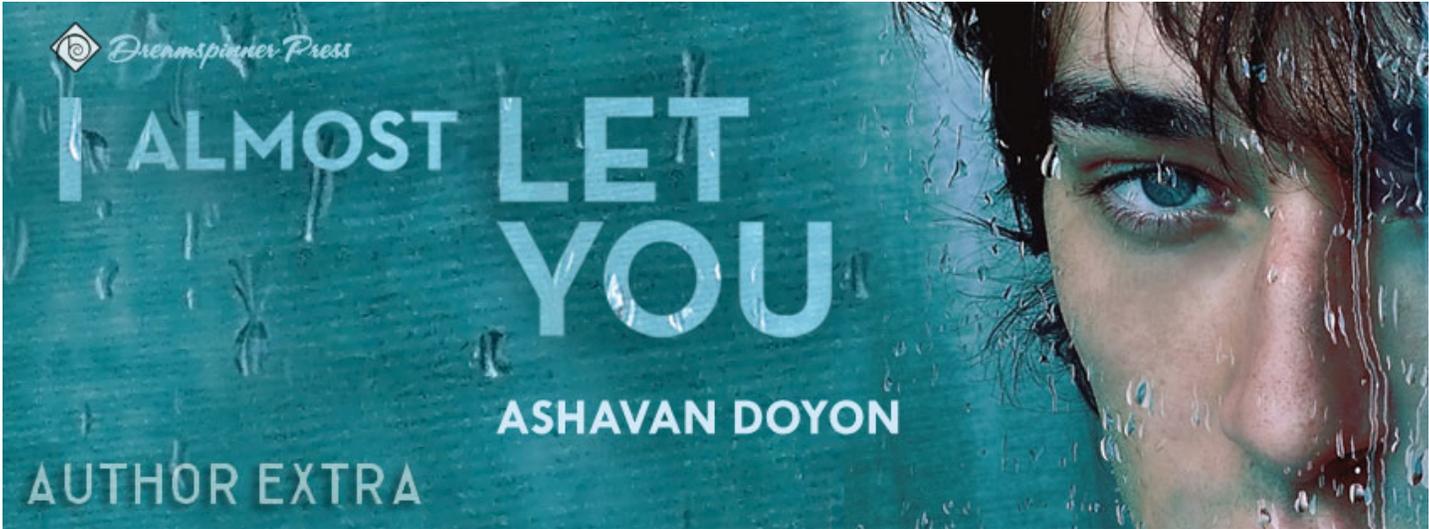


 Drehmaschinen Press

I ALMOST LET YOU

ASHAVAN DOYON

AUTHOR EXTRA



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I Almost Let You | *Ashavan Doyon*
Author Extra

Author's Note: Relationships always have at least two sides. In I Almost Let You, we are exposed to Aaron's side—to his angst and his fear and to a devastating loss. For that to be real, we have to lose part of Chris's perspective. This is my way of bringing a little more of Chris into the story. To see his sweetness and care and nervousness. To get just a glimpse of falling in love, rather than being in love.

Thirteen years earlier

“CHRIS! WHERE are you going?”

Chris looked up. *Fuck. How am I supposed to explain this?* “Just going out, Dad.”

“Out?” he asked, coming in from the den.

“Just having dinner with a friend.”

“A friend?” asked his mom, suddenly interested. “Is this someone special?” She looked him up and down.

Was I that obvious? What if they find out it's him?

“Come on, Mom. There'll be girls there”—he shot his mom a twinkling, dimpled smile—“gotta look good.”

She stepped up to him and smoothed out the wrinkles in his shirt. “All right, dear. You have fun. Don't be too late.”

“Mom! It's a Friday!”

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“And you’re still only sixteen, young man,” she said. “Reasonable hours. And call if anything changes.”

“Fine,” Chris said, rolling his eyes.

His dad stepped up to him and looked sternly down at him. “You listen to your mother. Home, at a reasonable hour.” He tousled Chris’s hair. “I’d be happier if this was a date. You should be dating at your age.”

Chris froze. Would his dad, could his dad, see the panic that flashed across his eyes? He was sure it was visible. It had to be visible. Butterflies fluttered in his stomach and he just had to hope his dad didn’t see the tremble. He lightly punched his dad in the arm. “Come on, Dad. There’s plenty of time for that.” He flashed his dimples again. “Besides, there’ll be girls there, remember.”

His dad smiled and walked back into the den. It was all Chris could do not to breathe an open sigh of relief.

His mother looked at him. “Something wrong?”

Chris forced a smile. “Nothing. I gotta go. Gonna be late.”

“All right, dear. Just have a nice night.”

Chris ran for the car. Once inside, with the air blowing on him and the music playing, he felt a lot better. He clutched the steering wheel and took a deep breath, letting it whoosh out of him in a single long stream.

“Oh, Dad. It is a date,” he whispered. He couldn’t help that his voice cracked.

He sped across town. It was stark, the line from working class to middle class, and the next line more so, to the folks who were well to do enough not to worry about money, even if they weren’t rich. Chris pulled into the driveway and walked nervously to the house. He pressed the button by the door.

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The door opened and the butterflies in Chris's stomach started to work overtime. "Hey," he said. He tried to stay cool, but he could hear the crack in his voice. If he could, then Aaron certainly had.

Aaron looked furtively about and then pulled Chris inside.

"I was ready to—"

Aaron threw his arms around Chris and embraced him as though Chris was all there was in the world. He nuzzled his face into Chris's chest. "Can't do this out there."

Chris gulped. *Aaron is so warm. We're inside. No one can see.* Chris let himself smile for just an instant and then wrapped Aaron in his arms, tucking Aaron's black curls under his chin and holding him for a moment. "You look nice," he whispered.

"Nice?" Aaron said, playfully kicking at Chris's shins.

Chris looked about and, seeing no one, smiled. "Hot," he whispered.

Aaron laughed, a broad grin on his face. "That's better."

"Come on, the car's running."

"All right." Aaron turned back toward the inside of the house. "Mom, I'm going out." He didn't wait for an answer. He fiercely hugged Chris again, then led the way back to the driveway.

Chris smiled as he followed, his eyes on the street. It was dark already, and the lights in the lengthy driveway were off. *No one can see.* Chris's stomach flipped as he raced to beat Aaron to the car, and held the door open for him. He closed the door behind Aaron and rushed to the far side.

They sat for a moment, Chris's hand finding Aaron's at the center console. Chris squeezed, allowing himself to look up at Aaron's face. His heart raced as he saw the smile and he squeezed again, then backed the car up and sped away from the house.

"How far are we going?" asked Aaron.

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“I thought we’d get a pizza and have a picnic in the back.” It could have been sweet and romantic. But Aaron had that pouty look that told Chris immediately that Aaron was unhappy about it.

“We can go farther.”

Chris shook his head. “We did that last time. We have to be careful.”

Aaron muttered something under his breath and Chris had to squeeze hard to keep him from pulling his hand away.

“We’ll have more time together this way,” Chris hissed. It was a plea and Aaron’s hand relaxed a little. “Please, say it’s okay.”

“Fine,” Aaron said. But while his hand stayed wrapped in Chris’s, his face was turned away, staring out at the dark.

“Baby, please.”

“It’s two months, you know.” Aaron’s voice had a hard edge to it. A cutting edge.

Chris gulped. “When we’re.... In public it’s hard, Aaron. I have to keep myself from t-touching you.”

Aaron closed his eyes, but there was a hint of a smile at the edge of his lips. “All right, Boo. Pizza.”

Chris smiled. “I called in the pizza before I came over.”

Aaron swatted Chris’s thigh. “You arrogant—”

“It’ll be good. You’ll see.”

Chris pulled into the parking lot at Antonio’s and ran in. It only took a few moments to get the pizza and a pile of napkins and return to the car. Aaron accepted the pizza box, but his gaze was still downcast.

This is supposed to be special. Two months of these dates. Quiet and secret and wonderful. Chris set a hand over Aaron’s and was rewarded with a touch of a smile.

Chris didn’t have to drive them far. There were plenty of little quiet dark nooks and crannies at the edge of town, and he’d made it

his business to learn them all. He pulled the car over and shut off the engine. He turned and smiled at Aaron. "It'll be good. I promise."

He got out of the car and opened the hatch. His trove was still there. They'd done this a lot over the past two months. Quiet, secret dinners. But not like this. He spread out the blanket over the flattened back seats, and then started pulling out the plates and silverware, setting them out as though for a fancy dinner.

Aaron got out of the car and joined him in the back. He was looking around and the smile that touched Aaron's face—it made those butterflies flutter even more. Chris tried to smile back as he served up the pizza on his parents' wedding china. They'd never miss it. They never really entertained.

Aaron looked at him, his face dancing in the light of the jar candle that Chris had brought for ambiance. "You were trying to make it special?"

"Two months," Chris said. It came out as a squeak. "It means something, you know. To me, too."

"How can you be so sweet when we're alone and such an ass when we're in public?"

Chris didn't answer. He just took a big bite of his pizza and busied himself chewing. It was an easy escape. The answers frightened Chris too much to voice.

Aaron didn't push, though. He rankled, that Chris could tell just by looking, but he rarely pushed. Chris finished another slice of pizza and then pushed the box aside, carefully setting the plates together and wrapping them with napkins and then back in the protective felt he'd brought them in.

Aaron blew out the candle.

"What'd you do that for?" asked Chris. Even in the darkness it was hard to miss a determined twinkle in Aaron's eyes.

"Two months, Boo."

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Chris smiled, and gulped. “Yeah.”

Aaron caught Chris’s hand. “Boo?”

Chris looked right at Aaron. “Yeah?”

Aaron’s lips parted slightly and his eyes widened as he looked at Chris. There was a sudden tightness in Chris’s chest. “Aar—”

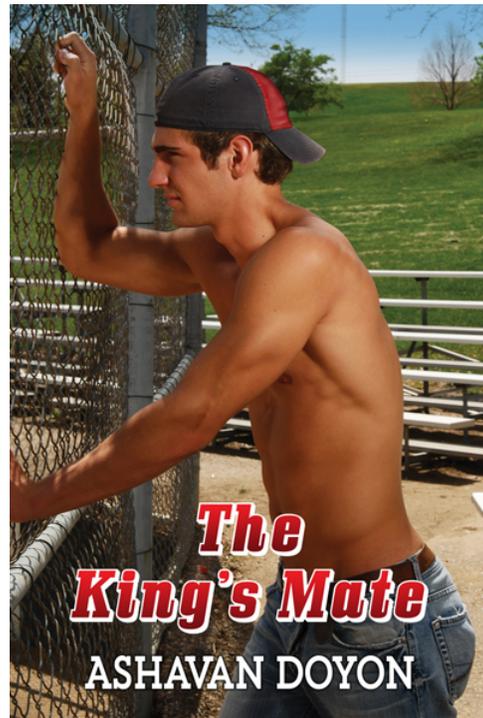
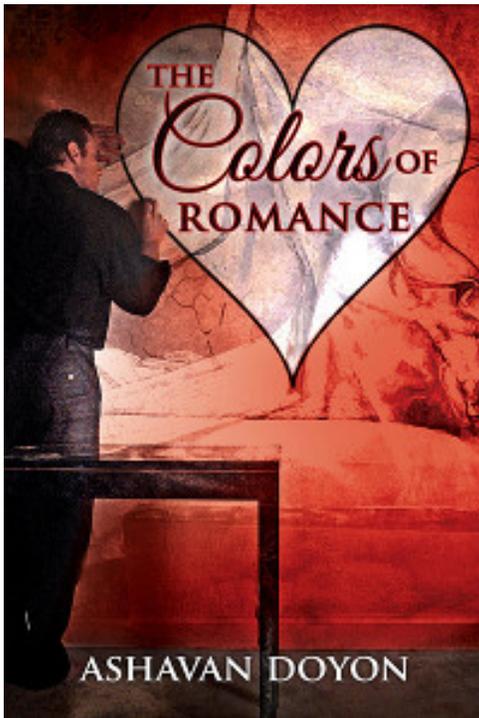
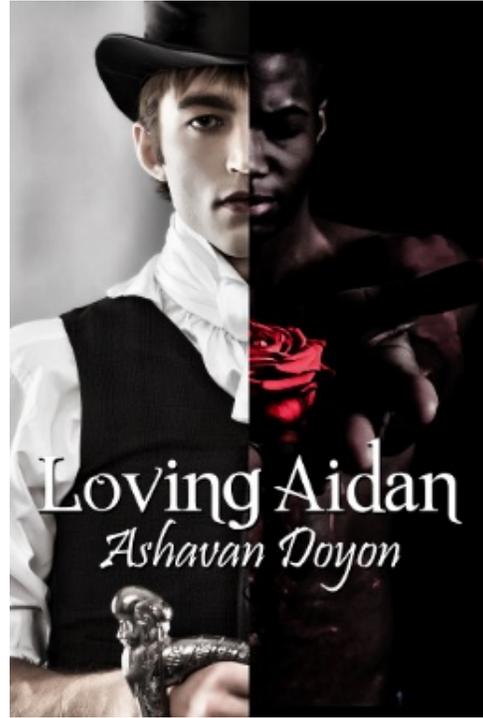
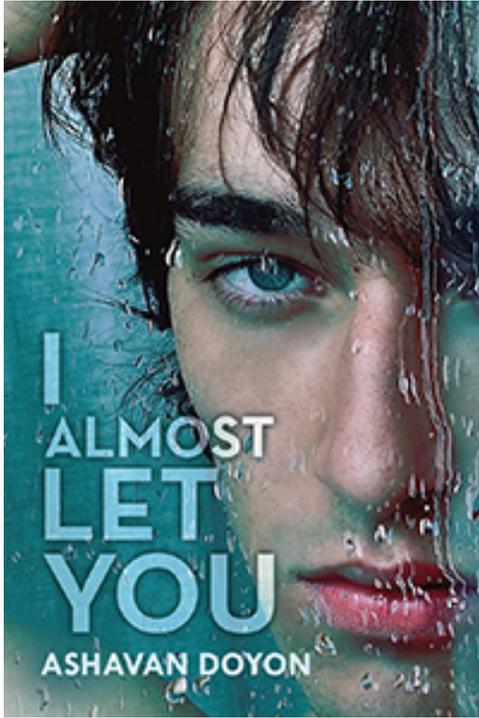
Aaron lunged, suddenly, and Chris felt the touch of heaven at his lips. Wet, moist, desperate. It was clumsy and ferocious and determined, and as Aaron’s tongue touched his, Chris knew wonder and fear. A tear fell down his cheek and Chris squeezed his eyes shut.

I’m not ready. I can stop this now. I can end this now.

Chris could feel the guilt building in his stomach, but it was warring with something else. Chris wrapped his arms around Aaron. *God! This feels so right.* His mouth opened, his lips moved, and Chris returned the kiss with a passion he’d never felt before.

Read more in [I Almost Let You](#) from Dreamspinner Press.

READ MORE BY ASHAVAN DOYON



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