

Love, A Declaration

by rhiannonhero

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Justin had imagined scenarios over the years. He was a romantic at heart; even Ethan hadn't killed it entirely. So of course he'd thought about it, even if he knew that it would *never* happen.

He'd thought it might be during or after really great sex. Brian, sweaty and panting, stunned as always that it was still that *good* between them. Or, he'd thought it might be after they'd broken up. Sometime, years from now, they'd meet again and Brian would admit it from the safe distance of years. And occasionally he'd envisioned a ridiculously romantic deathbed confession, both of them old and gray.

But he'd never in a million years imagined what happened. Brian was across from him in the kitchen pouring coffee and saying, "Justin, I've got to pick up laundry after work, so I might be late to Deb's party." Then Brian crossed over to him, kissed him on the forehead, and muttered, "I love you."

What the fuck? What the *fuck*?

Justin stood in a silent, confused panic, no joy or elation as he'd imagined, just abject fear coursing through him. "Brian?"

No answer.

He turned and Brian was out the door already. Justin broke into a run, dashing down the stairs, and beating the elevator by seconds. When the door slid back, Brian seemed surprised to see him there, panting and out of breath.

"Did I forget something?" Brian asked, looking down at his briefcase and travel coffee cup, and then back at Justin curiously.

"Is the cancer back?"

Brian rolled his eyes, a smirk settling on his lips. He stepped around Justin, ignoring him and heading out to the car.

"Is it?" Justin asked, dogging him. "Brian, please fucking talk to me."

"I'm fine, Justin." Brian stopped by the car. "The only thing wrong with me today is that I'm going to be late for my appointment with Remson." Brian placed his cup on top of the car, and pulled open the door, tossing his briefcase onto the passenger seat.

Justin stared at him. How could he be so nonchalant? Justin's mind raced through a thousand

reasons why Brian would say that he loved him. His heart plummeted to his stomach, and his throat felt tight. "Are you leaving me?" he asked, softly.

Brian sighed, turned to look at him as though he were insane, and said, "What do you think? Of *course* I'm fucking leaving you!"

Justin felt like he might vomit.

Brian went on, "Just like I do every morning!" He spoke slowly, like Justin was retarded. "I'm going to the office, where I'll do my work. *Then* I'll go to the laundry, pick up my dry cleaning, and meet you at Deb's. After that we'll come back to the loft, where we *live* together, and we'll fuck our brains out, then fall asleep." He threw his hands up. "What's your fucking problem?"

"You know goddamn well what my problem is!" Justin yelled, adrenaline rushing through him like bump.

Brian just grabbed his coffee from the roof of the car, climbed in, and drove away.

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"I'm not sure that I really understand the problem, Justin," Ben said, patiently, as he leaned against a bin of comics. The store was nearly empty; Michael stood by the register, arms crossed, and a look of confusion on his face, and Justin sat behind the counter, telling them why he was in such a bad mood.

"He said that he *loved* me, out of the blue, with no warning. Don't you see?" Justin scratched his ear nervously. "Something's wrong with him. This is serious." He turned to Michael. "You really don't know anything at all?"

Michael shook his head, his eyes wide. "Wow, so he said it, huh? About fucking time."

Justin gave him an incredulous look. "Michael, this is *bad*. Don't you of all fucking people see that?"

"Justin, I think you're leaping to conclusions here," Ben said, calmly. "Why not look at this as a positive thing? A turning over of a new leaf? Something to celebrate? Why not live in the now?"

Justin stood up, shoving his Rage drawings back into his bag. "Listen, forget I said anything. And, Michael, whatever the fuck you do, don't mention this to him, okay? I don't want him to know that I've been obsessing over it."

"He won't hear a peep from me," Michael promised.

Justin bit back a sarcastic rejoinder, and slammed out of the store, wondering who else he could talk to that might have insight into Brian's sudden declaration of affection.

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"Did you test positive?" Justin asked into the phone, not surprised to hear the dial tone almost immediately.

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"Honey, you've been with him all these years and he's never once said he loved you?"

Justin sighed, pursed his lips, and tried to be patient. Talking to his mom hadn't been a good idea after all. What a surprise.

"It's just not his way."

Jennifer took a swig of her beer, and Justin could see her trying to re-work her world order into a place where Brian Kinney had never told Justin Taylor that he loved him.

"I mean, I know he loves me, Mom. He's always loved me."

"Well, yes, anyone can see that," she said, quietly. "I just--well, honey. Why do you think he finally said it then?"

Justin clutched his hair and pulled, before resting his head on Woody's bar, moaning, "I don't know. I just don't know."

"I guess you'll just have to ask him."

Justin felt like crying.

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"Is this some kind of joke? Are you fucking with me?"

Brian's annoyed growl was followed again by the dial tone, and Justin chewed on his thumb for a second before hanging up his cell.

Maybe...maybe Brian just meant it, so he said it? Justin's heart pounded. No, no way. That was too easy.

It had to be something else.

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"Seriously, Deb, what do you think?"

Deb snorted. "I fucking think you need to stop thinking it about so goddamn much, Sunshine, and take it for what it's worth."

Justin groaned. Great, another 'live in the now' speech. He wondered if Ben knew how much he and Debbie had in common sometimes.

"Brian Kinney's been in fucking love with you since day fucking one. Well, almost. So he told you. Deal with it and move the fuck on. I've got tuna salad to serve."

Justin threw a few dollars on the counter to cover his lemon bar to go, and left the diner without the additional insight he'd been hoping for.

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The party was in full swing, but Brian wasn't there yet. Justin was panicking. How fucking long did it take to get some dry cleaning? What if he'd pushed Brian too far? What if--?

What if the guy at the laundry was hot and queer? Well, that could take awhile. Justin settled back into his chair, and took another nearly force-fed bite of Debbie's spaghetti.

"Don't look so glum, Sunshine," Deb practically yelled. "He'll be here. And, hey, everybody! Guess what? Sunshine got the present even though it's my birthday!"

Justin swallowed, shaking his head, saying, "God, Deb, please, no--"

"Brian told him that he loved him today!"

Justin tried to sink into the chair, but Hunter, Ben and Michael were hooting, Emmett and Ted were laughing, and Lindsey and Mel were kissing his cheeks. Even Gus was applauding like he was aware of what that meant; at five Justin supposed that he was in a way.

"Stop kissing him, you vile women! You'll turn him straight and he'll be worthless to me!" Brian's voice boomed across the room, and then he was hugging Debbie, handing off some wine and a present, before sitting next to Justin, and pulling Gus onto his lap. "Here's my Sonny Boy," he said, letting Gus kiss his cheek.

Still enthused over the earlier celebratory atmosphere, Gus crooned, "Justin and Daddy sitting in a tree," bouncing a little in his father's lap. "K-I-S-S-I-N-G!"

Brian leaned over and kissed Justin's lips, and then food was passed around. Gus sat on his father's lap throughout dinner, and Justin wondered whether the issue of the declaration that morning was going to be ignored, and prayed that no one would bring it up.

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"Michael, you said you wouldn't say a word about it," Justin growled.

"I didn't. Well, not really. Okay, so I said a small thing, but I didn't know it was like a fucking secret,

okay? I mean, everyone knows he loves you."

Justin just threw up his hands, and followed Brian out of the house, hoping that he hadn't driven off and left him.

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"Do you think of me just as a friend? Like Mikey?" Justin asked, the engine of the Corvette humming under his legs.

Brian slammed on the brakes, jerked to the side of the road, and grabbed Justin's cock.

"Christ! Careful or you'll rip it off!"

"I don't suck my friends' cocks, okay? Jesus, Justin--what's the problem? I thought you'd be pleased, but instead you're flipping the fuck out like a virgin on her wedding night."

"It's just that--"

"What? I can't say it? Am I not allowed to say it? Did you co-opt the term and no one can use it but you? I mean, fuck, Justin--you've said it for years. Why can't I fucking say it without it being a big fucking drama for the big fucking drama queens?"

Justin sat in silence, staring out the side window. What could he really say to that?

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The loft was quiet at three in the morning, and Brian's soft breathing was regular and normal. Justin listened to it, the soft in and out soothing to him. His ass still ached from the fucking he'd received when he got home. Now that--*that* he understood. That fuck was Brian saying, "You've pissed me off, but I love you so much it makes me sick, you little fucking piece of shit." And, Justin could deal with that, he *understood* that.

"Brian, hey--Brian, wake up."

Brian rolled up on his elbow, awake, and looking around for the problem. "What? What is it?"

"I just wanted to tell you that you're right. I don't own the words. You can say them whenever you want, and I won't freak out. I promise."

Brian sighed, and collapsed back against the bed. "I was fucking *asleep*."

"I just wanted you to know."

Brian rolled over, and pounded his pillow, before settling back in.

"So, um, you know, you can say it. Whenever."

"Great, Sunshine. I'll keep it in mind," Brian muttered sarcastically.

"Like, if you wanted to say it right now, I wouldn't say a thing about it."

Brian snorted.

Justin lay breathlessly for a few seconds then half-snorted at himself. He rolled onto his side so that his back pressed against Brian's. He closed his eyes, and thought about what Ben had said about living in the now, and he reluctantly had to agree with the hippy bullshit. After all, he'd wasted the whole day being anxious and upset, when he could have just enjoyed it for what it was worth.

"Sunshine," Brian said softly.

Justin's heart did a summersault. "Yeah?"

"Your feet are cold. Get them the fuck away from me."

Justin sighed, rolled away from Brian, buried his face in the pillow. He had to smother a grin when Brian pulled him close, spooning him, and whispering in his ear, "Don't expect me to ever say it again, but I love you, so fucking go to sleep. Christ we've got work tomorrow."

It wasn't what he'd ever imagined, and God knew if he'd ever hear it again, but at least it wasn't on his death bed, and at least they weren't broken up. And Brian was there holding him when he said it this time, it was...well, ridiculously romantic, as far as Justin was concerned.

He pushed his cold foot back against Brian's leg, and laughed when Brian jumped. Life was good, and love was now.

THE END