

ARDOR

June 2016

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LOVE ON A ROLLERCOASTER

REMEMBERING
ORLANDO

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COLLEGE ROSE
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Hot Pink Spandex

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THE NEWSLETTER OF ASHAVAN DOYON

Books by
Ashavan Doyon

From Dreamspinner Press

Shorts
The Kings Mate
The Colors of Romance

Novellas
I Almost Let You
The Byte of Betrayal
A Wounded Promise

Novels
Gerry's Lion

From Torquere Press
The College Rose Romances

Loving Aidan
Steven's Heart
Andrew's Prayer
Becoming Rory

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Editorial

Love on a Rollercoaster

Rory goes searching for truth in *Becoming Rory*. Truth about himself. Truth in relationships. *Becoming Rory* isn't an easy story. Its hero, Rory, suffers a lot of doubt around being out and open. He's come back to college from an uneasy family situation with a homophobic father and a mother who simply doesn't understand.

Once he gets there it's even harder—he has to take this idea of being open, being himself, and he has to be true to that vision. That's both tremendously freeing and absolutely terrifying at the same time. As difficult as that can be, as coming out stories go it's actually fairly common. Closeted gay boy gets some action in secret. Eventually his cover is blown or he feels secure and starts being open. The nature of relationships changes. The nature of intimacy changes. The idea that you could date, that there's more to your sexuality than sex, becomes overwhelming, huge. That part... the difficult, scary part of negotiating a relationship becomes as important as getting off.

And so when Rory does get intimate, he notices the lack of that relationship. It's perfectly natural for him to pursue it, and he does, with a passion and fervor and genuine want for that closeness beyond physical intimacy that makes you feel for the character—and inspires the orange

rose that goes with the story.

He quickly discovers how much of a rollercoaster young love can be. His paramour, Danny Smits, isn't just a cocky skater kid. Sure that's what he looks like, but he's older, wiser, and a whole lot more complicated than Rory. He's also very much the one to seize control. Even when Rory pleads his case to date him, Danny has rules.

Danny struggles with mental illness. Not a little bit, but full on struggles with mental illness. It's a major stumbling block. For readers, I know, it has been a difficult one. Because Danny's demons aren't small. No. Danny has major life changing demons that dictate positions in a relationship. As a lot of readers have said, it's a lot for a young relationship to handle.

But as someone with those sorts of mental health struggles, I am know it can be done. And so does Rory, though his own family experiences. It was so important to me to give this one the celebratory ending it deserved, and I know if you take a chance on it, you'll celebrate when Rory finds his happiness.

Happy reading!

—Ashavan Deyon

REMEMBER ORLANDO



Remembering Orlando

Like most of America and the world, I watched in horror as the news from Orlando came. The numbers of dead and wounded kept going up. And then it was a big number, a scary number. Fifty dead. Forty-nine victims. Many more wounded.

I knew about the Upstairs Lounge arson that happened only a year before I was born. I've seen the pictures. A cautionary tale... our community is our strength, and yet that is where we're paradoxically most powerful and most vulnerable. Learning about gay culture from my mentors in the bear culture that I was welcomed by even as a young gay man, I had learned about the powerful statements of gay pride that started the gay rights movement at Stonewall, and the tremendous pain of the pictures from the Upstairs Lounge—men caught in the bars on the windows trying to get out, burned alive by the hatred of people who don't understand us.

Powerful, because we are a community, because we do band together to find our strength. Because we live, hated and despised, to love and cherish and in our hearts we find that love.

Vulnerable, because in that place our guard is down. We are open and our secrets laid bare. To fight the hatred that surrounds us we exult and we dance and

let our hearts and passion reign. Vulnerable because to be together as a community makes us a target, painting a bullseye on our chests.

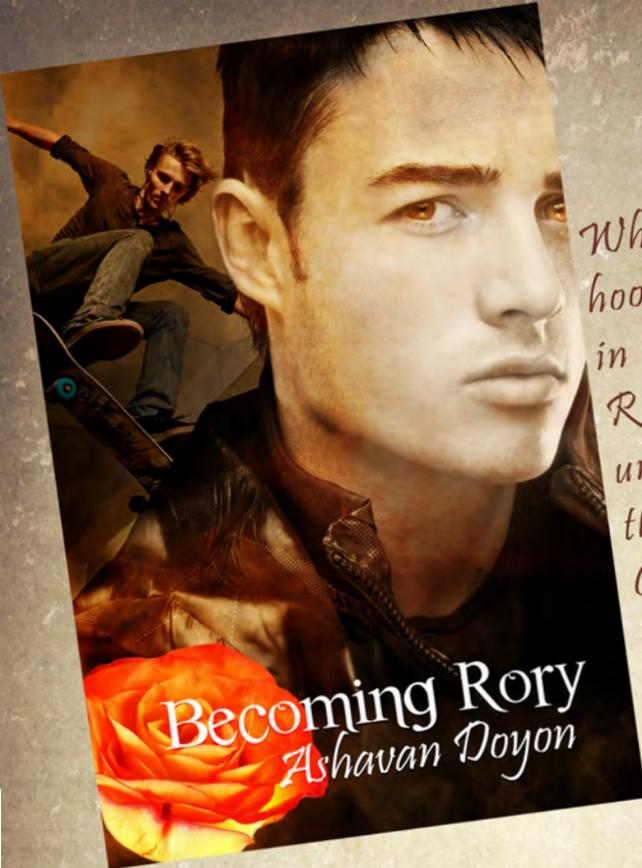
The victims this time were our youth. They were the ones we fought so hard to protect and we failed them. We failed them because the communities of color so horribly hit are also the communities so often excluded from the mainstream gay movement. We failed them because we let our guard down. We let them feel safe, trusting that we had already borne the brunt of that hatred. Having won marriage, we knew we were winning.

I know people who go to Pulse. I know people for whom that is their home club. I know people who go to Pulse weekly when they're in the city. I know people who were there just before and just after. I know someone who was there that night. Someone who died because as a country we value hate over love.

When I hear the leaders of this country offer thoughts and prayers, I laugh. They think that's enough. Until they stop seeing us as less, it is not enough. Until we stop dying because of their hatred, it is not enough. Until it is safe for teens to come out, it is not enough.

Have Pride.

Remember Orlando.



Becoming Rory
Ashavan Doyon

*When an anonymous
hookup leaves his card
in Rory's pocket,
Rory does the
unexpected and calls
the phone number.
Can a moment of
weakness become
something
special?*

Becoming Rory
by Ashavan Doyon

College Rose Romances
Book 4

Published by
Torquere Press



Each of the early books in The College Rose Romances was released with a free work of short fiction. The pieces for both Loving Aidan and Steven's Heart are reproduced here, and a never before seen short for Andrew's Prayer was created for this issue of ARDOR.

Free Reads

College Rose Romances Fiction

LOVING AIDAN FREE READ (2013)

A first meeting between Aidan and Sammy.

AIDAN TURNED onto the narrow service road that led to the dorm. He pulled up near the building and onto the grass. This early there weren't many students about yet. Aidan stepped out of the car, wincing a little at the sudden heat. He was dressed as he always did in a long sleeve shirt and a buttoned waistcoat. He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and lightly dabbed at the sweat that had immediately broken out on his forehead.

"Oooh. Hey, guys, here he is. Our resident piss-ant fag.

Aidan turned and gave the line of lounging young men a glance. He conceded only a single raised eyebrow as he passed them by, ignoring the ongoing catcalls. He should report them. But nothing was ever done about it. Instead, he entered the small residential office at the side of the building. A student asked his room number, and more numbly than really warranted at this early hour offered him his key. He took it and looked at the label. Samuel Riley.

"This isn't mine," he said to one of the students handing out keys.

The perky young woman glanced at it quickly. "Oh, sorry. That's your room-

mate's key." She ruffled through the box. "Ah, here it is. Sorry about that," she said, taking the key back from him and handing him another.

"Thanks," he muttered, and turned to leave, barreling into a very tall young man. He looked up and all he could think of was dark. The man's skin was charcoal black, and slick from the heat. Aidan stammered a quick apology automatically.

"Ain't no skin off my teeth," said the man with a smile, his cheeks showing deep dimples.

Aidan was sure his heart was going to stop, and he quickly looked at the ground to hide the red in his cheeks even as he hastened his way to the door. He was hit immediately with another catcall. The row of young men stood idly by cars still stuffed with boxes. The staff would help people later on as more keys were picked up, and they were waiting, as they always did. Most of them wouldn't carry a single box of their own.

Aidan did not glare, though he wanted to. Instead he went to his car and pulled out the first box.

"Showing off that ass? You maybe want som--" the young man yelped suddenly.

Aidan turned to see the man he'd run into in the office staring down the row of young men.

“Have a problem with him?” asked the man.

“Come on, Sammy, kid’s a fag. Look at him!”

And Sammy looked. Aidan was being given a thorough once over. Sammy chuckled, showing his dimples again and slapped the other man on the shoulder.

“Don’t know what you’re worried about. His eyes are on me.” Sammy stripped off his shirt, stuffing it into a back pocket where it hung loosely against his leg. “See?”

“Sammy, he’s looking at you!”

And Aidan was. His eyes were locked on Sammy, on perfectly chiseled abs, gazing across the broad, smooth chest.

“Has taste,” said Sammy with a grin, showing dimples again. “Clearly you lot of cowards got nothin’ to worry about.”

Sammy walked away from the row of young men and stepped up to Aidan. “Need some help?” he asked.

Numbly, Aidan nodded.

Sammy smiled, clapped him on the shoulder, and took the box from his hands. “Let’s get these boxes upstairs.”

Aidan gulped and softly murmured a thank you.

“Ain’t no problem, roommie.”

Aidan’s eyes widened. Sammy. Samuel Riley. Dear God, this was his roommate.

STEVEN’S HEART FREE READ (2014)

Bonus scene between chapters 4 and 5.

STEVEN WATCHED from the hall. He didn’t dare go in. Not with Sammy inside, holding Aidan’s hand tight, oblivious to the tortured man staring at them through the window. Steven worked a bit of his bottom lip against his teeth and shut his eyes tight.

“His prognosis is better than Michael’s,” whispered a voice from just behind his left elbow. Addy’s voice.

Steven nodded, swallowing hard. She was right. Aidan was going to be okay. Which meant Steven didn’t really have a reason to watch. Except that he did. A reason that made Sammy sitting there with Aidan feel like someone had shoved a hot poker through Steven’s heart. He turned his head rather deliberately from the window before opening his eyes.

“Hard to see them like that?” asked Addy.

Steven grunted an answer that might have had words. Even Steven couldn’t be sure what they were supposed to be. He stared down the length of hall. Monitors and chairs and carts, even beds clustered against the walls. Somehow those details were easier to think about.

Addy touched his elbow lightly.

“You’re very confused, aren’t you?” asked Addy.

Steven glanced down at her. Adrienne Rossier was dressed, primly, professionally. She was always dressed like that. Knee length gray skirt, professional jacket, low cut but not too low, and the obligatory strand of pearls. It made her eyes sparkle and stand out. Did Michael’s stand out that way? Were they the same brilliant mix of blue and green? Steven wanted to know and it wasn’t just confusing. Steven let out a heaving breath, slowly, trying to imagine himself on the water. He glanced at Aidan’s door, and then back down the hall toward where he knew Michael was waiting for him.

“It’s too soon,” he whispered, so soft he was surprised when Addy responded.

“Mika likes you.” She managed a smile. “Rather a lot, I think.”

Steven didn’t look at her, his gaze was still fixed at the end of the hall. “You’re leaving, aren’t you?”

“He has you. The doctors agree. Right now, you’re helping him more than I am.”

“They won’t--”

"It's all arranged. The doctors and nurses have word. You, and Aidan if he wakes up. But it's mostly going to be you." Addy's grip was strong as she grabbed his arm and turned him. "You take care of him." Her cheek was glistening in a trail from the outer edge of her eye down her cheek.

Steven looked over her head at Aidan's door and then back down the hall. His gut started to twist, whether over Aidan or Michael he couldn't be sure. Probably both. That would be about right for him. He thought about Michael for a moment. Bits of black hair sticking out from tight bandages. Pale skin bruised to almost black. Long fingers. Fingers that felt so right in his hand and so good when they squeezed his.

"What if it gets serious?" asked Steven, brutally pushing aside the feelings that wanted to erupt as a tear formed in his eye. Feelings about Aidan. He couldn't have Aidan. He'd never have Aidan again. Aidan chose someone else.

Addy seized his chin, and forced him to look at her. "I'd love that," she said. Then she patted him lightly on the cheek and slowly walked away, her heels clicking against the tile with every step.

ANDREW'S PRAYER FREE READ (2016)

Bonus scene

"DON'T RUN!"

The young girl in her bright yellow sundress skidded to a stop. "Why not, Mr. Tutty?"

Drew smiled at her, running to catch up and hold her hand. His other hand held the sunflower he'd given her earlier. He'd promptly taken it back, proclaiming that the park was not a safe place for the flower in the hands of Melinda Marie.

Melinda, for her part, adjusted the wide wavy brim of her equally yellow hat. "Last time we sat over there."

Drew bit his lip, eyeing the tree line. "Remember the scary man, Melinda?"

She turned on a fully pouty face.

"Yeah, me too." He pointed to a shaded spot in the central green. "How about over there. We could see the ducks."

"I want to feed the ducks, Mr. Tutty." Melinda stressed the word feed like it was far more important.

A chuckle was Drew's only response.

"Daddy would take me!"

"Shh, Mel. Your dad will let you feed the ducks once he gets here."

She stomped once, but followed where he led, gripping his hand tight. When they got to the tree, Drew sent a quick text to let her dad know where they'd be.

"When is Gram Tutty gonna be well enough to read me a story?"

Heart frozen, Drew knelt down beside her. "What does your daddy tell you to do when you want someone to get better?"

"Think good things about them and pray. But you don't believe that."

He let out a long sigh and brushed his fingers against the girl's cheek. "Sometimes it's so important that you have to do it and just hope you believe enough."

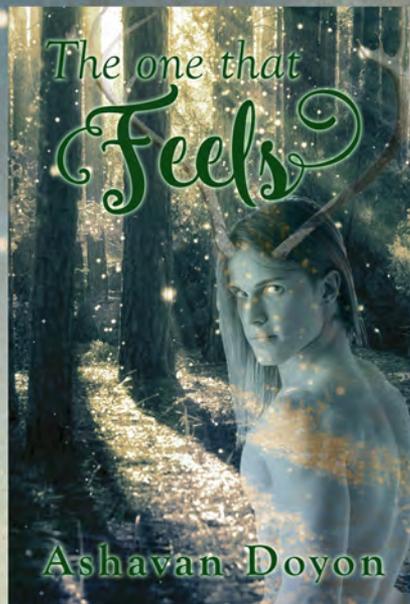
Melinda Marie leaned against the tree. "I like Gram Tutty. She tells funny stories. She's going to get better, isn't she?"

A rich voice answered. "We can hope. We can pray. And we can be there for her whether she gets better or not."

"Daddy!" Melinda grabbed hugged a jean-clad leg tight.

Grant was handsome. Blond hair brushed and golden, cheeks warmly red. He was fit and gorgeous and looked just a tad out of place in the brilliant white of his dress shirt. His tie was abstract, silver and a blue-green that made his eyes sparkle. The red in his cheeks spread as Grant leaned forward and touched his lips to Drew's. It was chaste and sweet and it still sent a tingle all the way to Drew's toes.

Join the Adventure



Thommas Ashforthe should never have met his ex Brian at the club. Never able to refuse Brian's pleas, Thommas enters the Realm to seek out the lost spirit of Brian's dying boyfriend Jordan. The price of travel in that place of magic is steep and oaths spoken in the Realm cannot be broken. With time running out before Jordan's body dies in the world of the real, Thommas rushes through the Realm on a hopeless quest.

Nem is a prince of Zaharoth, and Thommas represents a hope of escape from the ruthless authority of his father. But when Nem binds Thommas with an oath as a price of passage through the forests of his homeland, can he dare to hope that the stranger from the real will be truly bound by it?

Read the serialized edition free at
www.ashavandoyon.com/blog

Work in Progress

Hot Pink Spandex

One of the things I do when I get stuck is design covers. I try to take the kernel of an idea and evoke it on a page in graphics and fonts and words. Get my name in there to remind myself that I'm an author. It's a fun activity, and a struggle. I have a fear that one day a story I believe in will be turned down by my publishers, and that I'll be stuck with a story that I love, that I believe in, but that I can't sell.

I know that eventually I'll end up getting it edited, formatted. That I'll venture with a dipped toe into the dangerous and scary waters of self-publication. Many of those tasks would quickly whip me into submission and teach me the error of my ways. One, I trust that I could do, if necessary.

I could design a cover.

Not one of those crazy obviously self-pubbed covers that we all cringe at when we look at Amazon. A real cover. One that you'd struggle to differentiate from Dreamspinner or Torquere or Samhain.

So recently, while I was toying around with Photoshop, I created a cover. I didn't mean to. It just sort of happened, first one, then cover after cover of superheroes. I think it might have been that I was looking forward to *Captain America: Civil War*. Or maybe it was that I'd recently agreed to play a game of *Mutants*

& *Masterminds* with my not-so-little brother. But the damage was done. Not one, but six covers of pure superhero goodness. Covers with titles. Covers that evoked.

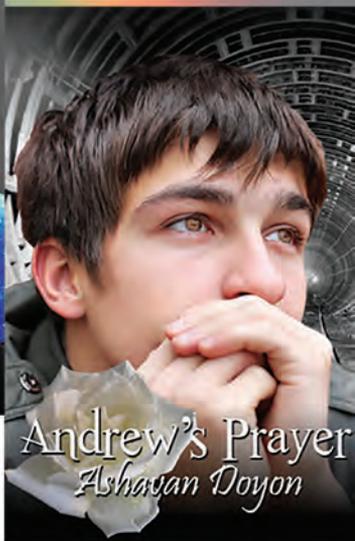
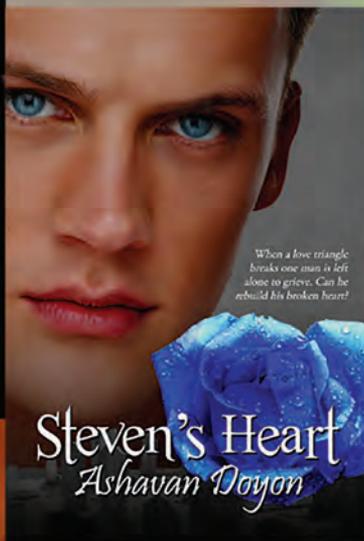
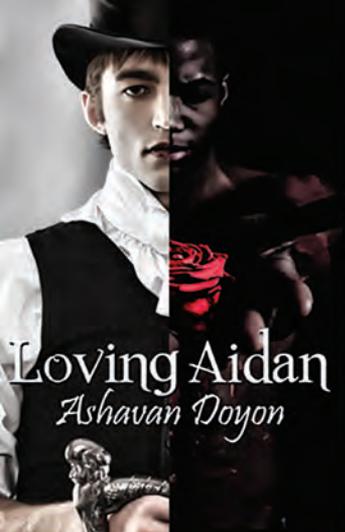
Covers, that above all else, need stories.

The first two covers were opposite pairings. Fire and Ice. *Fire in the Hole*. *Cold as Ice*. I'm writing them as novellas, and who knows, maybe one of my self-designed covers will finally get a public appearance.

Mostly I just want to renew the fun in writing. I write a lot of gut wrenching, tear your heart out, Kleenex grabbing prose. Maybe what I need is some fighting for truth, justice, and the American way of life.

I have my super secret work-in-progress. I've actually just put it to bed and gotten approval, and I'll be talking about that soon. There's a lot about that particular project to talk about.

But right now, for my birthday (which is in July—happy birthday to me!), I'm going to enter the difficult terrain of doing some world building, creating some origins, and just maybe my characters will let me fly. I sincerely doubt that any of them will be in hot pink spandex. But you never know... it could be the love interest is!



*discover the
thrill of romance*

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