

CAN SHE MOVE ON TO THE FUTURE
SHE DESIRES AND DESERVES?

Song to Celia

1572-1637 Ben Jonson

with thine eyes,
Age with mine;
in the d
look for
the soul
d drink
of the
feta
for
mine.

sent thee late a rose wreath,
Not so much hoping that there
As give me hope that there
But thou the flower withered be.
And send it only to the
When it grows and smells as I swear,
Not of itself, but of thee.

Hearts AND Flowers

BORDER

Laura Stewart
Loves
Emma Jenkins



L.T. SMITH

OTHER BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR

See Right Through Me

Puppy Love

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again, without Astrid Ohletz's dedication to the publishing profession, I doubt I would have ever seen this book published again. *Hearts and Flowers Border* was the very first story I'd ever written, and, considering we are talking a fair few years since this happened, I still worry about how she will fare in this big old world we live in. Astrid has helped to calm those fears through gentle suggestions and guidance.

Next on my "hit" list is Day Petersen. Thank you, Day. You have worked diligently—again—to make *Hearts* the best she could possibly be, and all done with an eagle eye and a ready smile. Considering editing is probably the worst part of writing, you make it seem so much better.

Now on to the front cover. Wow. And definitely WOW again. Amanda Chron—you are a genius. I absolutely love what you have done with my baby. You have made her look like she is a million dollars. I still can't believe what you managed to accomplish with my mumbled suggestions of "Erm...a flower? And erm...words?"

Finally. Thank you, reader. You have made me want to keep writing, and considering *Hearts* was my first story, through you and your support, I am hoping she won't be my last.

DEDICATION

Ann and Ju. To the maddest, kindest, funniest, most supportive, wittiest sisters a girl could have. I am truly blessed to have you two watching my back.

Part 1

CHAPTER 1

Present Day

Life, my life, was being turned upside down and inside out. For a second time.

Yesterday, I was just me—marking, planning, teaching, and bawling at kids who jacked around in class. It was all I had, all I needed. Until today.

It had been an ordinary day. I had forgotten I even had a conference scheduled until just before the tap on the door of my classroom. Still, in that split second it was as if I knew, deep down, that this disremembered appointment would hold something for me.

I think the giveaway was the way that time slowed down as the door opened. The groaning of the hinges announced the arrival of a hand, a firm, grasping hand that clutched the poor defenceless handle. The hand was at the end of a toned, tanned arm. The arm, as arms tend to be, was attached to a broad shoulder, which pinned itself to a body.

I scanned the rest of the visitor, noting the long legs and the slender hips, but it was the ice blue eyes that captured me.

Have you ever experienced the sensation of your stomach dropping into your shoes only to shoot back up into your mouth? That's what it felt like. It felt as if I had been transported back thirteen years to a time when those blue

eyes became the centre of my world.

Fear gripped me. Honestly. It gripped me right around the heart, as if to squeeze the life out of it.

The room seemed to shrink; I seemed to expand. Not good.

That's all I remember.

In the blackness filling my head, I could hear a concerned voice whispering my name, but it seemed too distant to be talking to me. The voice was familiar, too familiar. Remembering what destruction it had wrought, I wanted to shut it out.

Slender, strong fingers gently stroked my face, and I knew I had to open my eyes to see whether it was all a dream.

I forced my eyes to open, then blinked away the startling light. Blurry images danced in front of me until anxious blue eyes became the focus of my attention, the centre of my world once again.

It had been ten years since I had last looked into her eyes. Ten long years of not seeing her.

With that realisation, I fainted for the second time.

Chapter 2

Thirteen years previously

“Fuck off, dyke!” I’d always had a way with words. “Clam smacking arse licker!”

I should warn you now—I tend to swear when I’m distressed, nervous, happy, sad, melancholy, watching telly, drunk, sober... I could go on, but I guess you get the picture.

I was sixteen years old and already had the mouth of a sailor. My vitriolic display was aimed at Justine Russell. She got on my tits. She always sucked up to the teachers, but was a complete bitch to everyone else. Finding out she had been caught with her pants down, literally, in the changing rooms with Ms “Bulldyke” Wilkins had been a serendipity. I vowed to put a “SPECIAL” in the school magazine. I even made myself a mental note to not forget the hearts and flowers border, which would attract attention.

I hated school. School was filled with two classes of people: popular and unpopular. Guess which class I fitted into. I had the dress sense of a kebab, the social skills of an amoeba, and the patience of a dog busting for a pee. I definitely did not belong to the prominent social circle, aka, the popular group. But then, it didn’t matter. I didn’t feel I deserved to be in that group, and, more importantly, I didn’t *want* to be.

You see, I don’t think things through before I speak my

mind. My mouth had gotten me into far too many scrapes and scraps. Consequently, I'd had more black eyes and fat lips than Mike Tyson. This is the way of the typical Mancunian. Honestly, if I had behaved any other way, my family would have disowned me.

In retrospect, it's a pity they didn't.

I think I was repressed. Oppressed? Suppressed? Depressed? One of them. Delete as applicable.

You see, I wanted to be the one in the changing rooms with... Well, not with Bulldyke. She was—fuck—a bloke with tits and a mullet. No. I went more for the dark haired beauties with classic features—straight nose, long black hair, tanned, lithe body, tall. In two words—Emma Jenkins. She was hot. And she didn't even know I existed.

It seemed as if she'd just suddenly appeared at the end of Year 10. Where she had been until then, only God knew. Probably avoiding me, if she had any sense.

You know when time slows down and everything moves in slow motion, like in the films? That's how it was when I first saw her.

I was rushing to Maths...

Does that make sense? Does anyone really rush to Maths? But I digress.

I was walking to Maths rather quickly—that sounds better—and she was coming down the hall toward me with the Bitches of Eastwick, laughing, head back and laughing.

Things began to move in slow motion from that moment on.

My legs felt as if they were controlled by a puppet master. They lifted slowly and then noiselessly placed themselves on the ground. I took in the whole scene. Her head was back and

she was laughing, but I couldn't hear anything. Her mouth was open, displaying beautiful straight teeth encased by lips that had been formed from red velvet. Perfection. Her head slowly came forward, her closed eyes began to bud open. Fluttering black eyelashes blinked open, like she was taking in the world at that moment, to reveal blue eyes...blue, blue eyes.

I was transfixed, rooted to the spot. My breathing became erratic; my heart was pumping so hard, it bruised the inside of my chest. Numbness engulfed me. My mouth was dry, like cardboard, and I thought I was going to keel over.

Long hair fanned behind her as she flicked her raven locks over her shoulder. It appeared to stop in mid-air, like in cheesy movies, and then fall behind her. A long sleek arm raised to finger stray locks into place. She had grace of a ballerina, and the poise—strong, sure of herself.

The total opposite of me.

My eyes drifted down her body, etching every minute detail into my memory. Her skirt stopped a few inches from her knees. Tanned legs went on for miles, and my eyes thoroughly enjoyed the ride, although my stomach decided it didn't like long journeys.

My gaze seemed to focus in on something, something that seemed so out of place, so unexpected.

Doc Martens!

I shook my head to clear it. But... Doc Martens! A revelation, a complete contrast to what I was expecting. Did ballerinas wear Doc Martens? Well, they did now.

I looked back to her face and was captured by blue eyes. Her expression was hard to read, but she looked kind of startled.

Then the group was gone.

And summer arrived.

Six weeks of slob time. Perfect. And if hadn't been for spotting "the Girl in the Docs" just before school went out, I would have loved every minute of it. The image of her in the corridor replayed in my mind like a BBC rerun. I guiltily embraced every visual—hands stroking her hair, the crooked smile, the parted, glistening lips. Every time I thought of "the incident," it became a little more interesting.

The Bitches weren't there, obviously, just her and me. The school was empty...

No. I wasn't going there. Not then. Not ever.

I found that out the hard way.

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AND
Flowers
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Hearts and Flowers Border

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