was real. AJ was a part of him, his flesh and blood. For his child, he would move mountains, and he felt sometimes as if he had. It had been hard there at the beginning after Cho had left. AJ had only been four weeks old at the time, and there was no way that Sean was going to pawn him off on someone to look after... not that there hadn't been loads of offers.

His parents were great, they had come and stayed with him for the first few days while he figured out what his next step would be. He wanted to do right by his child, and therefore took a sabbatical from work so that he could raise AJ on his own, and figure out what to do. His employer offered to allow him to work from home; being a data analyst meant he could work from anywhere so long as he had a computer and an Internet connection.

It had been working out okay for them, except for the lack of sleep. He had started to figure out what AJ's different cries were, but the one that he was hearing at the moment was one he hadn't heard before. Vaulting out of bed in nothing but his boxers, as AJ's cries got progressively louder from the whimper it had started out being, Sean made his way over to the little cot at the side of his room. It had been given to him by his mother, who had kept it from when he had been a baby, hoping, as all mothers do, that it could be passed down. Being an only child, he was her only hope. His parents had always known that he was gay—that didn't stop the badgering to settle down with a nice man and start a family.

Looking down at his son, he noticed that AJ was red and blotchy from crying and scrunched up in a tight ball as if in pain—and he wasn't kicking out his little legs and arms as he usually did, this looked more like flailing. Not knowing what could be wrong, he immediately lifted AJ from the cot, automatically making sure to support his head.

He brought the baby to his bare chest, cradling him there rocking to and fro, AJ's face moved automatically into the hollow between Sean's neck and

shoulder. He couldn't get over how much AJ had grown in his short three months of life; it seemed only yesterday that Sean had brought him home from the hospital able to hold AJ's head in his hand while the baby's bum rested on his forearm.

From the minute they had gotten AJ home, Cho had moved into the spare room, leaving AJ with his father in the main bedroom. The only reason they had shared a bed in the first place was because she had hoped it would lead to something, and when she realised it wouldn't he had still insisted on it. He had become used to feeling his child kicking him in the back when Cho curled up behind him and was loath to lose that.

After the baby was born, the only times she had gotten up at night when the baby woke was so that she could get the breast pump, and even then the only reason she even did that was because she was starting to hurt. She would go to the kitchen, use the pump, leave the milk and pump on the counter, and go back to bed.

Coming out of his musings, he noticed the screaming had quietened to a whimper, but this only lasted for a couple of minutes before it started again, only worse this time. Laying AJ down on his bed, Sean stripped him of all his nightclothes and checked his nappy. Nappy empty, he figured that that wasn't the issue. AJ did seem a little warm though, so he picked up his nappy-clad baby and started walking around the room rubbing his back, willing to try anything to help his son even if it meant walking for hours.

After two hours of nonstop crying, and Sean trying everything he could think of—from walking around his room for an hour, because even if he wore a hole through the shag rug on the floor then it would be worth it; to giving AJ a bath to see if that would help—he was finally at his wits' end. Why had his parents decided that this weekend would be a good weekend for a trip away? His mother always knew what was wrong and would have been there in fifteen minutes if he asked.

Starting to worry and not knowing what was wrong, he placed AJ in his carry-cot and rushed around, throwing on whatever clothes he could find and grabbing his wallet and keys. His only option left was to go to Accident &

Emergency at the hospital. Strapping the carry-cot into the back of his car, he made the ten-minute drive to WUH.

Scrambling through the doors of A&E, Sean could only imagine what the nurse at the desk was thinking looking at him. Unshaven, with his tattoos, black spiky hair, and ear rings, he knew he looked like some punk-biker, but on top of all that, he caught a glimpse of himself in the reflective glass of the A&E doors and realised he was wearing a pink “Don’t Read In The Closet – M/M Romance Group” T-shirt... and carrying a screaming baby that had some obvious Korean descent.

Well, he wasn’t sure if it was a look of sympathy or wariness on the nurse’s face. Not caring about anything other than his crying baby, he rushed to the desk. Placing the carry-cot on the ground carefully, he lifted his tearful baby out and cradled him against his shoulder trying to soothe him. Turning back to the nurse Sean explained why he was there with just a touch of near-hysteria threading through his voice.

“Hi, I’m Sean Keogh, this is my son AJ. He started crying at about three a.m. and I haven’t been able to settle him since. He’s a little clammy, I tried to bring his temperature down by bathing him, but it doesn’t seem to be high enough for a fever and he doesn’t seem to have any kind of rash. I have winded him, checked his nappy but nothing seems to be working. He has been curling up into a ball as if he is in pain and I have checked him over as much as I could but I can’t see anything that it could possibly be.”

He knew he was rambling but couldn’t stop.

“I just don’t know what’s wrong and he won’t stop crying and I’m starting to get worried. My mother usually knows what’s wrong but she’s away and I don’t have anyone else to ask. Is there someone that can look at him, can you tell me what’s wrong with him?”

Sean had been looking at AJ through the last half of his quavering speech, all the while keeping a smile on his face for his son. They said that babies could pick up on tension, so he tried to remain as calm as he could. When he finally looked up expecting the nurse to say something, it came as a total

shock to see that the nurse was no longer standing right in front of him, but was now standing behind the most gorgeous man that he had ever seen—tall, lithe, a five o'clock shadow gracing the jaw of a face that could have been chiselled by the gods, and bright emerald-green eyes looking at him with a peculiar expression that he couldn't read. A man he had never thought to see again... and a man that hadn't left Sean's dreams since that fateful morning after AJ had been conceived.

Sean breathed the name, as if he said it out loud the Adonis would disappear.

“Anthony.”

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## CHAPTER TWO

Dr Anthony Ryan couldn't believe his eyes. The last person he expected to see coming into A&E in the early hours of the morning on his first shift here in nearly a year was Sean Keogh. God, had he missed the man! Even after everything that had happened between them. He had known that Sean was a player when they first started seeing each other, but he thought that after six months together that Sean was actually starting to leave his old ways behind him. They had been seeing each other more and more on their time off, they spent every night together when he wasn't on the night shift—and when he was, he would go to Sean's with breakfast, and they would spend the rest of the morning in bed just loving each other until it was time for Sean to go to work.

Sean had even given him a key to his place not two weeks before *The Incident*, which was why it had hurt so much. He had come in from work that morning with breakfast for them both, knowing that Sean probably hadn't eaten much the day before, only to find him in bed with that Cho bitch. Anthony had known the minute he met her that she was after Sean, but when he told Sean as much, Sean had just laughed it off.

Obviously Sean had only been covering the fact that he had already known, and he'd been waiting for the right time to do what he was good at. Anthony had just never realised that Sean was bi; if he had, he would have been a bit more cautious about the company he kept. He hated the fact that he had been so unwary with his partner.

The chance to move to another hospital couldn't have come at a better time for Anthony. A colleague in Sligo had been hit with some hard times, and had asked him to cover for him in his own hospital for a few months. Within two weeks of him walking into Sean's house to see him in bed with a woman, Anthony had closed up his house, leaving his parents to keep an eye on it, and was living in Sligo. He knew that Sean had tried to get in touch with him for weeks, before and after he left, but just hadn't had it in him to speak to the man that had broken his heart. He knew it had been cowardly, but his heart just couldn't take it.

Even now, looking at the man across the counter of the nurses' station with his dishevelled hair, unshaven panicked face and a now-screaming baby on his shoulder, his mind and heart were warring with each other. His whole body wanted to melt into a puddle on the floor in front of the man who had been the star of his dreams for months, take a hold of him and wrap his arms around both the man and child to protect them from the world. The other part of him wanted to rail at the man who had broken his heart and that he just couldn't seem to get over.

But, ever the professional, Anthony inclined his head to Sean and held his arms out.

"Mr Keogh. May I take a look at the child?" He sounded a bit more detached than he would have liked; being professional was one thing, being rude was another.

Sean handed the child over to him with what seemed like more ease than you would see with most parents, even ones that were at their wits' end. It felt like a completely natural movement. Not wanting to think too much on that, Anthony walked from around the desk and moved to one of the curtained examination areas, knowing without turning around that Sean was following on his heels. The sheer presence of the man was overwhelming.

Placing the child on the examination bed, Anthony pulled down the U-cushion they used for babies to stop them rolling, and started examining him while asking Sean some routine questions.

"What is the child's name?"

"AJ... Anthony John." Came the hesitant reply.

With his heart racing, Anthony looked away from the child for a moment, his eyes moving to Sean and searching for confirmation. The gleam of love and pain he saw there was not something that he had been expecting and not something he was likely to dwell on at the moment. *That look was for the child, you idiot, not you!*

"Um, okay, does he always cry like this at night?" Ignoring the fumbling of his own words, and the way his heart was about to jump out of his chest and

straight into the other man's arms, he continued to try to remain professional, knowing he was doing a piss poor job at it.

“This is the first time I've heard this cry—I know all his cries and I have never heard this one before. What's wrong, Ant? Please tell me he'll be okay. Is it something I've done?” The panic was starting to creep back into Sean's voice, Anthony noticed, and Sean hadn't even realised that he had called Anthony by his old pet name—no one had ever called him Ant, only Sean. It seemed that whatever was going through Sean's mind since they first saw each other in the waiting room was being pushed back as his focus moved completely to his son.

Anthony continued speaking and asking questions as he looked after the baby. He still couldn't get over the fact that Sean had given the child his name—what was that about? What didn't he know? But he was getting away from himself. There could be another logical explanation for the child being called Anthony; considering Sean was the Gaelic version of John, the baby was named after Sean, as well. He couldn't remember Sean saying anything about any of his family having the same name, or even the Gaelic version, Antóin.

Not that he cared anyway, he didn't care what this man did or didn't do; his main focus right now was the baby. He couldn't think of him as AJ, it hurt too much, and as soon as the baby was well again, they would both be out of his life and he could go back to the way they had been this last year. *What a depressing thought!*

Looking over at the carry-cot Sean had brought into the exam room, he saw a soft blanket and pulled it out, folding it on the bed next to crying baby the way he needed it.

“If Cho...” he stumbled over the bitch's name, “...is breast feeding, you need to tell her to stop eating dairy products for a while. Actually, you better go out and get her so that I can tell her this as well.”

When Sean didn't move like Anthony hoped he would, leave the room and get Cho from wherever she was and granting him the space he needed to get his head straight, he looked over at Sean with a question in his eyes.

“Cho doesn't breast feed. She left when AJ was four weeks old. She resented that the baby didn't bring me to her bed like she hoped. She finally realised that I was gay and that she couldn't change me. She never wanted AJ, and when she realised that even pregnant with my baby I still wouldn't sleep with her, she wanted to get rid of him. But with the abortion laws in Ireland, she couldn't.”

The look on Sean's face nearly broke his heart all over again—the anger for the woman who could do something like that, and the love as he looked at his son—and melted a little bit of the anger Anthony felt toward him. He had heard through the grapevine that Sean and Cho had gotten married in a quiet civil ceremony about two months after he had left for Sligo... and that she was pregnant. He had assumed that they were in love and having a baby together. From what Sean was now saying, that didn't seem to be the case at all. It seemed as though Cho had trapped Sean.

All the messages that Sean had left for him, all the times that Sean had tried to get in contact with him saying that he didn't remember what had happened that night, the anguish in his voice... maybe it had been real. Maybe there had been something between them after all.

Sean continued talking as though he hadn't just turned Anthony's world upside down.

“I found out about AJ the same time I found out that she had spiked my drink that night. *That* was why I didn't remember what happened, and how I ended up in bed with a woman. She told me later that she had been sick of me talking about you all the time, and that I just needed the right woman to be straight, that I wasn't really gay. I had been planning something that night for when you got home in the morning and was telling the girls about it during the party. She... snapped, said she spiked my drink knowing that she would be able to get me into bed, and that you were coming over the next morning and

would see us.” The derision in Sean’s voice sent a bolt of what could only be described as hope through Anthony.

Sean took a deep breath at this point, looking as if he had more that he wanted to say, but Anthony just couldn’t bring himself to hear it. Needing to squash the feelings starting to well up inside himself, instead he cut Sean off, and tried with every last ounce of willpower left in his body to stop the shaking he could feel in his body and heart.

“He has colic.” he stated simply, applauding himself for the calm he portrayed in that one line, even as he was a bag of jitters inside.

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## CHAPTER THREE

“Oh God, that’s bad isn’t it?” Sean asked as he raced the two paces over to the examination bed his beautiful baby was lying on. Scooping AJ up into his arms as if to protect him from everything, Sean turned pleading, tear-filled, fearful eyes to Anthony.

He couldn’t cope if anything happened to his baby; he had already lost one man he loved, there was no way that he would survive the loss of another. Looking at his baby boy in his arms, he shushed him, rocking him and rubbing his back, AJ’s eyes a deep hazel colour so much more vibrant than his own. Life in general had dulled Sean’s eyes, and lack of sleep didn’t help either. If it meant his son was healthy, he would give his sight or his life for him.

Looking up at Anthony, he was surprised to see a smile on his face and an emotion in his eyes that made Sean’s heart skip a beat. How could he be smiling when AJ was sick? That made him angry, and he was about to blast Anthony when the other man put one hand on Sean’s arm and the other on AJ’s back, so close to his that every time his hand made an upward swipe on AJ’s back their hands met. Even that barest touch calmed him and sent sparks shooting through his body.

“He’s fine, about twenty-five per cent of babies his age get colic—it is more like indigestion and cramping than anything else. Give him over here and we’ll see what we can do.” Anthony plucked AJ right out of Sean’s arms, and he was too stunned by not only the sensation of Anthony so close to him, but the *we* in Anthony’s statement.

Following Anthony back over to the bed, Sean watched as he laid AJ down on the folded blanket and started wrapping him in it. Sean lost sight of the process, even though he knew he should be watching closely so that he could replicate it himself in future. But he was too busy watching the man with his son—the way he handled him so gently, as if AJ were the most precious thing in the world to him. As if he was also AJ’s father.

It was something Sean had dreamt about for months, that it was Anthony he was having a baby with, not the woman who was AJ’s mother. Obviously

that was not something that could ever happen, but dreams were fantasies, and he had read enough sci-fi in his life to have an active imagination.

Once Anthony had finished the complicated-looking wrapping of the blanket around AJ, Anthony proceeded to lay the baby over his arm and onto his little belly. As soon as AJ was positioned where Anthony wanted him, holding the baby's head under his chin and rubbing his back slightly, AJ's crying stopped practically instantaneously.

Sean couldn't believe it, he sagged with relief and stumbled to sit on the edge of the bed in front of them. With a shaking hand, he reached over to AJ's face to wipe the tears stains from his baby's face and saw that AJ was fast asleep, his eyes closed and huffing softly.

"Thank you." He ducked his head as he whispered to the man he loved, a man he knew he could never have—but he was also the man that had helped his child, and would forever be the man that no one else could live up to. Not that Sean ever wanted anyone else to try.

Clearing his throat, Sean looked to Anthony, hoping that now his son was asleep and no longer in pain, Anthony wasn't going to leave the room and send the nurse in to deal with everything else. To his ultimate surprise, not only did Anthony not leave the room, but he came over and sat down on the side of the bed next to Sean, not even attempting to hand the baby over. He seemed content to just sit there holding the baby who Sean so wished was theirs, not just his. Sitting there, barely breathing, hoping that if he didn't make any movements then Anthony would stay there with him. Staring at the man next to him, he tried to commit as much of this scene to his memory so as to never forget it.

Sean had no doubt that this would never happen again; no, he hadn't deliberately set out to hurt Anthony, that had been Cho, but there are just some things that the heart can't get over. He had a feeling that what happened between Anthony and himself was one of those things. But he hoped that someday Anthony would forgive him. God, he would love to be able to fix things between them, but even if he did, why would any free single man want be saddled raising a child that wasn't his *and* had been conceived in the

situation that they were in? *None, that's how many!* He didn't think he could do it, seeing the reminder every day of the act that had hurt him so much.

So he sat there quietly, not moving, not saying anything, just watching Anthony with his son and willing his heart to stop hoping for something that could never be. He knew he needed to crush this dwindling hope that was trying desperately to spark in his chest just from looking at the two of them.

Anthony broke the silence after a while. Sean didn't know how long they sat there next to each other, shoulders brushing with each inhale of breath taken. The first thing that was said was possibly the only thing Sean had been expecting, but was also the one thing he didn't want to hear.

"I should be leaving soon. I'm the only one on duty, and I'm surprised they haven't called for me already."

Standing up from the bed, Anthony bent down while still cradling AJ in his arms to pick up the carry-cot, but Sean reached out and did it for him, placing it on the exam bed. Anthony lowered AJ into the cot, making sure that he was comfortable, and ran his finger over the soft cheek peeking out through the blanket. The action was so tender, it made Sean's heart cry out for the man he had lost and the father that he had denied his son.

If he hadn't had the reputation that he had back when he and Anthony had been together, they might have been able to work it out. There was no hope of that happening; he didn't think there was any way Anthony could trust him again. What little trust Sean had earned disappeared after the conception of AJ.

It hadn't been his fault, and it wasn't like he had done what he had done willingly—Sean knew that even though Anthony now knew that he had been drugged, something tenuous had been broken between them. He realised now that they really hadn't known each other that well after all was said and done. If they had, Anthony would have known that there was no way that he would sleep with a woman of his own free will, that he wasn't bi and would never have done what Anthony accused him of. All Anthony had known was that Sean was a player, but not what had made him that way. He wasn't as cold-

hearted as most thought, he had just been unable to bare his emotions the way that most would.

His very first boyfriend back in school had played him. Sean had loved him, or at least it had felt that way at the time, he knew differently now. What he had felt for Tomas was nothing compared to what he felt for Anthony even back when they had first started seeing each other. There had been something about Anthony. He couldn't put his finger on it then, now he knew it was something akin to them being kindred spirits.

He had come to realise that they had both wanted the same things, both were looking for a family to call their own. Sean had found his, granted, in an unorthodox way, now all he needed was to complete his family.

Making up his mind even though he didn't think that he had a hope in hell of succeeding—but as his mother always said, “God loves a trier, but hates a chancer”—he had to try. He also knew that this would be it for him, and there wouldn't be any other. There was one person out there for everyone, their soul mate, and he had come to realise that Anthony was his. It was time to show the man he loved that he had changed, that he had changed because of him. When Tomas slept with his best friend back in school, he had been devastated, and swore that he would never let anyone close enough again to hurt him like Tomas and Shirley had. It had been ironic, really, that his boyfriend had slept with the girl next door just simply to break up with him. The coward hadn't even had the balls to do it himself, but had set up a stage for Sean to walk in on, exactly the same as Cho had done. It had broken something in his child's heart when they had done that, but it had been nothing compared to the break in his soul when he lost Anthony.

The first time, he had been lost, and he had lashed out at everyone since, keeping them at a distance and using people the only way he knew how to keep them there. He had become a player. This time though, he had gained something from his time with Anthony, he had learned respect, not only for others but also for himself. Anthony had made him stronger.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

Anthony didn't know what Sean was thinking as he stood there looking at him; he seemed to be in his own world making some kind of decision. Whatever it was, there was a look of determination in his eyes and something that looked very much like hope, all mixed together with a deep-seated sadness that had the potential to burn a hole through Anthony's heart. Whatever it was, it sent thrills through Anthony and set his gut to churning.

He knew he shouldn't care what Sean was thinking or what he was deciding, but after Sean's revelations there was a small part of Anthony that felt a little guilty for not allowing Sean to talk to him. From the sounds of it, Sean had needed him and he hadn't been there for him—and that crushed another piece of Anthony's anger and directed the majority of what was left over at Cho for what she had done. She had messed with and ruined so many lives, not just AJ's, the son she had abandoned, but she had ruined his relationship with Sean—hurting them both, it seemed.

Looking down at the baby in the carry-cot, his heart broke just that little bit more. Even with everything that had happened between him and Sean, he was a little bit jealous of Sean for getting the family that he, himself, had always wanted, even if it wasn't in the best circumstances. He would give anything to be able to be there for Sean and AJ like he should have been since the beginning. He couldn't imagine how angry Sean must be at him; they had been doing so well together, but he hadn't trusted Sean enough to even hear him out, abandoning him when he was needed the most.

Even if Sean wasn't angry with him, how could Sean ever trust *him* again? If the tables were turned, he didn't know how he would be able to cope with what Sean had gone through and not be angry with everyone around him, especially someone who was supposed to be there for him but wasn't. How he could do that to the man he supposedly loved? He'd just given up on him, and Anthony was mortally ashamed of himself for it.

Without even looking up from the sleeping baby, he could feel Sean's eyes boring into his back. There was no menace there, but it seemed as if whatever had been going through Sean's mind, he was ready to say something.

Taking a deep fortifying breath, Anthony turned to look into the deepest-hazel eyes that had haunted his dreams since the day he walked out the door of Sean's house. The pain and confusion in those gorgeous eyes that day still stole all the breath from his lungs. Now all he saw was determination and...

"I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry."

They both said it in unison. Sean's gaze turned questioning as Anthony felt his face turn a light shade of red.

"What do you have to be sorry for?" Sean demanded. "*You* didn't do anything wrong, I was the one that hurt you. If I hadn't kept myself so closed off, and opened myself up to you like I should have, you wouldn't have believed that I would have slept with Cho in the first place. This is all my fault, and I pray to God that you can forgive me, that we can at least be friends.

"I have missed you so much—and I don't mean just in my bed, I mean in my life. I have missed having someone I can talk to. It's not quite the same talking to a baby, they can't understand you and can't tell you how much of an idiot you are." The slight smile that accompanied that comment made Sean's eyes twinkle in a way that Anthony loved to see.

"I should have talked to you," Anthony whispered. "I shouldn't have left the way I did. I let my own insecurities get in the way." Hanging his head in shame, he turned away from Sean, not wanting to see the confirmation in his face.

He felt Sean come up behind him, and was surprised when he felt arms hesitantly wrap around him and cradle him back against Sean's chest. Sean was a slight bit taller, not even half a head, but it was enough for them to fit comfortably together in this position. He had loved it when Sean used to hold him like this, and with a sigh he relaxed back into the embrace that he had

missed as much as the man himself. There was so much going on in his head right now, he just wanted something to make it stop. He wanted to enjoy the feeling of being in this man's arms again.

Sean took his chin gently in his hand and slowly lifted, turning his head to face him while tightening his other arm around him at the same time. The look he saw in Sean's eyes made his heart gallop in his chest and his breathing unsteady.

"It wasn't your insecurities that did the damage, it was my reputation, the by-product of *my* insecurities, that caused it."

"But..."

"No 'buts'." Sean shushed him with a kiss to his neck. "I should have opened up. I came to realise that even though we had been together for over six months, we really didn't know each other that well. But if you would be willing, I would like to rectify that. I want for you to trust me again."

The moan that escaped Anthony at the words, and the feel of them being whispered against his neck, was loud enough to make the baby stir in his sleep.

"I treated you so bad, how could you want to fix things between us? How could you ever forgive me, I can't even forgive my... oomph." Anthony couldn't finish what he was saying because Sean's mouth came crashing down on his. The shock of the pleasurable assault on his mouth made him gasp, opening his mouth and giving Sean the opportunity to push his tongue past his lips to taste every inch. As soon as Anthony came to his senses he was a full participant in the kiss.

The feel of Sean's lips on his was divine, so was the feel of the solid body wrapped around him from behind. He had never felt anything to equal the sensations he felt when he was with Sean, it was as if the last eleven months hadn't happened, that they hadn't been apart at all. His senses were overwhelmed by the movement of muscle under his hands and the sensual musky smell of Sean, a smell he had longed to duplicate in the last few months but hadn't been able. It wasn't a scent of any aftershave, but the aroma of man, a man that he loved.

Breaking away slowly, loathing to do so, but needing to for both their sakes in order to breathe, Anthony turned in Sean's arms and placed his hands on Sean's pecs, feeling the rapid beat of Sean's heart under his fingers as he tried to rub away the tension he could feel there. He tucked his head into the crook of Sean's neck, and felt content for the first time in a long time.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

Sean didn't know what had just happened. He hadn't meant to rush this, but seeing the shamed look in Anthony's eyes, he had wanted to do everything in his power to take that look away. To hear him talk about his insecurities, that he thought Sean should be angry at him—well, it had never crossed his mind. Sean knew it was all his fault, that he had made so many mistakes when it came to their relationship, and he couldn't handle it. All he had wanted to do was comfort Anthony, and hoped to God that he wouldn't push him away. When he had put his arms around him and Anthony hadn't rejected him, his heart had soared, but then to hear him talk about needing Sean's forgiveness—well, damn, that had been the last straw.

His better judgement had flown into the wind, and he had done the only thing he knew would stop Anthony from berating himself further. The kiss felt like coming home, like warm apple pies made in your nan's house, like summer mornings or a lit fire on a winter's night, curled in front of it under a blanket. Anthony's scent had curled around him exactly like that blanket, even under the tang of disinfectant and the innate hospital essence that clung to everything. But Sean had gotten used to that in the time they had been together, and it was as much a part of Anthony as anything else.

He prayed that it had been the right thing to do once they had stopped to catch their breath. He would have preferred to keep on kissing until they both passed out from it, but there was no way he would put Anthony in danger of getting hurt from passing out. Not to mention the fact that they were in the hospital where Anthony was currently on duty. But based on the way that Anthony was currently wrapped around him as if he never wanted to let go, and the way he was currently nuzzling into Sean's neck, it had hopefully been the right move.

The tension in his shoulders slowly dissipating under the ministrations of Anthony's hands, he laid his cheek next to Anthony's, and said—to his own surprise—something that he hadn't planned on sharing just yet... at least not until he had gained Anthony's trust again.

“I love you. I think I have since the first time I met you. I hadn’t meant to kiss you like I did just then, but I’m so glad that I did. I don’t want to rush you and if you don’t want me just tell me. I love you and I just want you happy, so if you would prefer never to see me again then I will respect that. But I want you, I want us to get to know each other properly this time, and I want you to be a part of this family.”

Feeling Anthony going stiff in his arms he forged ahead, until he had said everything he wanted to say before he was pushed away. He needed Anthony to know it all before that happened.

“I was hurt bad back when I was in school, it ruined the boy I was, and I lashed out and cut every possibility of hurt from my life. That’s why I had been such a player when we first met, I think. But then I met you, and you changed me, you showed me that it was okay to let someone—the right someone—in. You are that one, the one person I want to spend the rest of my life with. When you left, the only thing that kept me going was this little guy.”

Looking over at his baby, he had so much to be grateful for. He turned back to Anthony to see him looking at AJ with a soft, tender expression on his face that Sean recognised from his own face.

“I want AJ to know the man that brought his father back from the brink and showed him how to love.”

There was a slight catch to Anthony’s inhale as he turned his gaze on Sean. As he opened his mouth to answer, a nurse came barrelling into the exam room with a harassed expression on her face. Anthony slid out of Sean’s arms gracefully and turned to face the nurse as if nothing was amiss at all.

“I’m sorry, Doctor, I tried to give you as much time as I could with Mr Keogh...” The comically devious grin that flashed across her face had Sean wondering just how much the nurse had figured out about what was going on.

“That’s quite all right, Nurse, what seems to be the problem?” Ever the professional again, Anthony’s face was devoid of any emotion as he looked at the nurse that had probably just ruined one of the most pivotal moments in his life.

“There has been a crash out on the new ring road with several injuries. I have most of everything ready but you are needed out there. They have an ETA of five minutes.”

“Thank you, Nurse, I will be with you momentarily.” Dismissing the nurse, Anthony turned back to Sean. “Keep the baby swaddled like that for as long as you can, lay him over your arm like I did earlier to help with the pressure in his tummy. I have to run but I will leave instructions at the front desk before you go home.”

And with that he was gone. Sean didn't know what to do. Anthony had still had his professional face on when he turned back around to speak to Sean, so he had no idea what had been going through his mind. Not knowing what else to do, and knowing that they would need the exam room for when the accident came in, he picked up the carry-cot and made his way back to the front desk.

While making his way back up front, he kept his eye out for Anthony, but he was nowhere to be found. Once back to the nurse at the front desk, Sean signed all the forms that she handed him and took the offered envelope. Looking between him and the envelope, she explained that it was the instructions that Dr Ryan had requested she give him.

By the time he was leaving through the doors of the hospital, the accident victims had arrived and the place was in full throttle. Taking one last look into the A&E, he couldn't see Anthony, so he left, not wanting to be in anyone's way and wanting to get his baby back home to sleep more comfortably. There was nothing else he could do tonight, or should he say this morning, as it was now going on six a.m.

He would try and contact Anthony and see if they could meet for a coffee. If he said yes, they could talk and if he said no... well, either way Sean would have his answer. He would give him a few days, give him a chance to decide for himself and he would see where to go from there.

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## CHAPTER SIX

Sean didn't want to wake up from the most perfect dream he had ever had. It felt so realistic—he had his baby curled in his arms in front of him, and a warm body wrapped around the back of him. But AJ was starting to fuss, so he knew he needed to look after him and get his bottle ready.

He had stopped off in the twenty-four-hour shop on the way home from the hospital to get the new formula that Anthony had suggested in the notes he had given him through the nurse. He couldn't believe how long AJ had slept; it felt as if it had been hours. Opening his eyes to look at the clock on his bedside table, he noted that it was gone midday, he had been asleep for four hours without AJ waking up. The poor little thing had obviously been worn out from crying and being so ill the night before.

Looking down at his squirming son, he saw something that couldn't be real. There was another hand also curled around the baby, not just his own. A very masculine hand. The feel of a person wrapped around him from behind hadn't been in his dream but in real life. The heavy weight of an arm slung over his hips and the feel of breath on the back of his neck had Sean whipping his head around behind him, his heart wanting to bolt out of his chest at break-neck speed.

It couldn't be, he had to still be sleeping, there was no way that Anthony was in the bed behind him. But as soon as his gaze locked onto the devastating green eyes that shone back at him with the twinkle he knew so well, he knew he wasn't dreaming. He lay there at an awkward angle, frozen in place, terrified that if he moved it would break the spell that he seemed to be under and he would come back to reality, a reality where Anthony wasn't in his bed with him.

Sitting up, Anthony reached over him to lift AJ up into his arms, and lay back down again with AJ between them in the bed. "I still had the key you gave me. I hope you don't mind, but when I finished work the thought of going home to my place was the last thing I wanted. I hoped that with

everything you said this morning you would want me here as much as I wanted to be here myself. With you... and our son.”

That finally broke Sean out of his stupor and put him into action. He practically dove across the bed, minding his baby, and attached himself to Anthony’s lips. This kiss was just as explosive, if not more so, as the one they had shared in the early hours of the morning, and made both of them groan in unison.

They finally broke apart only when AJ’s fussing started to get a bit louder and Sean had to get up to get his bottle. Anthony pushed him out the door, saying that he would watch AJ and to hurry up to get back into bed.

Sean had never moved so fast in his life. Not caring that it was freezing and that he wasn’t wearing a stitch of clothing, he jumped from the bed and practically ran down to the kitchen to prepare the bottle. He was back to the bedroom in record time, with Anthony snatching the bottle right out of his hands as soon as he got near.

Instead of climbing back into bed, he threw on a pair of sloggies, the comfortable cotton trousers that he wore only around the house. Seeing the questioning look in Anthony’s eyes, he simply said that he would be back in a minute. Going back down to the hall, Sean fetched his coat from the hook and carried it back into the bedroom where Anthony had just finished winding AJ and was putting him back in his cot. The sight of his ass all perky and sticking up in the air as he bent over the cot had some very inappropriate images racing through his head while his son was in the same room.

“If you’re that cold, I know good ways of warming you up. You won’t need your coat in bed,” Anthony assured him from his position by the cot with a waggle of his eyebrows and a smirk on his face. The sway in Anthony’s hips as he all but stalked across the room had Sean panting and furiously trying to remember what it was he had been planning.

“I love you too,” Anthony practically purred, “and I want this to work between us if you hadn’t figured that out already. I agree that we need to get to know each other better this time around but... I don’t think that we need to go

all that slow. I have been wanting for a long time, wanting you like you wouldn't believe. Now get your fine ass over here and let me remind you why you like mine so much." The growl in Anthony's voice sent shivers down his spine; Sean had never seen Anthony like this before, the aggressor, but that didn't mean it didn't make him as horny as hell.

"Not like... *love*. I love your ass. And your present is in my coat, that's why I have it." Sean all but choked out the words, his brain too focused on Anthony to get the words out properly.

Willing his brain to function properly, he tried again. "I told you that I had been planning something for you the night of the work party, well it's here in my coat. It has been since that night. I never take it out. I always hoped, even if I thought it was useless. I never stopped hoping."

Reaching into the coat he drew out a box that looked like it had seen better days. The wrapping paper was rubbed through in places and torn in others, as if it had been handled a lot over time, and the bow on top was half flat and half loosened. All in all, it was falling apart, but from the way Anthony was looking at him it could have been wrapped in gold.

Taking a hold of Anthony's arm, Sean pulled him to sit down on the edge of the bed and joined him, hands shaking as he handed the box over for Anthony to open. Hesitantly, Anthony took the box from his hands, and with more care than the paper was worth, he picked the paper open to reveal the box underneath. He was so nervous he was shaking. Sean watched Anthony's face the whole time, watching for every microscopic change in expression. Everything he had ever dreamed of was just moments away. He knew that he was moving fast, but waking up with Anthony next to him this afternoon had sealed it for him. It was time to make them a family once and for all.

With a sharp intake of breath and a multitude of emotions racing across his face, Anthony turned to Sean. "This was the surprise you had for me? And you have kept it all this time, even after everything?"

With a nod of his head, the lump in his throat making it impossible for him to even utter a sound, Sean confirmed the unasked question.

The joy on Anthony's face made Sean breathe easier even before he spoke a single word.

“Then yes, yes I will marry you.”

With a silent thank you to his son for helping bring them back together, for making them the family he knew both had always dreamed of, he took the man of his dreams, his soul mate, the man he loved, into his arms and proceeded to love him for the rest of their lives.

**THE END**

## **Author Bio**

*Kelly McGrath grew up in Waterford, Ireland and lives in a little country area with her family. She has been an avid reader since she was a teenager, starting with her mother's crime novels that she squirreled away before they were taken off of her.*

*Over the last three years she has read upwards of eight hundred books, and has recently decided that it was her turn to write one.*

*After getting into the M/M Romance genre two years ago, she hasn't been able to put them down. With a love of books, men, and of happily-ever-afters, where else would she start?*

*With a very open-minded family, she has found the support she needed from all directions.*

## **Contact Info**

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