

A man and a woman are shown from the back, standing close together. The woman on the left is wearing a white tank top, a white knit beanie, and blue jeans with a black belt. The man on the right is wearing a white button-down jacket and blue jeans. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The title 'Because of You' is written in a large, black, serif font with a white glow effect, centered over the couple. The word 'Because' is on the top line, 'of' is on the second line, and 'You' is on the third line, with the 'Y' being particularly large and stylized.

Because
of
You

PENNY BRANDON

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

BECAUSE OF YOU

By Penny Brandon

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love's Landscapes* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love's Landscapes?

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 these authors 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's Landscapes*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, 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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BECAUSE OF YOU

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Photo Description

Black and white gif that depicts two naked men in bed together. One is on his back, and he's looking up at the man who is making love to him. They seem to want to connect on more than a physical level, and the emotion between them is clearly visible on their faces.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

Everything changed in those heady moments as he stroked my innermost parts, somehow baring more and more of my soul with each thrust. Our eyes met and I knew we would never be the same.

prefer no BDSM and please have an HEA

Thank you and happy writing!

Sincerely,

Hunter

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: gay for you, first time, friends to lovers, oral sex, office romance, architect, engineer, coming out

Word Count: 9,163

BECAUSE OF YOU

By Penny Brandon

Dean sipped on his bottle of cold beer, and glanced around the bar. It was dimly lit, which wasn't surprising considering the late hour and the premises. Soft strains of some song he'd never heard filtered through the low voices of the men around him. He'd never been here before, and to be honest he'd probably never come again. It was most definitely a pickup joint, but the men that dotted the stools at the bar, or the infrequent tables scattered haphazardly within the small room, were not his type. They were all older than him for a start—most in their mid-forties and upward, but that wasn't the only reason. From what he could tell, they were business men—office types in suits—and he never went for anyone who wore a suit.

He was just about to pick up his phone to check the time when he heard a voice behind him.

“Hey.”

Assuming unwanted attention—again—Dean turned to give whoever it was a quick refusal, but Ben stood there, a smile on his face.

“You're late,” Dean accused, unintentionally sounding more aggrieved than he felt. Ben was only a few minutes late, so it wasn't really that which had Dean annoyed. What pissed him off was having to rebuff several attempts at being picked up.

“Sorry, got caught up at work.” Ben sat down opposite, beer already in hand. “I saw you already had one,” he said, indicating the half-empty bottle in Dean's hand.

Dean tipped his bottle back to his mouth. He'd been nursing it for over fifteen minutes because he wouldn't have another. He didn't drink much, and anyway he was driving home. When he placed it back on the table, Ben was staring at him. His scrutiny was a little unusual, but so was his asking to meet Dean here. Normally they went out to their local near work, and it generally suited them both. This, though, this was so off the wall it started a niggling worry. Was Ben trying to hook him up with someone? No, he couldn't be, because Ben knew he didn't do casual.

“And how is work?” Dean asked.

“You should know. We both work for the same company.”

“Yeah, but you’re at the office every day. I only need to be there once a week—which is how I prefer it.”

“Well, it’s good. We signed up that new client you did the specs for.”

Dean smiled. As resident architect, Ben did the drawings and ultimately got the contracts. Dean only did the quantity surveying and oversaw the building projects once a job was under contract.

He casually leaned both arms on the table. “So, why are we here?”

Ben glanced around the bar, and then shrugged. “How long have we known each other?”

Caught off guard by the question, Dean frowned. “A little over a year. Why?”

“And how long have we been friends?”

“The same amount of time. Why?” he asked again.

Ben picked up his bottle, took a sip, then put it down, wrapping his fingers tightly around it. He fiddled with the label before catching Dean’s gaze. “Do you trust me?” he asked.

“Yes, of course I do, but why are you asking? What’s this about, Ben?” Something was off. Ben wasn’t acting his usual self. “You’re worrying me.”

“Don’t. Don’t worry. It’s nothing tragic. Well, that depends on your attitude, and ultimately your decision, but, I want you to think long and hard before giving me an answer, okay?”

“An answer to what?”

Ben lifted his hand, palm out. “Just give me a second to formulate the words properly.”

Seriously? Since when did Ben have a problem formulating words? The man had a mind like an encyclopedia. He was eerily smart, analytical, and decisive when it came to dealing with clients. Dean wasn’t stupid; his engineering degree proved that. However, there were times when he wondered why Ben had picked him to be his friend, especially as Ben knew Dean was gay, and Ben wasn’t.

He waited though, simply because whatever Ben was going to ask him to do would have been meticulously thought out, and was going to be well worth hearing. However, Ben seemed to have a real issue with getting out what he wanted to say. His normally focused blue eyes were filled with uncertainty. He looked pale too, even in the dark lighting of the room. He sat back, played with his bottle a little more, then bit his lip.

“This is going to sound unusual. Actually, it’s going to sound like I’m out of my mind, but I’m not. I’ve had a lot of time to think this through. You can say no, so there’s no pressure—but I hope you don’t. I really want it to be you.”

“Ben, you’re making no sense. What do you want me to do?” What the hell was going on? Ben never acted this mysteriously, or hesitantly. It was so out of character. Then again, the last few times Dean had seen Ben he’d been acting weird.

Ben shifted a little uncomfortably in his seat, then he lifted his chin—his light blue eyes clear once again. “I want you to fuck me.”

Dean knew he hadn’t heard right, but when he half lifted his mouth in an attempt at a smile he noticed the grim line of Ben’s. The man meant it. Holy fuck, Ben meant it. Dean stood abruptly, shaking his head emphatically.

“No!”

Several stares were turned their way, but Dean hardly noticed. He pointed at Ben, both shock and dismay flooding his body. “Are you fucking crazy? I’m not fucking you.”

Ben grabbed his arm and pulled him back down. He also slid in close to Dean on the bench seat. “You don’t have to shout, you know. I can hear you.”

“Then you know my answer,” Dean replied, dropping his voice down to a hiss as he noticed the attention they were getting.

“You didn’t think about it.”

“I didn’t have to. I’ve never heard of anything so ridiculous. You’re straight, Ben, or have you forgotten that? You fuck women, not men.”

“I haven’t forgotten, but—”

“No, there are no buts.”

“Of course there are. I’m curious.”

“Curious? Teenagers are curious. Not grown men of twenty-nine.”

“Look, I know this is a little... unorthodox, but I want you to really think about this. It would be easier with you, but if you say no—if you honestly don't want to do this with me—then I'm going to ask someone else.”

“What?” Now Ben had gone too far. “You can't do that. Who?”

“I don't know who. You're the only gay man I know, but that's why I came here.” Ben slowly looked around the room, his gaze resting on a few single men seated at the bar. “I checked out gay bars on the internet. This place seemed like a good choice because the men here are supposed to be experienced, and I thought one of them might be glad to help.”

“Glad to... Ben, you can't be serious. You don't know the first thing about gay sex. You could get into trouble. They might not take care and hurt you.” Why was he even saying all this? He should be dragging Ben out of here and beating this nonsense out of his head.

“I've done research. I know what I'm getting myself into. And that's why I asked you. I trust you, and I know you wouldn't hurt me.”

“Research? Jesus, Ben. What kind of research? Do not tell me you've already started experimenting with someone.” Dean felt his stomach clench at the thought of Ben on his knees in a dark alley somewhere while some asshole shoved his cock down his throat.

“Like I said, I've checked out the internet. Watched some movies. Got some toys.” Ben made an expressive gesture with his hands. “I'm not going in blind, Dean.”

Dean pulled in a deep breath. How was he supposed to convince Ben that if he went through with something like this he'd regret it? Maybe not immediately, but one month down the road, six months, a year, he was going to hate the person who hadn't talked him out of it, or had done it to him. Dean didn't want to be that person.

“Yes, you are. You obviously haven't thought this through.” As soon as he said it, Dean knew it was the wrong thing to say. Ben bristled.

“I'm not rushing into this. I've thought about it long and hard.” Disappointment clouded Ben's face, and uncertainty once more engulfed his eyes. “I really want it to be you. Please.”

At a loss, completely shaken by Ben's request, Dean stared at his friend. He knew arguing with him wasn't going to work, but maybe if he pretended to

consider it, Ben might change his mind on his own—when he realized how stupid an idea this was. “Can you give me a couple of days to think about it?”

Ben smiled, though it didn't take the darkness out of his eyes. “Okay. I'll give you till Friday.” He stood, looking as awkward as Dean felt, and then he slowly walked away, leaving Dean with a hard knot forming in the pit of his stomach.

Friday came, and Dean was still no closer to saying yes than he'd been on Wednesday. He'd forgone their usual Thursday night game of squash, simply because he needed time to think, and time away from Ben. He'd quickly realized Ben was serious; the man never did anything without going through all the pros and cons first. But sex with a man? Why? What had prompted it? Ben had never mentioned he was curious before, and God knows he would have had plenty of chances to raise the subject in the past. So why now?

Dean's private fantasies of fucking Ben were just that—fantasies. He'd never voiced them, never even hinted at them. Had Ben somehow picked up on what sometimes went through Dean's mind? Wondering if that was why Ben was doing this, Dean groaned. Jesus, if that was what this was about, Dean definitely had to say no. But what if it wasn't? What if Ben really was just curious and Dean's refusal sent him into another man's arms? Dean shook his head. He couldn't let that happen. He hadn't been kidding when he'd pointed out the danger to Ben. Not many men would care that he was a virgin or take the time to introduce him to gay sex properly. Ben needed someone who would do it right. Someone who would take care of him, take it slowly, and treat him gently—the way he deserved. Dean knew he was that man, but what of the consequences?

The building site he was visiting didn't need much of his attention, which was good, because he hardly gave it any. By the end of the day, a headache had begun to form behind his eyes, and he wondered what he was going to do when Ben asked for his answer. He considered requesting an extension of time, but wasn't sure if Ben would give him one. That opportunity slipped by when he received a text message on his phone.

Meet me at Danny's.

Danny's was their local, and it was neutral ground. Dean supposed it was as good a place as any, and he hoped there was less chance of either one of them

causing a scene that way. Still, it took a lot more courage than he'd thought it would to walk through the door and into the noisy bar.

Ben was waiting for him. He was sitting calmly at one of the small tables tucked into a corner. There were two bottles of beer on the table.

"Hi." Ben stood slightly then sat back down. It looked like he'd been on the verge of hugging Dean, which, though they did on occasion, didn't seem appropriate now. Dean pulled out a chair, but hesitated. He knew this wasn't going to go well, and someone was seriously going to get hurt because of it. However, with no other choice, Dean sat, faced Ben and, after taking a deep breath, said the only thing he could.

"Okay."

Ben's delighted smile lit his face. "Yes? Really? You'll do it?"

"I said I would, didn't I?" Dean couldn't put a smile on his face. This was all kinds of wrong, not least because of the simmering desire that was starting beneath the surface of his skin. He had to push that aside, however, because it could easily jeopardize the way he had to approach this. He didn't want Ben knowing how much he'd thought about being with him. It wasn't exactly something a friend would do, but now the opportunity had arisen, Dean couldn't help but feel a tingling of awareness and need.

"Thank you. I knew you'd come through for me." Ben stood and extended his hand. "Come on," he said.

"Where?"

"We're going back to my place. I've already got it set up."

"What? Now?"

"I can't wait." Ben slipped his hand through Dean's, his firm grip both surprising and odd. He pulled Dean to his feet. Dean followed, a little dizzy with shock. Ben wanted to do it now?

Ben only lived a few streets away, but Dean insisted on driving, though he kind of wished he hadn't when his hands slipped on the steering wheel more than once. He wasn't going to deny he was nervous, and he didn't like the roll of his stomach as he parked the car in Ben's driveway and got out.

Ben was animated. He climbed out of the passenger side and strode up to his front door with the air of a man who'd been told he'd just won the lottery or something. Dean dragged his heels. Ben glanced over his shoulder, and Dean

had a feeling he was making sure Dean was still following him and hadn't decided to bail.

Once inside, Ben headed toward the kitchen. He didn't hesitate to bring down two glasses and a bottle of scotch from a glass-fronted cupboard. "Want one?"

Dean almost said yes, but shook his head instead. "No, thanks. I need to keep a clear head."

"Do you think *I* should keep a clear head?"

"Bit late for that, isn't it? What you're doing, what you want me to do, is not the action of a man who knows his mind."

"You're not changing yours, are you?"

"I should be trying to change yours, but I know you too well, and I can't, can I?"

"Nope." Ben grinned, looking far happier than Dean had ever seen him, whereas Dean guessed his own face conveyed grim dread.

He stood in the middle of the kitchen, not knowing what the hell to do. Normally he would be kissing the guy who brought him home, or getting him to strip, but here, he hadn't a clue. He supposed the ball was in Ben's court, and he would have to wait until Ben was ready to play. When Ben turned to put his back to the counter, however, he suddenly looked nervous, and Dean guessed Ben wouldn't be making the first move.

Not sure if getting this over and done with was the best ploy, he felt it was better than dragging it out. He stood in front of Ben then took his glass from him, taking a sip. "Where do you want to start?" he asked.

"I, um, I don't know. I've never seduced a man."

"I damn well hope not." It still didn't sit well—Ben wanting to do this, but at least Dean could breathe easy that Ben hadn't tried this with someone else. *Jealous much?*

No, not jealous, just worried. Once this was over... Dean didn't want to think about that. Didn't want to think of a future without Ben in it.

"I don't know about you, but I like to start slow, and work my way up to hot and fast." Dean watched Ben's face, gauging his reaction. Ben wasn't all that easy to read, which was why this had come as such a surprise. Now though, he wasn't hiding anything, and his eyes showed both need and trepidation.

“Slow? Like kissing?”

Dean nodded. How many times had he thought about kissing Ben? “And touching.”

“So we do that first?”

“If you want.” Dean crowded close to Ben, then stretched past him to put the glass on the counter. “Of course, I’d prefer it if you didn’t want to do anything.” Now who was he kidding? This chance with Ben was going to be the only one he’d ever get. What gay man wouldn’t want this?

Ignoring Dean’s last remark, Ben slid his arms around Dean’s waist. Dean stiffened just slightly, and then gave in, moving closer. Ben’s shoulders were as broad as his own, his chest as wide. They were both the same height, and their hips aligned perfectly. So did their mouths. Dean dropped his gaze to Ben’s lips. The man licked them, and Dean instantly reacted to the unvoiced invitation. He leaned in, and, ignoring everything that told him this was a bad idea, he joined their mouths together.

Ben gasped, and Dean instantly pulled back.

“No, don’t stop.” Ben’s plea hit a chord with Dean. That’s what he usually wanted the men he was fucking to say, and hearing it from Ben was no different. He pushed up against Ben’s body, capturing his lips again. This time Ben moaned, and Dean had to seriously rein in his instinct to grip the back of Ben’s head and plunder his mouth.

Need began to override reason. He wasn’t doing this for himself. He was supposed to be giving Ben an experience he wouldn’t forget, but Dean couldn’t help savor the feel of Ben’s lips on his and notice how soft yet firm they were. He tried to be gentle, giving Ben a chance to pull back if he wanted to, but Ben tightened his grip around Dean’s waist before moving his arms up to link around Dean’s neck.

Impulse caused Dean to trace Ben’s bottom lip with his tongue. Ben opened his mouth, and Dean instantly entered. The heated wetness, along with the silky slide of Ben’s tongue, had Dean slanting his head, getting a better angle. The whiskey flavor was a sharp contrast to the sweetness that lay beyond it—the sweetness of Ben.

Changing direction, he nibbled against Ben’s hard jaw, then dragged his mouth down Ben’s neck, licking the slightly rough skin, relishing in the fact that Ben hadn’t shaved. Ben twisted his head to give Dean better access, and the unconscious submissive gesture had Dean’s body tightening in arousal.

Dean fought to take it slow, but the way Ben was reacting, the way he seemed to be giving himself over to Dean, just pushed all of Dean's buttons. Needing to change the pace, he pulled back and dropped his hands, but immediately missed the contact of Ben's skin.

"Should we get undressed now?" Ben's question was too close to Dean's own thoughts, but he shook his head. Seeing Ben naked... Dean inwardly groaned. Shit, how was he seriously supposed to do this without Ben finding out how much he couldn't wait to get in his ass?

"No. I mean... Why don't you have a shower, and I'll, um..." What? Wait in bed for him, stay in the kitchen, run away and never come back? The surrealism of what was going to happen was throwing Dean for a loop. What if he fucked this up?

"Come in with me?" The hopeful glint in Ben's eyes was Dean's undoing. He hadn't been able to say no to Ben when it counted. Would giving in and having a shower with him make any difference? He lifted both arms in a gesture of *whatever*, and then allowed himself to be led toward the bathroom.

He honestly tried not to watch as Ben started pulling at his tie and undoing it. He'd never thought of ties as sexy before, nor a plain white shirt, and certainly not suit pants, but as Ben took off each item of clothing, Dean started to change his mind. Yeah, Ben was a guy who wore suits, but Dean suddenly didn't care. The body beneath the clothes didn't look like it belonged to a man who sat behind a desk all day. He knew Ben exercised—he played squash with him once a week, but looking at Ben's well-toned and nicely -muscled frame had Dean wondering why he hadn't taken more notice. Oh right, because Ben was his friend and Dean wasn't supposed to be lusting after him.

When Ben stopped at his tight black briefs, Dean almost thought Ben had changed his mind. He felt a little smidgen of relief, but unexpectedly, more disappointment.

"Dean?"

Realizing he was staring, Dean started pulling off his T-shirt and jeans. He knew he didn't need to be self-conscious, because if anything he was in better shape than Ben. However, he'd never had a straight guy looking at him the way Ben was, and it was a little disconcerting. Down to his boxers, Dean hesitated, wondering if it would be better if Ben got naked first. He glanced up, then sucked in a sharp breath when he noticed the front of Ben's briefs begin to stretch and fill out.

For some odd reason, Dean hadn't expected Ben to get aroused, which was stupid now that he thought about it. Ben wanted to get fucked. He'd no doubt want to come. Why else would he do something like this?

He swallowed, fascinated with the way Ben was hardening under his gaze. His own body's response was immediate, but Dean ignored it. "You may want to get out of those before you strangle something," he said, hoping to keep the mood light so Ben wouldn't start freaking out on him.

Ben smirked, his posture relaxed. He hooked his thumbs under the waistband of his briefs and slowly—very slowly—eased them over his erection and down his hips. Dean openly stared. Fuck, Ben was big. Thick and long, he nearly put Dean's to shame. Nearly. Dean suddenly wanted to compare. He pulled off his boxer briefs ridiculously fast, and moved to stand closer to Ben. It was only as he was about to reach out and grasp Ben's cock did Dean realize what he was doing. He stopped, and felt his face turn red.

"I was going to compare dick sizes," he said by way of explanation when Ben frowned at him.

"Do gay men do that?"

"Not just gay men, but yeah." Dean eyed Ben's cock again. "I didn't realize you were so big."

"Good thing I'm not fucking you then, isn't it?"

Dean quirked an eyebrow, surprised at Ben's humor. *If* Ben was trying to be funny that was. "What makes you think I'd let you top?"

Ben's blue eyes locked onto Dean's brown ones. Ben's were serious once more. "Would you?"

"I might." Dean had no idea what made him say that, but as soon as he had, he knew he meant it. If Ben was gay and things were different... But Ben wasn't, and they weren't.

"Are we going to have that shower now?" he asked, pushing past Ben and turning on the hot water. When he glanced back over his shoulder to see what Ben was doing, he was disturbed by the look of satisfaction on Ben's face.

Disturbed and annoyed by it.

The water was too hot when Dean stepped under it, and he had to quickly add some cold. He grabbed the first bottle he saw on the shelf and squeezed some onto the puffy thing hooked over the tap. Just as he was about to start

rubbing it vigorously over his body, it was taken from him. He blinked as Ben stepped into the shower and crowded him into the corner.

“You don’t want to do this, do you?” Ben asked.

Knowing he had to be honest, because Ben wouldn’t accept anything else from him, Dean said what was in his heart. “I do want to do this, but I don’t want to lose our friendship over it. Things might get awkward and...”

“It won’t get awkward. You’re my best friend, Dean, and I have no intention of losing you. You’re the reason I’m doing this.”

He was the reason? On the verge of asking Ben what he meant, Dean got sidetracked as Ben moved in closer and brushed his lips softly against Dean’s. His silky wet skin was a complete distraction, and Dean forgot about everything else as he opened up for Ben’s kiss and allowed the other man to start massaging suds onto his chest. He grabbed Ben’s hips and aligned them together, moaning slightly at the contact. Best friend or not, having a man’s hard cock sliding alongside his was not something Dean could deny himself.

Bubbles slithered down his stomach and pooled at the mat of dark curls at his and Ben’s groins. Dean noticed how the bubbles made Ben’s skin glisten, and how they made grinding against him so much better. He closed his eyes, and Ben skimmed his fingers across Dean’s shoulders, his caress amazingly electric.

Before he forgot why he was there, Dean took the sudsy sponge from Ben and dropped it to the tiled floor, then he brought his hands to Ben’s cock and carefully encircled his thick length.

Ben’s low grunt of surprise had Dean smiling. “Want a blowjob?” he asked, feeling a little more in control. As long as he was calling the shots, directing how things went, he guessed he could do this.

“Yes.” Ben’s eyes had widened, and as he looked down to where Dean was holding him, Ben licked his lips.

Getting on his knees, and uncaring of the water pouring over his head, Dean curved one hand around Ben’s thigh, and used the other to draw Ben’s cock to his mouth.

“Fuck, Dean!”

Ignoring Ben’s cry, Dean concentrated on the taste of Ben’s cock. As Dean licked around the swollen head, he detected the faint salty flavor of precum

leaking onto his tongue. He dipped his head lower, taking more between his lips. Ben started shaking. Dean grinned around his mouthful then began to suck in earnest. Ben's knees buckled and he began sliding toward the floor.

Grabbing Ben so he didn't hit his head on the tiled wall, Dean helped him sit down. "Are you all right?" he asked.

Ben nodded. "Yeah. I didn't think it would feel like that."

"I barely got started," Dean said, confused. "You have had blowjobs before, right?"

With his breathing barely steady, and his hands clutched around his knees, Ben stared at Dean. "Of course I have, but this was different."

"How?"

Mumbling something Dean didn't catch, Ben got to his feet and turned off the water. He grabbed a towel and passed it to Dean before wrapping another one around himself. His face was controlled, but his eyes seemed wild.

"You honestly don't know, do you?"

"Know what?" Feeling like he was missing something, Dean shook his head. He knew he shouldn't have started this with Ben, but as Ben seized his arm and began dragging him toward the bedroom, he knew he wasn't going to be able to stop it.

He'd only been in Ben's bedroom once before when Ben had been sick and Dean had put him to bed. Ben hadn't been feeling well, but hadn't wanted to go home. One look at him, however, and Dean had insisted. The fact that none of their other colleagues had been able to convince Ben had been a matter of pride to Dean. At least his friend listened to him. Well, most of the time he did.

The room hadn't changed. The bed was neatly made, there was still a pile of books on the side table, and, as before, there were no clothes scattered on the floor or the club chair located in the corner. However, it looked... different. It wasn't until Dean noticed the box of condoms and the bottle of lube next to the bed that he realized why.

This wasn't the place where he'd tucked Ben in and told him he'd be okay while holding a cold compress to his forehead; this was the place where he was going to fuck his best friend.

Pulling in a deep breath, Dean counted to ten before letting it out slowly. He needed to take back some control, so before Ben could say anything, or do anything, Dean pulled off his towel and crawled onto the middle of the bed.

“Ready?” he asked.

Ben nodded, dropped his towel to the floor, and edged right next to Dean. Ben's heat immediately seeped into Dean's skin, chasing away the chill sitting in his stomach. While contemplating what his next move should be, Dean reached for Ben, kind of wanting to get this over with, but also unable to stop the need spreading into his bones. Whether Ben knew it or not, he was a sexy man, and Dean could only hold back his arousal for so long.

Pushing Ben onto his back, Dean settled between his thighs. “Let's try that blowjob again, shall we?” he suggested, getting comfortable. Still hard, Ben's cock stretched toward his navel, so Dean simply leaned in and put it into his mouth. Ben's low groan gave Dean a sense of delight, and for a while he pretended this wasn't his straight best friend he was sucking off.

“Dean?” Ben clutched at Dean's head, his fingers digging in. Dean glanced up. Ben was staring at him, his mouth open. “I'm going to come.”

Dean grinned around his mouthful. That had been his intention. He didn't bother telling Ben however; he just continued to enjoy the feel and taste of Ben filling him while using his skill to bring Ben closer and closer to the edge. Just as Ben tensed and his deep groans became panted whimpers, Dean gently cupped Ben's balls and slid a finger against the sensitive area beneath.

“Fuck! Fuck!”

Hot cum spurted into the back of Dean's throat. Expecting it, he swallowed, but as the last pulse hit, he drew back a little and caught some on his tongue. Holding it, he waited until Ben had relaxed, then he crawled up Ben's body and kissed him.

Ben opened up, and Dean passed the leftover cum into Ben's mouth. Ben grimaced, which was pretty much as Dean expected.

“Just wanted you to know what it tastes like,” he said.

“I know what my cum tastes like,” Ben muttered.

Astonished, Dean gaped. “You do?”

“Yes, I do. And I don't like it.”

Though knowing he shouldn't have presumed a blowjob in return, Dean couldn't help but feel another surprising bout of disappointment. He steeled his emotions—which had no place in what he was doing anyway—and grabbed the box of condoms and the lube off the bedside table. He was about to suggest getting Ben stretched, when Ben grinned.

“Doesn’t mean I won’t like yours though.”

Before Dean had a chance to reply, Ben rolled over and trapped him on the mattress. “I want to taste you,” he said.

Pinned down, Dean stared up at Ben. “Are you sure?”

“I wouldn’t ask you to do this without repaying the favor. I assume you like having a man’s mouth on your cock?”

“Well yes, but you’ve never—”

“No time like the present to learn.”

Dean knew he should be asking why again, but the thought of Ben’s tongue licking him, Ben’s lips wrapped around him, and Dean couldn’t say no. He nodded his assent then watched as Ben got himself in position. Ben seemed to take stock, and then he gripped Dean’s hard length and sank his mouth onto it.

Dean shuddered at the first contact, but was careful not to do anything that would hurt Ben, or make him want to stop. Warm lips, soft and pliant, enveloped his cock while a tentative yet effective tongue swiped over the head. Ben moaned, the little hum sending vibrations through Dean’s shaft. Dean stared down at him. Ben’s eyes were closed, but the way he was devouring Dean’s cock made it look like he was enjoying himself. Mesmerized, Dean held back on a groan, but clutched at the quilt beneath him as he felt his balls begin to tighten. Struggling against the need building inside and the control he knew he needed to keep, Dean transferred his grasp from the bedspread to Ben’s hair. He pulled him up, nearly laughing at the look on Ben’s face.

“What?” Ben asked. “Wasn’t I doing it right?”

“Yes, you were doing it right. Much better than I expected.” *Way better.*

“So why’d you stop me?” Ben asked, his voice tense.

Dean didn’t want to admit he had no intention of coming in Ben’s mouth. It wasn’t as if he wouldn’t be able to come twice, it was just that he didn’t want the memories of spurting down Ben’s throat to haunt him for the rest of his life. “Turn over and I’ll show you,” he said, not sure why he was still agreeing to this.

Ben sat up and shook his head, though it wasn’t in absolute refusal. “I don’t want you to do it from behind. I want us to be face to face.”

Something inside Dean twisted. In every fantasy he’d ever had about making love to Ben, he always had Ben on his back so he could stare into his

deep blue eyes. Seeing his fantasy come true, knowing it was what Ben wanted, Dean nodded.

He gently helped put Ben into position. "Grip the backs of your knees and pull your legs up."

Ben did as asked, exposing himself to Dean's gaze. Dean's mouth went dry. Jesus, Ben had a beautiful pink hole, just begging to be breached. He reached for it, gently stroking the puckered skin. Ben twitched and sucked in a sharp breath.

"Relax," Dean said instinctively. "It won't hurt so much."

"You'd better not hurt me." Ben's growl released some of Dean's tension, and he grinned.

"It's gonna burn a little, but I'll be careful." He wasn't going to pretty this up for Ben, but he was going to try and make it as good as he could. "Now relax," he said again.

The lube was of good quality, the same brand Dean used, so he knew how much to put on his fingers. Inching a little closer, Dean had to remind himself Ben wanted this. Then before he could change his mind, Dean slowly inserted the tip of his middle finger into Ben.

Heat and tightness welcomed him, so did Ben's low moan. He pushed in deeper, almost closing his eyes as the sight of Ben accepting him became close to unbearable. God, and he hadn't even started pushing his cock in there yet.

"Okay?" he asked, just to make sure.

"More."

Ben's plea sent shivers across Dean's skin. He ignored it. This wasn't supposed to be about his enjoyment. It was about Ben's curiosity getting slaked. So he gave him more, smearing the lube inside before adding another finger to test Ben's endurance.

"Dean."

Dean paused, glancing up at Ben's face. He'd tried not to look at him, but he should have known that wouldn't have been possible for long. "Yes?"

"I want you in me."

"I am in you."

"I want more of you." Ben let go of one of his legs and grabbed Dean's hand. The movement caused Dean's fingers to brush against Ben's prostate, and he groaned. "Oh God, that's..."

Knowing how good it would have felt, Dean did it again. Ben visibly shook, and his grip on Dean's hand tightened. Fascinated with Ben's response, Dean gently added a third finger, truly stretching Ben and getting him ready.

Ben was panting by the time Dean thought he'd be able to take his thick and hard cock. He pulled his fingers free then picked up the box of condoms. Ben avidly watched him, drawing in his bottom lip as Dean ripped open a foil packet.

There was no point in asking Ben if he was still sure, so Dean rolled the condom on and aligned himself with Ben's waiting hole. He prayed though. Prayed with all his heart this wasn't going to end up with him getting hurt.

Just before he pushed in, Dean gave the inside of Ben's knee a small kiss. Ben's gaze never left his, and it was the trust Dean could see in those dark blue depths that gave him the courage to continue.

"Remember to relax," he said. Then, with gritted teeth, he penetrated Ben's virgin ass.

The feel of being inside Ben was far more intense than Dean expected. It wasn't so much the physical sensation, but the emotion behind it that made Dean groan. He gripped Ben's thighs to hold himself steady, using all his experience to not push in too fast, too deep. He knew Ben would need time to adjust, and he paid close attention to the nuances of Ben's body to indicate when and how much to move.

"So good, Dean."

Ben's soft words were like a balm, easing the concern tightening Dean's chest. He nodded before slowly pushing all the way in, then he waited.

"Okay?" he asked again.

"You have no idea." Ben reached up and curved his hand around the back of Dean's neck and pulled him down. A gentle caress of lips teased Dean before Ben tightened his grip and opened his mouth to deepen the kiss. Dean lowered his weight and felt Ben's erection pressing against his stomach. A shot of pleasure raced down Dean's spine, igniting a need he thought he'd buried.

"Ben."

“Want this. Want you.” Ben shifted slightly to accommodate him, and Dean automatically started to thrust.

He began slowly, each lift of his hips measured and controlled. Ben moved with him, wrapping his legs around Dean's waist. Muffled moans accompanied each thrust, and it took a while for Dean to realize they were coming from him. He buried his face in the crook of Ben's neck, tasting his skin, smelling his sweat—and knowing those two things would remain with him forever.

Ben's arms tightened around him, holding him, while his soft murmurs encouraged Dean to thrust harder, faster. Dean was becoming lost in the pleasure. He could feel Ben's muscles surrounding him, squeezing him, embracing him. He rocked his hips, pumping with more force, more need. Ben groaned and arched his back. Dean sought his mouth again, sliding his tongue alongside Ben's.

His heart was racing, but it had nothing to do with how close he was to coming. This was Ben, and he was kissing him, fucking him, and he didn't want to stop.

Everything changed in that heady moment. As Dean stroked Ben's innermost parts he somehow felt his soul being filled, taken, and held, by Ben. Dean lifted up and met Ben's beautiful eyes, and knew he would never be the same. *They* would never be the same.

“Coming. I'm coming.” Ben looked almost astonished, but Dean was too far gone to think it funny. His body tightened with the familiar tingle at the base of his spine.

“For me, Ben,” he said. “Come for me.”

Ben's cry sounded loud in the room, but it echoed inside Dean's heart. Wet heat splashed against his stomach the same instant Dean's orgasm took him to a place he would have sworn he'd never been.

“Fuck! Fuck, Ben!”

Strength deserted him, and as the last pulse of intensity died, Dean collapsed. He only had enough wits about him to hold onto the condom as he carefully pulled out. Ben's small whimper had Dean instantly pulling Ben into his arms.

“It's okay. It's over now.” It *was* over. Damn it. He knew this would happen. He knew making love to Ben would ruin things. He'd hoped it wouldn't; had hoped he could do this and walk away without his heart being

crushed. But every time he looked at Ben again, he was going to remember this, and know he wasn't going to have this ever again.

Pain replaced the remnants of bliss still lingering in Dean's limbs, but he continued to hold Ben, soothing him and hoping it would be enough to get them through the next few awkward minutes. He waited until Ben pulled free, then steeled himself for the judgment in Ben's eyes.

Ben, however, smiled at him. "Thank you."

Dean nodded, not prepared to say *you're welcome* or to offer any other inane reply. He inched away, needing some space, some room to breathe.

"Hey. What's wrong?"

"Nothing. I just..." Dean shrugged. "I think I'd better go."

Ben frowned and reached out to grip Dean's arm. "Why?"

"Because we never should have done this," Dean argued. "You're going to wake up tomorrow and wish you'd never asked me, and I'm going to wish I never agreed."

Ben's face paled. "You hated it."

"Yes. No. Shit, Ben. What I felt about it doesn't matter. It's how you're going to feel."

"And how will I feel?" Ben sat up, anger seeming to ripple through his muscles.

"Like I let you down," Dean said against the constriction in his throat. Damn, it wasn't fair. He'd just had amazing, mind-blowing sex, and instead of reveling in it, he was pushing away the man who had given it to him. It didn't matter though. Ben wouldn't do this again.

"You haven't let me down. Just the opposite. You've given me what I wanted."

"If getting your ass fucked was what you wanted, then yes, I have, but at what cost? What did you gain from this, Ben? Seriously, I want to know."

Ben closed the distance between them. His breath ghosted along Dean's shoulder, making him shiver. "I thought I'd gained you."

"You've always had me. Fucking your ass wouldn't have made any difference."

“It does to me. I wanted to know what it was like. I wanted to know what being with you was like.”

“Why?”

Ben shook his head, as if Dean should already have known. “Because I love you.”

Dean’s heart gave a little jolt. “Love me? You’re straight, Ben. You can’t love a gay man.”

“Of course I can. I do. I’ve loved you for months.” Ben was beginning to get agitated, which wasn’t helping matters.

“No, you’ve been my friend for months. There’s a big difference, and friends don’t do this to each other.” Dean got up off the bed and started pacing. “You do realize you gave me no choice. It was either me or someone else, and I couldn’t let anyone else near you.”

“That was what I was banking on. Look, I know it sounds strange, but I started noticing things about you, things that attracted me. Your smile, the way you laugh, the way your eyes light up when you’re telling a stupid joke... I’ve never felt that way before and...” Ben took a deep breath, his hands held out. “It was you or no one, Dean. I wouldn’t have let anyone else near me either. Don’t you see that? I don’t want anyone else. I only want you.”

Somehow, somewhere, Dean thought he’d dropped into *The Twilight Zone*. Was Ben insane? Dean couldn’t accept what Ben was telling him, because it wasn’t real. Ben had just wanted to experiment, and he’d mistaken lust for love. If Ben really wanted him, as a lover, it would have to be long term, and Dean didn’t think Ben truly understood the ramifications of that.

“I can’t do this right now,” he said as confusion and doubt started wreaking havoc in his chest. He headed toward the bedroom door, intending to get his clothes from the bathroom.

“Where are you going?” Ben was right behind him.

“Home.”

“Dean—”

Dean turned to face Ben. “I think we both need some time apart. You’re feeling vulnerable right now, and I’ve already taken advantage of you. Please. Just give me some time to sort this out, okay?” Dean hurried to pull on his jeans and T-shirt. His wallet and keys were still in his pocket, but he would have

walked out without them if necessary. Ben hovered by the door, but Dean didn't know if he could cope with looking at him again.

"Can I call you tomorrow?" Ben's tentative question caused Dean to pause. He shook his head.

"Give me a few days." He knew he wasn't being fair, but Ben hadn't been fair either. How could he have thought Dean would have been fine with Ben's declaration? Love him? Ben had no idea what he was talking about. Yet, as Dean slammed the front door behind him and marched toward his car, he was remembering the way Ben had clung to him and the way Ben had moaned Dean's name as he was coming.

Monday morning came way too fast for Dean. His nerves were shot after three sleepless nights, and for the second time within a week he found himself worried about facing Ben. However, the thing about not sleeping was it had given Dean the chance to re-think and re-evaluate what Ben had told him.

Dean knew he'd reacted badly, and he regretted running out on his friend, but he didn't know what to make of Ben's sudden change in character. Dean had no warning Ben had been thinking of sleeping with a man. No, sleeping with *him*. Only him, Ben had said. Consequently, Dean also had no idea that Ben's feelings toward him had morphed into something other than friendship.

Could Ben love him, as a man? If Dean gave his heart to Ben, would he cherish it, look after it?

After forcing himself to confront that possibility, Dean still hadn't had the balls to contact Ben and talk to him about it, and now he'd run out of time; he was going to have to face Ben today whether he was ready to or not.

Unsure of how strong Ben's affections really were, Dean entered the office building. Their Monday meeting still had to go ahead, despite how they personally felt about each other. With his stomach cramping and his limbs feeling like lead, Dean slid through the boardroom door to see Ben and four others already sitting at the table.

Dean nodded and smiled at the others as he usually did. But then he saw Ben's face, and Dean's smile fell away.

Ben looked like his world was falling apart.

Dean instantly went to him. "Are you all right?" he asked.

Ben's normally bright blue eyes appeared dull and haunted. He shrugged; his broad shoulders barely moving beneath his suit jacket. "I don't know. Am I?"

Knowing he was to blame for the way Ben looked, Dean sat on the chair next to Ben and, ignoring the curious glances from around the table, turned Ben to face him. First and foremost, Ben was his friend, and Dean couldn't allow the other man to believe Dean had forsaken him. "You look like you've slept the same amount of hours I have," he whispered so the others couldn't hear.

"I was waiting for you to call me. When you didn't..." Ben shook his head slightly. "I guess I got my answer."

"Shows how much you know me, doesn't it?"

Dean glanced at their spectators. A few of them looked intrigued, but not wanting to make his declaration public, he grabbed a startled Ben by the wrist and dragged him to the empty office next door.

"What are you doing?" Ben protested.

Dean sighed, feeling guilty for not having done this earlier. "For the past five days I've gone from feeling shocked, to euphoric, to completely uncertain. I have never had such a range of emotions before. Not in such a short time span, and I'll admit, I haven't handled it very well. But you're my best friend, Ben, and if you honestly think you love me—"

Dean didn't get a chance to say anything else. Ben's mouth was on his, cutting off the ability to do anything else other than kiss the man back. Dean automatically opened for him, and he moaned under the onslaught of Ben's tongue.

Wrapping his arms around Ben's waist, Dean hauled the man up against him. Ben went willingly, cupping Dean's face to keep their kiss going. Shockwaves skittered across Dean's skin, and he tightened his hold on Ben, reluctant to let the man go now that he realized he could have him.

Dean only pulled back a little when he remembered the office they were in had a glass panel in the door and wasn't really private. Ben tried to drag him back, but Dean shook his head. "I don't think this is the right time or place to continue our discussion," he said, hoping his tone sounded reasonable.

"We're not discussing anything. I don't think I love you, I know I do. Granted, it was difficult for me to understand and accept that at first, but I know how I feel. It's not going to change, Dean, if that's what you're worried about. I

may have been straight, or the gay in me had been dormant simply because I hadn't met the right man to love, but don't think I don't know what I'm doing. Well, I may not have known what I was doing by asking you to fuck me instead of telling you I loved you. In hindsight I should have probably done it the other way around, but if the sex wasn't good, if I didn't like it, then at least I wouldn't have felt guilty if things didn't work out."

"So you like the sex?"

"I fucking love it. The way you make me feel when you're inside me..." Ben shivered. "I love you, Dean. You've made me love you, just by being you. You're smart, you're sexy, you don't care that I'm a stubborn workaholic bully, or that I snore—"

"You snore? No, sorry, that's a deal breaker," Dean said, but he was smiling, and Ben's answering grin set fire to Dean's nerve endings.

"So, can you love me back?" Ben asked.

"I've always loved you, but can I fall *in* love with you?" Dean thought about the way Ben felt in his arms, the way Ben was always there for him, and the way Ben was looking at him now, as if the world revolved around Dean's answer. Things *had* changed between them, but Dean reckoned they'd changed for the better. He nodded. "Yes, I can."

The End

Author Bio

Author of: Blind Passion, Bringing Him Home, Choices, Murphy's Law, Behind Every Cloud, First Kiss. Penny has been a lover of books since before she could read and a maker of stories before she knew how to talk properly, so it was only natural that she started writing when she could hold a pen. From fairytales to teenage romances to the hot, erotic stories she writes now, she's always held the same belief; to love what she puts down on paper. Which means she doesn't love cooking, cleaning or weeding the garden. She does, however, love to travel and has lived in England and Ireland and now resides in Australia, where she intends to stay and discover all that she can of this beautiful country.

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