

PIPER VAUGHN

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More Than  
**MOONLIGHT**



Free Short Fiction

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### First Night

“Ugh. Shane, I don’t think this was such a good idea.”

Shane’s band, Luck, was waiting backstage, ready to go on. It wasn’t the time for important band members to freak out. Jesse couldn’t freak out. He was the band’s lead singer and owner of one of the most gorgeous voices Shane had ever heard. Jesse leaned over at the waist and made a few rather loud retching sounds.

*Ah, shit. Don’t puke, Jess.* The kid was made for music, was *born* to sing, but the stage on the other hand? It didn’t look like the stage was going to be Jesse’s friend. Probably not the best moment to find that out. It was Luck’s first performance. Ever. (Unless you count a few cans of Mountain Dew on their dad’s basement floor as an audience.) Nerves were to be expected. Puking wouldn’t be so great, though. Probably best to avoid the puking.

“Jess, you’re gonna be fine. You sing like a frickin’ angel and you play the guitar like fire. Just get the hell out there and show those kids who Jesse Seider is.”

“Jesse Seider isn’t anybody.” He groaned. “It would be a hell of a lot cooler if I had a last name like yours.”

“Ventura’s not so special. Your voice is.” Shane rubbed Jesse between the shoulders. It was an uncharacteristically soft gesture for him. He tried not to let people in. Jesse was different. He’d managed to sneak in right from the start.

“Look at ’em, Shaney.” Nicky, Shane’s pain-in-the-ass, cocky younger brother (who happened to rock the bass) gestured to the crowd of disinterested teenagers on the other side of the curtain. “I can’t believe we’re playing cover tracks at a high school dance. This blows my ass!”

“*Nick.*” Dre, their drummer, thwacked him with a drumstick. “They probably heard that in Timbuktu. Do you *have* an inside voice?”

Nicky guffawed. “Have I ever?”

Shane took another glance at Jesse. Looked like Nick and Dre’s usual arguing antics had distracted him from the nausea. *Good.*

“Ready, Freddie?” Shane asked him with a small nudge of his hips.

“Don’t call me Freddie,” Jesse joked weakly. Then he did a few warm up strums on his guitar and nodded.

Shane supposed that it didn’t much matter anyway. Ready or not, they were on. The somewhat damp red velvet curtain raised and the sea of students suddenly seemed a whole helluva lot closer. Shit. And he thought Jesse was nervous.

*I can do this...*

An old guy in a suit (principal probably) cleared his throat into the mic. “Ahem, students and faculty of Cabrini Heights, will you please join me in a warm round of applause for...” He shuffled a stack of papers.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Nicky’s inside voice wasn’t any quieter than the last time. A few students snickered behind their hands. Nicky stepped forward and grabbed the microphone. “We’re Luck and we’re going to rock you!”

Nicky’s shout was met with scattered applause. They had to keep going as if they’d gotten a stadium full of screams. Dre counted them down with his sticks on the rim of his snare and they were on. Too late to go back.

Their first few chords were greeted with indifference, but one by one the students warmed up. Luck started with a rocked out version of “Johnny B. Goode.” Everyone knew that song, right? It was their chance. If they didn’t have the crowd with the first song, they wouldn’t have them at all.

Shane played lead guitar and Jesse kept up a driving rhythm over Nicky’s complicated bass. Shane was terrified at first but when Jesse’s voice came in loud and strong, he started to breathe...and perhaps even have a little bit of fun. Nick showboated around the stage like only he could, thrusting with his hips under his bass and making the girls in the front row squeal.

They had them, goddammit. This room of high school kids was going to be theirs.

“Johnny B. Goode” ended with enthusiastic applause. They segued quickly into The Cure’s “Just Like Heaven” with Jesse on keyboards and Shane singing lead before slowing it down with a perfect copy of Pearl Jam’s cover of “Last Kiss.” Nick took over and sang Eddie Vedder’s lead vocals in his low, gravelly voice, which was sure to make the girls swoon. Jesse and Shane played the two guitars off of each other, harmonizing and trading riffs. There were kids in the audience slow dancing; some were just watching the band. Shane knew some of those

girls were staring at him. One of them winked. Shane wanted to roll his eyes but he smiled right back at the girl flirtatiously. Had to play the crowd.

Shane looked over at Jesse and grinned. Jesse knew how girls were with him. He also knew that Shane couldn't care less. He was never going to be into a girl. Ever. Shane was happy to leave them to his brother. Jesse chuckled and shook his head.

*Jesse.*

Just watching him play made Shane smile. He couldn't ask for a better best friend. They'd only known each other since the end of the last school year when Jesse had been assigned to tutor Shane a few months before he graduated. But it felt like so much longer. The guy who Shane had once thought was an uptight, pain-in-the-ass nerd was cool, and fun, and a fucking brilliant musician. Luck had been lucky to find him.

"What's next?" Jesse whispered when they finished the Pearl Jam cover.

"Buddy Holly," Shane answered. Weezer. It was one of his favorites. He'd been looking forward to it. Shane threw the distortion pedal on his amp and waited for a count in from Dre on the drums.

By the time Jesse was done with the first line Shane was full out grinning. The nerves were gone. In that musty old gym, on the stage with his brother and his best friends in the world, he was having the time of his life. Who cared if it was just some high school kids bopping their heads to Weezer on the floor of a basketball court instead of a Luck original at Madison Square Garden? Those days would come. He was sure of it. He and Jesse could do anything.

They worked their way through Sugar Ray's surfy "Someday," singing to each other and the crowd. Nicky's favorite came next. All it took was him growling "The world is a vampire" into the mic and the girls just lost it. Shane was proud. His brother sure as hell knew how to do what needed to be done.

Jesse couldn't believe it. He was on stage. *Singing*. And it was okay. Fun, even.

He'd been sure he wasn't going to make it to the front of the stage without puking his guts out all over the crowd. Good thing he hadn't eaten earlier when his mom tried to shove lunch down his throat. It would've come up so damn fast.

The first song or two had been a little awkward, but by the time they'd started on Sugar Ray he was having an honest-to-God good time. All it took sometimes was one of those big gorgeous smiles from Shane and he felt like he could do anything. And there it was. That smile. They swayed together with the beachy beat, and Shane looked right at him and mouthed "you were always there for me" right with the lyrics. Aw, shit. *Why's he gotta be gay?*

Jesse felt a bolt in his stomach. *Music, asshole. Play the music.* But it was true. It would've been so much easier not to have the world's most ridiculous never-gonna-happen crush on his best friend if there wasn't that one little niggling hint of 'maybe'.

"Jess... 'Till There Was You.' Let's do it." Jesse's stomach dropped. Everything had gone so well. "Till There Was You" was a classic, it would be only him and Shane, no electrics, no drums. Terrifying. He went to shake his head but Shane nodded significantly. "C'mon, Jess. It's perfect."

Jesse nodded, not sure of it at all, and turned to pick his electrical acoustic off of its stand. Shane followed suit, and nodded for Dre and Nick to take a break. Jesse raised his eyebrows at Shane. *I might be playing the damn song, but you're going to do the talking.*

Shane grinned at him and stepped up to his microphone. "This is the first song I ever heard Jesse sing." He smiled engagingly at the audience. "I'm pretty sure you'll see why we hired him." Then he winked and turned to Jesse. "Ready?"

*No.* "Let's do this."

They started out with the complex, two guitar cha-cha rhythm. Jesse only had a few eight counts before he had to come in. *Deep breath. You got it. Go.*

He sang the first verse on his own before Shane joined in on backup. Jesse's voice rang out across the auditorium, stripped down and in his perfect range. He was singing for Shane. He always sang for Shane—like a loser. Jesse wished it didn't affect him so much when Shane smiled at him the way he did. After eight months, he'd come to accept it.

The concert ended with tons of applause and two encores. It barely felt real. The curtain closed on them slowly (ending with Nick sticking his head out and blowing kisses to a group of giggling girls). After they were hidden from view, Shane whooped softly and ran over to engulf Jesse in a huge hug.

"You did it, dude," he whispered. Jesse heard the pride in Shane's voice.

“We all did.”

“Yeah, but your voice was perfect.” Shane ruffled his hair in the seconds before they were bombarded by hugs from Dre and Nick.

“We rocked that fucker!” Nick crowed. Loudly, of course. It was good that the thumpa thump of the bass from the DJ covered his voice—and his rather impressive vocabulary. Shane shoved him.

“What, dude? We’ve gotta go celebrate!”

“Not too late, you’ve got school on Monday. So does Jesse.” Shane’s voice sounded like the law.

Unimpressed, Nick rolled his eyes. “Fuck you. Just ’cause you barely managed to graduate doesn’t make you king of the world.”

Jesse sighed. If they got Nick out of high school successfully, it would be a miracle. “Shane’s right. I have a project to finish up tomorrow, and I’m sure you have homework you need to do. We can go out for pizza or something, though.”

Jesse was treated to the same eye roll that Shane had received. “I always knew you were a loser. Why’d you gotta make my brother one too?”

Jesse shrugged. He didn’t take Nick too seriously.

Shane tossed his arm around Jesse’s shoulders. “We can be losers together,” he whispered, loud enough to make sure Nick heard him. Nick flipped him off. “Let’s go get a large pepperoni and talk about how amazing we are and how we’re going to book a ton of shows this winter.”

Jesse chuckled to cover up the fact that his back had burst into a cascade of goose bumps. *Shane, you have no idea.* And he never would. Jesse just grinned and said, “Yeah, let’s go get pizza.”

They walked out into the chill of a late fall night. There were stars glittering above the city and the cool breeze was a relief after the stuffiness in the gym. Jesse smiled. It had been their first show together, but hopefully just the first of many. Jesse felt like he was ready to take over the world and he wanted to do it with Shane by his side. Shane might never find out how he felt, but that didn’t change anything. Their band was going to make it big. They had to. Luck was too good just to fade into nothing. Jesse wouldn’t allow it.

But no matter what, big or small, world tours or holidays at home in Chicago, he, Shane, Nick, and Dre were a team. They were going to do it all, together.

~\*~\*~\*~

**End**

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## Me Too

“Ugh, it’s hot!”

Shane flopped back on Jesse’s bed. He rolled a semi-frozen water bottle back and forth on his forehead until little rivulets ran down his face and neck onto the comforter. Shane’s black hair was shiny from a few minutes before when he’d dumped his one other bottle over his head. It had also made his already thin tank stick to his skin in the most interesting ways. Jesse turned on the fan and faked a chuckle to hide the fact that Shane all wet and sprawled out on his bed made him think things that...*oohhh, damn. Stop it, you ass. Say something!*

“Yeah, you think?” he teased. “It’s summer in Chicago. You’re just being a wimp.” Still, Jesse couldn’t help it. He leaned over and ran his fingers down that damp tank top, dying to feel the skin underneath. But they were still new. Way too new for that kind of thing, right? He still couldn’t believe that it had actually happened. That day a few weeks before when Shane had kissed him for the first time, when *everything* had changed between them, still felt like a fantasy. His most hidden favorite fantasy. But it was real. Impossibly, crazily real. Jesse was still waiting to wake up.

*I want to touch him...* He’d *been* wanting to touch Shane since they’d met back in high school. God, that felt like a lifetime ago. Far more than the two years it really was.

Shane reached up and pulled, tumbling Jesse down next to him. He rolled over and covered Jesse’s mouth in a sweet kiss. Jesse’s breathing sped up. He couldn’t help it.

Even though he and Shane had been seeing each other as far more than friends for weeks, they’d been keeping their growing feelings away from the rest of the band. It was getting harder by the day. And even with their new, well, whatever it was, just between the two of them, Jesse still couldn’t get used to it. He couldn’t get used to Shane’s gorgeous mouth on his, used to hearing Shane tell him how much he liked him, used to the fact that beautiful, cool as hell Shane Ventura wanted to be with *him*—dorky, chubby, awkward him. *Why?*

“Jess?... Babe? What’s up?” Shane lifted his head and reached for Jesse’s hand, threading their fingers together.

“Nothing. I just—”

“Listen, Jess.” *Oh, God he’s gonna break up with me. I knew this was too good to be true. He’s gonna—* “I wanna tell the guys.”

Jesse choked. “What?”

“They’re not completely mental—well, I guess my brother is. But they have to know something is up. I can barely keep my hands off you during rehearsal. I don’t like this secrecy shit.”

Jesse’s already hot face turned beet red. He could feel it. He buried it in the comforter. What would the guys think? They’d tell Shane he was nuts for going after someone as lame as Jesse. Shane had boys all over him constantly...well, except for lately. *Oh, Jesus, the band probably has noticed...*

“What?” Shane chuckled. “I don’t care who knows, babe. It sucks not being able to be near you like I want to just ’cause Dre or Nicky might be watching. You hafta know I wanna kiss you, like, all the damn time.”

“*Why?*” Jesse wasn’t fishing for compliments. He really didn’t understand.

“You actually mean that?”

Jesse nodded his head miserably. Shane lifted his chin. “Because you’re smart, and funny, and I can’t even hear a single note you sing without getting all turned on...and, well, because I’m falling for you. Like, *hard.*” Shane’s forehead wrinkled, his eyes went puppy-dog droopy. “Don’t you feel the same way about me?”

Shane’s sudden insecurity was sweet and sad and so very endearing. “Of course I do. But you’re *Shane*. I’m just...” *A nerd. Ugly, squishy, pale, and too damn blind to get rid of these dumb ass glasses.*

“There is no ‘just’ anything. Jess, you’re my boyfriend. Right? I never asked officially but I was hoping...”

Jesse nodded. He didn’t even try to conceal his slow smile. “And you really don’t care that I’m not hot like you?”

He snuggled up to Shane experimentally. Other than their very first ‘I can’t believe it’s happening and holy crap it’s so crazy good’ kiss, Jesse had never instigated any of their physical encounters. He’d always been afraid that the perfect fantasy he’d been living in would disappear and Shane would push him away. Didn’t happen. Shane wrapped damp arms around Jesse’s shoulders and kissed him hard.

“You’re perfect. Quit saying that shit.”

“Nicky doesn’t think so.”

Shane snorted. “My brother’s an asshole. He doesn’t see what I see. And if he did, I’d have to kick his ass.”

“Or wax his nuts.” Jesse giggled.

Shane sighed. “I’m never telling anyone I did that again.”

“What? It’s funny!”

“I was in high school.”

“Ooooooh, and now that you’re mister big man at twenty you’re so much more mature?”

Jesse rolled his eyes at Shane.

“You know what?” Shane chuckled and pushed Jesse back against the mattress. He laughed and poked until Jesse was giggling and almost gasping for breath. Jesse tried to tickle him back, but Shane was too quick and he squirmed out of Jesse’s grasp and pounced again.

“*Ouch*, you win! I can’t breathe.” Jesse gave up quickly. He was ready for more kissing—not so easy when he was trying to drag air into his lungs.

Shane raised his eyebrows. “So, no more shit about what you think you look like?”

Jesse hesitated. “Yeah, but I’m still not sure we should tell the guys. Bandmates aren’t supposed to date each other. It’s bad rock ‘n’ roll karma or something.”

Shane rolled his eyes. “They’re gonna figure it out. I refuse to act like we’re not together for the rest of our lives.” *The rest of our...* Jesse choked but he hugged Shane closer. Shane’s voice was soft in his ear. “Babe, I’m sorry if that freaked you out, but it’s how I feel. I’m in—”

Jesse wasn’t ready to hear any more. He wanted to but it was just too much too soon. He’d always figured he would end up alone. To go from that to ‘the rest of our lives’ was a bit overwhelming. He dove into Shane’s lips, kissing him aggressively, completely, deeply, for the first time.

Shane moaned against his mouth. “I’ve been waiting for you to do that.”

“What?” Jesse could hardly breathe.

“Just fuckin’...*kiss* me. I’m never sure you want it like I do.”

“I do. Always.” Jesse couldn’t believe that Shane would be unsure of anyone, let alone someone like him.

“C’mere, Jess. Kiss me again.”

So he did. He wrapped his hand around Shane's neck, fingers delving into the damp silky strands of his hair, and yanked Shane's face to his. The kiss was different than most of their kisses had been before. Where there had been sweetness there was heat, soft touches were replaced by grasping, desperate hands. Tongues swirled and Jesse fisted his hand in Shane's hair. He pulled—and not very gently.

Shane moaned and tossed his thigh over Jesse's hip. "*Jess...*"

Jesse moaned in return. He couldn't believe how good it felt. In a moment of boldness, he ran his hands down Shane's back and cupped his ass through baggy jeans. Shane tilted his hips closer to Jesse's and deepened their kiss. He moved to his belt and fumbled with it for a moment before his jeans went loose under Jesse's hand.

*Yes. I want to.* His heart crashed—*pound, pound, pound, pound*—against his ribs. Jesse slipped his hand inside jeans and boxers until he was caressing the warm bare skin of Shane's perfect butt. Shane shivered hard and his back bowed, bringing his hips down on Jesse's. His mouth, that beautiful mouth, suctioned itself to Jesse's neck and Jesse shivered in return.

"Aw, fuck babe. I wanna touch you, too," Shane breathed.

Jesse froze, trembling.

*Really?*

Shane couldn't believe how fucking turned on he was, just from one little damn kiss. But he should've believed it because it was like that every single time he and Jesse kissed. At the beginning he'd been nervous. He didn't want to ruin the most important friendship he'd ever had, but with each kiss he wanted more, with every touch he knew he'd never be able to stop.

He was in love with his best friend and it was new and scary and perfect and so fucking beautiful that half the time he felt like he was just going to take off flying at any moment.

"Jess, what's wrong? You don't want me to touch you?" *Please say it's okay. I'm dying...*

"I just thought you wouldn't want to...because, well, you know."

Shane slipped his hands beneath Jesse's T-shirt, wedging them between Jesse's back and the bed. Jesse arched to give him more room. The skin on his back was smooth and a little damp from the heat. Shane wanted more. He had to feel more.

"Jess, do you have any idea how sexy you are right now?" And he was. His spiky hair was all askew, glasses long lost to the carpet, those big gray eyes were shining up at Shane and his mouth was parted and wet, begging for more kisses. Shane wanted to show Jesse everything. Wanted to be his first. "I want whatever is okay with you."

"R-really?"

*Ah, shit, he's nervous. He never stutters like that anymore.*

"It's okay. Only if you want to. We can just kiss." Shane ran his fingers through Jesse's silky spikes and kissed him again, soft and romantic like they usually did.

"N-no. I want you to do it. I do." With trembling hands, Jesse unbuttoned his cargo shorts and loosened the zipper. Shane couldn't help grinning at him. He'd wanted to touch Jesse for so long. Shane lowered his head to kiss Jesse again, slow and deep, sexual, hot. Jesse shook against him and arched up instinctively.

"Yeah, like that, babe." Shane slipped his hands into Jesse's shorts and shuddered when he finally got a hold of Jesse's bare, and surprisingly muscular ass. *Yes, yes, yes.* They were kissing and grabbing and touching and it felt like nothing Shane had ever done before, even though he thought he'd done it all.

"*Shane,*" Jesse whispered. Just his name. But the longing and desire in that one word turned him inside out.

"What do you need, baby? Let me do it."

Jesse buried his face in the crook of Shane's neck. Then he took one of Shane's suddenly trembling hands and curled it around his sizable erection. *Damn.* Shane hadn't been expecting that. But it was nice. More than nice.

"Please," was all Jesse said. "Touch me."

*Oh, hell yeah!* Shane thought it would be months before they were anywhere near where his hand currently was but he wasn't questioning the gift. He captured Jesse's mouth with his and started stroking, slow and firm, until he figured out how Jesse liked it best.

"Sh-Shane?" Jesse was shaking, his face pink around summer freckles.

"You okay, babe?" Shane slowed his stroking. Jesse nodded and gulped. "Want more?"

“Yeah. *More*. It feels so good.”

“Lift your hips up,” Shane whispered. Then he dragged Jesse’s shorts down to his thighs until his deliciously thick erection popped free.

“What are you doing, Shane?” Jesse’s voice was reduced to a whisper.

“Shhh.” Shane grinned. “You’ll like it.”

Then he lowered his head and took his first long taste of Jesse’s pretty pink cock. *God*, it felt good against his tongue. Shane slid down slowly until he had all of Jesse in his mouth, nudging against his throat. Jesse gasped and arched from the bed. His hand reflexively came to land on Shane’s shoulder and he squeezed hard. Shane wanted to smile, but he couldn’t stand to stop what he was doing. It was everything he’d fantasized about late at night when he was alone, thinking of the way Jesse kissed, or that sideways smile he’d get when Shane had said something dumb. Shane couldn’t have fantasized the way Jesse’s little grunts of pleasure got higher when he was excited, couldn’t have imagined his salty taste, or that warm hand on Shane’s shoulder telling him not to ever, ever stop.

Shane sucked hard, pulling up until he released Jesse with a pop. His mouth was replaced by his hand, squeezing, stroking, feeling. It was all way too perfect.

“Feel good?” he asked. He didn’t give Jesse much of a chance to reply before they were kissing again. Jesse moaned, desperate and sweet, against his lips. Shane could feel him tremble, feel the surge in the hard shaft beneath his palm. Jesse was so close but he was fighting it.

“Shane, I...”

“I know, baby. Let it happen. Just...let go.”

Didn’t take long. Jesse convulsed, mouth open in a silent scream and Shane’s hand was filled with warm wetness. He didn’t even look down. All he could do was stare at Jesse’s face and stroke softly, watching the shivers, reveling in Jesse’s reaction.

“Jess, you feel so good. I...” He didn’t know what to say. There was too much in his head, not enough, so much more than he’d ever imagined saying to *anyone*, let alone his sweet, awkward best friend with the surprising spine of steel.

Jesse had his face buried in Shane’s neck again. Shane wasn’t going to let him hide.

“What is it? Jess?”

“Nothing, I’m just...embarrassed, I guess.”

“Why? Didn’t it feel good?” Jesse snorted into Shane’s neck. Shane lifted his head by his chin.

“Yes, okay? Of course it felt good. Better than good. I just...*fuck*...like a damn twelve year old.”

“And you’re embarrassed about that?” Shane chuckled and pulled him close. “I’d have been worried if you didn’t lose control. Jess, what do you think would happen if you touched me?” Jesse looked up at him with wide eyes and Shane nodded. “Off like a rocket. Ten seconds flat.”

“Shane, I—” Shane knew what Jesse was thinking. He could see it right there in those beautiful gray eyes. But it was hard to say. Scary as goddamned hell, too. He let Jesse off the hook.

“I know, babe. Me too.”

*Me too.*

~\*~\*~\*~

**End**

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### For Real

Jesse looked up from the notebook he'd been writing in and glanced at the clock. Shane was late. Well, that wasn't really anything new. Shane was rarely on time for anything except for their gigs. But he'd never been this late without calling before, especially not when they had plans on going out instead of just lounging around in Jesse's room, writing songs and playing music. And kissing. That was Jesse's favorite part. Sometimes it was all they did, just kiss and touch and whisper in the dark.

Jesse's cheeks warmed as he thought about it. God. He still couldn't believe it most days. How was it possible that Shane wanted *him*? He kept waiting to wake up from the dream, but it didn't happen. It was true. Shane wanted him and he was ready and willing to show Jesse how much any time they were together. And he told Jesse that he was sexy. Beautiful. Even though Jesse didn't really agree, he knew that whatever Shane saw in him was different than what he saw in himself. It made him feel confident. Desired. He'd never had anyone look at him the way Shane did. No matter how hard it was for him to understand sometimes, Jesse was starting to settle into the idea that what they had was for real. Maybe even forever.

They hadn't gone all the way yet. Jesse wasn't in any kind of rush. It would happen eventually. He knew that Shane wasn't a virgin and that he used to hook up with some of the guys at the bars where they played. But Shane hadn't done that since the night they first kissed. It seemed like a millennia ago, but in reality it had only been a little over a month. Jesse wanted to. He thought about it at least five or six times a day. But he still wasn't ready to cross that line. And Shane was so respectful of that, of him. Shane never pushed. He seemed happy to let their relationship go at Jesse's pace. It was one of the many reasons Jesse loved him.

*Love.* Neither one of them had said the word. It was too big, too intimidating, at least for Jesse. Shane had come close once, Jesse knew, but he hadn't been ready to hear it at the time. He'd stopped Shane with a kiss. But the feeling was there, unspoken between them. How could it not be? Shane was the best friend Jesse had ever had. He'd been halfway in love with Shane since high school when he realized there was so much more to Shane than the angry punk that everyone else saw.



Another glance at the clock made Jesse slam his notebook shut and push it aside. He was starting to get nervous. What if Shane had changed his mind? They were supposed to go out for pizza and maybe catch a movie after, just the two of them. It would be the first time since they'd made their relationship official. Maybe Shane wasn't ready for that kind of thing yet. It was a huge step, Jesse had to admit, going out as a couple instead of just friends. But, really, how different would it be? It wasn't as if it was a *date* really. They'd still be Shane and Jesse, hanging out like always. No one else would have to know that they were desperate to put their hands on each other.

Jesse sat up in bed and grabbed the cordless phone from his nightstand. He dialed Shane's number, feeling more and more anxious as the line kept ringing without an answer. Finally, on what must have been the fifteenth ring, someone picked up and spoke softly. "Hello?"

Jesse pressed the phone closer to his ear, gripping it in a suddenly sweaty fist. "Shane?"  
"Oh, hey, Jess."

Jesse swallowed thickly. That wasn't the greeting he'd expected. "Is everything all right? I thought we had plans..."

There was some muffled noise on the other end of the phone, and Shane's voice got even quieter. "I can't tonight, okay? I'll see you at the gig on Sunday."

Jesse blinked. *Sunday*? But that was three days away. He hadn't gone that long without seeing Shane since back in their tutoring days. "But I—"

"I gotta go. Talk to you later."

The line went dead before Jesse could respond. Dazed, he clicked the 'end' button and replaced the phone in its stand. Something was wrong. He could feel it in his gut. Shane had pretty much hung up on him. He'd never done that before. Usually it took them half an hour to get around to saying good-bye and most of the time they had to do the countdown thing and hang up simultaneously or they'd wind up talking until some ridiculous hour of the morning.

Jesse stood abruptly. He was out of his room and halfway down the stairs to ask his mom if he could borrow the car before he came to his senses. He hesitated at the bottom of the steps.

*What are you doing? He doesn't want to see you.*

What would Shane think if Jesse went rushing over there? He'd probably seem like some psycho stalker. But no. Something was up, Jesse was sure of it. They'd met for lunch the day before, between Jesse's last class and his shift at the library, and Shane had tugged him into the

bathroom at the restaurant and kissed him for a few long, sweet minutes before they'd finally managed to pull themselves apart. You didn't just go from that to not wanting to see someone in a day. Not without a good reason. And he had to know what that reason was.

"Mom?" Jesse called into the living room. "Mind if I take your car?"

When he got to Shane's neighborhood, Jesse had to circle the block twice before he found a decent parking space. He was so distracted by his worry that he completely forgot about Shane's warning not to come to the area by himself at night—until he spotted a group of bandana-wearing Hispanic guys who were loitering on the steps of the house he was approaching and one of them got up to block his path.

Jesse slowed to a stop as the guy looked him up and down.

"You lost, *güerito*?"

Jesse just barely resisted the urge to fidget. It was hard under the weight of three different sets of eyes. "No, I'm j-just visiting a friend."

"Yeah? What friend?"

"Shane Ventura."

The guy arched an eyebrow and tilted his head, considering. "Shane, eh? Oh, yeah, I've seen you around before. You're in his band."

Jesse nodded. "Yeah."

"Didn't he tell you? You should be careful coming around here after dark, kid. Some people won't be as nice as we are."

Jesse swallowed and nodded again. "He told me. But he d-doesn't know I'm coming."

The guy smirked and stepped out of his path, gesturing him forward. "Go on. We'll keep an eye on your car for you."

One of the other guys laughed and muttered something in Spanish. Jesse didn't even look his way, just kept his chin up and his shoulders straight and started walking.

It wasn't until he was knocking on Shane's door that Jesse realized how tense he'd been. He pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose and sucked in a shuddery breath as he waited for someone to answer. A few seconds later Nick opened the door with his skateboard tucked under

his arm. He looked surprised to see Jesse standing there, but not as surprised as Jesse was by the sight of him.

The right side of Nick's face was puffy and discolored, his eye swollen almost completely shut. There was a scab in the middle of his lower lip, too, and what looked to be finger-shaped bruising at the base of his throat.

Jesse was horrified. "Are y-you okay?"

Nick immediately went on the defensive. "What the fuck does it look like, genius?" He brushed past Jesse and started down the walkway. "I'm goin' to Dre's."

"Is Sh-Shane here?" Jesse called after him.

"In his bedroom," Nick answered without turning around.

Jesse stepped into the house and closed the door behind him. The interior was dark and mostly quiet, save for the faint strumming of a guitar coming from the back. He followed the sound to Shane's bedroom and knocked tentatively.

"Not now, Nicky," was the muffled response.

Jesse reached down and twisted the knob, opening the door just wide enough to squeeze inside the room and quickly push it shut again. He didn't think Shane's father was in the house, but he was being cautious just in case. It seemed like every time Jesse saw the man he was pissed off about something. "It's me."

Shane was sitting on the edge of his bed with his acoustic guitar in his lap. His head jerked up at Jesse's voice and his eyes went wide.

Jesse's stomach dropped as they stared at each other in silence. Shane didn't look as bad as Nicky, but he wasn't much better off. There was bruising on the right side of his face, from his temple down to the top of his cheekbone, and the area surrounding his eye was a bit puffy.

"Aww, fuck, Jess." Shane turned his head so that the bruised side was hidden. "I told you I'd see you Sunday."

Jesse crossed the room to stand in front of him. He could guess what had probably happened, but he wanted to hear it from Shane. He reached out to take the guitar from Shane's lap and rested it against the side of the nightstand. "I was worried. Tell me what happened. Was it your dad?"

Shane was quiet for a long time. Eventually, he nodded. "Yeah. He caught Nicky with a blunt last night and he went off on him. Fuckin' asshole. Like we don't know he smokes that shit,

too.” Shane sighed and shook his head. “Anyway, I heard what was going on and ran upstairs. I was only trying to stop him, but he thought I wanted to fight.”

“I’m sorry.” Jesse didn’t know what else to say. He’d known that Shane and Nick’s father hit them sometimes, but he’d never seen the evidence before now. He wondered how many times Shane might have hidden it from him in the past. “You and Nicky need to get out of this house. Maybe the three of us should look into an apartment. Nick will be eighteen soon. Your dad can’t keep him here after that, and there are some cheaper ones near campus. Maybe we could—”

He broke off when Shane finally turned his head to look at him again. Shane’s eyes were dark with an emotion Jesse couldn’t read.

“I didn’t want you to see me like this,” Shane said softly.

The shame in his voice hit Jesse right in the gut. He reached out to touch Shane’s face, just below the bruise on his cheek. “Don’t be embarrassed. This isn’t your fault.” Impulsively, he leaned down and brushed a soft kiss to Shane’s temple. He felt Shane shudder, heard his breath catch and then rush out in a shaky exhalation.

“Jess...”

Jesse kissed him again, just the lightest touch on the corner of his mouth. “Shane, it’s okay. You don’t have to hide. No matter what, I—”

Shane’s lips cut off the rest of his words. His arms snaked around Jesse’s waist and tugged him even closer. Jesse groaned into the kiss as Shane’s tongue swirled around his. He threaded his fingers into the silky hair at Shane’s nape and pulled lightly.

It was different at this angle. Jesse wasn’t used to being the taller one. Shane normally towered over him by a good six inches or so, but with Shane sitting on the edge of the low bed and Jesse still standing, their usual roles were reversed. It was Shane who had his head tilted back, Shane whose arms came up to loop around his neck and yank him down instead of the other way around.

They tumbled back onto the bed with Jesse falling on top of Shane. Jesse’s thoughts instantly turned to how heavy he was and how Shane was probably feeling squished and uncomfortable beneath his weight. He tried to pull away but Shane wouldn’t let him. Shane’s hands settled on his ass and kept him locked in place, their pelvises pressed tightly together.

Jesse might have protested if Shane's kisses weren't so very distracting. Instead he gave in to them, kissing Shane with all of the pent up lust and yearning he'd been feeling since he first realized how crazy, head-over-heels in love he was with his best friend. He'd held it inside for so long, never thinking that Shane could fall for someone like him. But there they were, kissing and touching, and it was so absolutely amazing that Jesse thought his heart might just burst in chest from the unbearable sweetness of it all.

They went on like that for long, slow minutes, the kisses getting hotter and hotter, their hands growing more and more desperate, until Shane eventually tore his mouth away and started tugging on the hem of Jesse's shirt. "Off. Want this off."

Jesse shook his head and reached down to still Shane's hands. He didn't want Shane to see his bare chest. He was pudgy. Soft. His stomach wasn't flat like Shane's, and he certainly didn't have a tight little six pack on his abs the way that Shane and Nick did.

*No, I can't. It's too embarrassing.* "Shane, I don't w-want—"

Shane brushed Jesse's hands away and tugged on the shirt again. "Come on. I wanna feel you."

"B-but—"

"I thought we already talked about this, Jess."

Jesse blinked down at him.

Shane's forehead wrinkled. "I mean, don't you get it? I like the way you look. I wanna see you. God, I fuckin' dream about it all the time."

"But I don't...look like you."

"No kidding." Shane rolled his eyes. "I don't want to date someone who looks like me. I want you." He reached for the bottom of Jesse's shirt again and this time Jesse didn't stop him. "Come on, sit up."

Jesse obeyed, sitting upright on the bed. He removed his glasses and set them aside so that Shane could pull the shirt over his head. When he was done, Shane stripped off his own tank top and sent it flying across the room. He didn't stop there, though. His hands went to the waistband of his jeans and he shoved the baggy material down, leaving himself naked except for his navy blue boxers.

Jesse didn't know how he could feel so insecure and yet so turned on at the same time. Shane was perfect, all long, wiry muscle and flawless, caramel-colored skin. Even though he was

almost naked, he lay there looking totally at ease and unselfconscious. Jesse didn't blame him. If he looked like Shane, he wouldn't have any reason to be self-conscious either. As it was, though, Shane's near-nudity made him feel like every single one of his flaws was that much more pronounced.

But when he looked into Shane's eyes he didn't see any judgment there, just heat and longing and unhidden need. Jesse felt bolder in the face of that need. So that when Shane flicked a finger against the button of his cargo pants and gave him a questioning look, Jesse nodded and let Shane undo them. He lifted his hips and let Shane pull them off, and then when Shane curled his fingers into the top of Jesse's boxers and asked for permission, Jesse said that was okay too.

Seconds later Shane's boxers had joined Jesse's on the carpet and they were lying face-to-face on the bed, limbs tangled, completely naked for the first time. Jesse trembled as one of Shane's lightly furred thighs pressed between his own. *Oh God...*

"This okay?" Shane whispered. His fingertips trailed up and down Jesse's spine in a slow, feathery caress.

Jesse shivered and tilted his head back so that Shane could press a kiss to his throat. "Y-yeah."

Shane's hand snuck between their bodies, his fingers curling around Jesse's aching erection. Jesse shuddered at the touch, instinctively arching his back and pressing into the circle of Shane's fist.

"Tell me how far I can go, babe." Shane's lips brushed Jesse's ear as he spoke. His hand had started up a languid stroke that made Jesse's entire body tremble. "I'm not tryin' to rush you, I swear. I just wanna make you feel good."

Jesse swallowed nervously. He wanted Shane to make him feel good. He wanted to make Shane feel good in return. There was so much he still had to learn, and he wanted Shane to be the one to teach him everything. Jesse wanted to try out all of the rest of it, he really did. But he needed things to go slow. "What do you want to do?"

Shane released Jesse's cock and slid his hand over Jesse's hip to cup one of his cheeks. He squeezed lightly, and the feel of that warm palm, and those fingertips, calloused from years of playing the guitar, sent a frisson of pleasure up Jesse's back.

When one of Shane's long fingers traced his cleft and skimmed over his entrance, Jesse couldn't stop himself from burying his face against Shane's neck to hide his embarrassment. He

was breathing hard and he felt like his entire body was blushing. Having Shane touch him there was both scary and exhilarating all at once.

“Do it,” he whispered against the skin of Shane’s throat. “Touch me.”

“Yeah?” The eagerness in Shane’s voice was hard to miss. “You sure?”

Jesse couldn’t bring himself to look up at him. Instead he just nodded and curled one of his arms around Shane’s waist.

Shane pressed a quick kiss to his temple. “Roll over, babe. Lay on your stomach.”

Jesse did as Shane asked and turned his head away to face the wall. Nerves made his pulse race and blood roar in his ears. He felt the bed shift as Shane got up, heard the click of the door being locked and the sound of a drawer being opened. The brightness from the overhead light made him feel exposed, vulnerable. When it switched off and the room was cast into darkness save from the orangey glow from one of the streetlamps outside, he almost sighed with relief. Suddenly the mood in the room seemed so much more intimate and his insecurity faded a bit with the knowledge that his body was partially hidden by the shadows.

Shane settled on the mattress beside him again. Jesse sucked in a sharp breath at the feel of Shane’s long, lean body pressed against his side and a big, warm hand trailing down the length of his spine.

“Tell me if you want me to stop, okay?” Shane’s voice was husky and deep. Jesse shivered.

“O-okay.”

Shane’s hand left his back. Jesse heard him fumbling with something and then Shane’s fingers were between his legs again, this time slick with some cool, slippery substance.

“This is just so it doesn’t hurt,” Shane whispered into his ear as his fingertips parted Jesse’s cheeks and circled his entrance.

Jesse tried not to tense up. He’d never touched himself there, not for pleasure. Not even late at night when he was alone in his bedroom, thinking of Shane and stroking himself off in the dark. It felt strange, but strangely good at the same time. He wanted more.

“Do it,” Jesse said, just loud enough to be heard above the whir of Shane’s fan. He was sure his face was probably bright red. At that moment, he didn’t care. Even if Shane had been able to see him, he wouldn’t have cared. His skin felt hot and needy, as if every single nerve ending craved Shane’s touch, and his erection throbbed, trapped between his body and the

mattress. He wanted to grind down against it, but he managed to hold himself still as one of Shane's fingers slowly pushed inside.

"*Oh...*" Jesse trembled and buried his face in one of Shane's pillows.

"Okay? Need me to stop?"

Jesse shook his head.

Shane slid his finger in deeper. His cock was hard against Jesse's hip.

"Spread your legs a bit." Shane's voice was little more than a whisper, right up next to Jesse's ear.

Jesse shivered and did as he asked. The action let Shane slide his finger even further inside and he touched something that made Jesse jump as if he'd been shocked.

"Oh God, wh-what—" He couldn't even finish his sentence as Shane rubbed that place again, nice and slow. Precum beaded at the tip of his shaft, leaking out onto the comforter. Jesse couldn't stop himself from grinding down into the mattress that time. He needed...gah, he just needed *something*. He wasn't sure what.

"Feel good?" Shane murmured, his warm breath radiating across the sweat-slick skin of Jesse's nape.

"Yeah."

"I'm gonna add another finger, babe."

"K-kay..."

Shane withdrew his finger and slowly added a second. Having two inside made it a little more uncomfortable. Jesse still didn't want Shane to stop, but he whimpered into the fabric of the pillow at the burny-stretch.

"It'll get better, baby, I promise." Shane was thrusting subtly against Jesse's hip, the action mimicking the movement of his fingers as he slid them in and out. "You feel so good. So tight and hot. One day it's gonna be my cock inside you, stretching you."

Jesse shuddered at Shane's words, at the sting of a soft bite on his shoulder.

"Do you want that?" Shane said.

The only answer Jesse could give was a moan. *Yeah*. Yeah, he did want that.

"I want it." Shane nipped at one of Jesse's earlobes, just hard enough to cause a tiny bit of pain. His fingers brushed that wonderful, sensitive spot that made Jesse's entire body quake. "I want you so bad. I wanna feel you come with me inside." Shane's mouth slid down Jesse's



throat. When he reached the base, he paused to suck lightly at the skin above Jesse's racing pulse. "Tell me you want me, too."

Jesse groaned when Shane's fingers flexed. The stretching sensation had gone from discomfort to *oh-God-so-good*. He could hardly draw in a breath to answer, but eventually he managed a few words. "I d-do. I want you."

"You want my cock in you?" Shane moved his fingers and his hips faster, grinding hard against Jesse's side.

"Yes."

"You want me to make you come?"

Jesse trembled, pushing back into Shane's touch. "Y-yeah."

"Look at me, Jess."

Jesse forced himself to turn his head and open his eyes. Shane's face was only a couple inches from his. The light from outside was just bright enough for Jesse to make out Shane's features—his high cheekbones, his lips, still swollen from their earlier kisses.

"You're beautiful," Shane whispered, and then he leaned forward and covered Jesse's mouth with his.

Jesse parted his lips to let Shane in. For the first time ever, Jesse didn't doubt Shane's words. He could tell by the way Shane kissed him, touched him, that Shane really did think he was beautiful. Shane needed him, *wanted* him. It was enough to bring tears to his eyes.

Shane broke the kiss. He was panting and the movement of his hips had gotten more erratic. Jesse could tell he was close. Jesse was too, just from the feel of Shane's fingers and the friction against his cock from the mattress.

"*Jess...*" Shane groaned. "I wanna be your first and your last. No one else but me, ever."

Jesse shuddered. Shane's fingers were buried in him as deep as they could go. He was rubbing and rubbing at that spot, driving Jesse crazy.

"Promise me, Jess."

Jesse tried to talk, tried to think. Shane was making him feel so good, so very good, it was almost impossible.

"Promise me," Shane said again.

Jesse finally choked out an answer, "I p-promise, Shane. No one else but you. Ever."

Shane groaned and shook against him. Jesse felt the warmth of Shane's release on his skin. That was all it took for him to lose it, too. His back bowed and he came, Shane's name tearing from his mouth on a long moan, his eyelids squeezing shut.

When the tremors stopped and Jesse's breathing had calmed, Shane gently withdrew his fingers and rested his palm on the small of Jesse's back.

"Are you okay, babe? Did I hurt you?"

Jesse turned so that he was facing Shane and pressed close. He nestled his head into the crook where Shane's neck met his shoulder and wrapped an arm around Shane's waist. Now that it was over, he felt suddenly shy again, but he didn't want Shane to worry. "You didn't hurt me. It felt really good."

"I didn't push too far?" Shane's voice rumbled under Jesse's cheek.

Jesse pressed even closer. "No. Not at all."

"I meant what I said. I don't ever want anyone else but you, Jess."

"I don't want anyone else either. Only you."

Shane's fingers threaded into his hair. He pulled Jesse's head back and kissed him again, slow and tender and sweet.

"I want to tell the guys," Shane whispered against Jesse's lips. It wasn't the first time he'd mentioned it. "I wanna be with you for real, Jess, out in the open. We shouldn't have to hide."

Jesse closed his eyes. He wanted that too. He was just so nervous about what Nicky and Dre would think, what their parents would think. As much as he wanted it—to be out and proud and tell everyone that Shane was his—he just wasn't ready to take that last step. The thought of it was too scary. "Give me some time, okay? I just...I need a little more time."

He felt Shane's nod. "Okay. But soon, Jess. I'm tired of pretending."

"I know. I promise, Shane. Soon."

He fell asleep to the sound of Shane's heartbeat in his ear. They had the rest of their lives. Shane had said so before. They both wanted the same thing. A few more weeks couldn't cause any harm.

*Soon.*

~\*~\*~\*~

**End**

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Read more about Shane, Jesse, Nick, and the other boys from Luck in [Moonlight Becomes You](#), coming from Loose Id on August 9, 2011. And keep an eye on our blog, [Babes in Boyland](#), for our upcoming giveaway contest and your chance to win a free copy of MBY and some great swag. Come on by. Maybe you'll get lucky!

