

# LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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# THE LONG RETURN

## Jessica Freely

# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## THE LONG RETURN

**By Jessica Freely**

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love Has No Boundaries* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a free gift to you.

### What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what they do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love Has No Boundaries*.

Whether you are an avid M/M romance reader or new to the genre, you are in for a delicious treat.

### Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

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## Photo Description

A stunning African American man in a stylish suit looks over his shoulder at us. He has an oval face with high, chiseled cheekbones, hooded eyes, and full lips. His hair is cropped close to his head. He is frowning slightly and in the depths of his liquid eyes is an expression that could be lust, longing, or reproach.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*We've been best friends for so long. He knows my pains, fears and the little things that bring me delight. One day, I caught him, staring at me, with that look on his face. The very next day, he was gone.*

*It's been fifteen years, and now he's back. Self-made and self-assured.*

*Why did he take off all those years ago? What could he want from me?*

*Sincerely,*

*Alessandra*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** LGBT Youth Center, African American, long-lost lovers, community activism, at-risk youth, reunited, homophobia, in the closet

**Word count:** 11,388

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Bright sunshine flooded through the windows and reflected off the freshly painted walls of the Delany Center for LGBT Youth on Michigan Avenue in Detroit. On a Saturday afternoon like this one, the center was a bright, bustling hub of activity. Kids chased each other up and down the halls and through the lobby, their voices a raucous, welcome soundtrack to the day-to-day chores of maintaining the center. In the laundry room, Director Trevor Davis threw another load of sheets in the washer and grabbed some fresh ones to make up the center's ten beds.

"Trev, Trev! Can I borrow your laptop? I want to show Vivienne your 'It Gets Better' video," Bryan said.

"Yes, if you help me make up the beds first."

Bryan scrunched up his face. His nose wrinkled and brow puckered before the muscles smoothed into a grin. "Okay."

Bryan was fifteen, and homeless. His parents kicked him out of the house three months ago when they found his sketchbook, filled with homoerotic drawings. Fortunately, Bryan found his way to the center that first night, before getting caught up in the cycle of prostitution and drugs that awaited so many young people on the street. Others weren't as lucky. Vivienne, for example. Before she found out about the center, the sixteen-year-old trans woman had been on her own for two years, turning tricks just to get out of the cold.

Trev thanked his lucky stars he had beds for these kids. It hadn't always been the case. In fact, for years they'd only been able to keep the center open on the weekends. There had been no beds, just a couple of couches where those most in need could crash for a night or two before being thrust back out onto the streets.

But for the past five years, increasingly generous donations from the Mathis Foundation had changed all that. They came unsolicited every quarter. Now the center had two dormitories, a vocation center, a kitchen, even a rec room. And they'd attracted the attention of the Community Initiative Coalition, whom they'd be meeting with on Monday about expanding their mission even further.

Trev had written the Mathis Foundation several times, thanking them, telling them what a difference they had made. He'd never gotten an answer, much less an explanation. All the same, this was one gift horse he wasn't about to look in the mouth.

As Trev followed Bryan to the dorms, he paused at the rec room. Carlos and Dean were in there, playing Ping-Pong. Carlos's shot went wild and hit Dean on the forehead. They both broke down laughing. Trev's heart swelled at the sight of kids finally getting a chance to be kids again. That was what the Delany Center was all about.

How many times had he wished there'd been a place like this when he and Shane were young? Maybe, if they'd been around people who accepted them for who they were, things would have turned out differently.

He could still picture Shane at seventeen, all long limbs and big, luminous eyes, but not awkward, never that—graceful, beautiful, with warm brown skin, and a smile that could light up the whole city. Trev, with his dark complexion and geeky appearance, differed from Shane in almost every way. Shane was outgoing; Trev was shy. Shane was athletic; Trev was a bookworm. Shane dropped out of high school; Trev graduated with a full scholarship to Wayne State University.

But none of that ever seemed to matter. Best friends since the age of ten and lovers at fifteen, they were inseparable. At least that's what Trev had thought.

He'd never know why Shane suddenly up and left him. He could still picture that moment at his graduation party when their gazes met across the crowded backyard. The weight of the memory bowed his shoulders down.

It had just been getting on to evening, that time of day when the setting sun makes everything seem magical. The smell of lilacs and freshly mown grass perfumed the air. Trev looked past his Auntie Cecilia, who had trapped him beside the punch bowl, her high, whiny voice buzzing in his ear like a mosquito. “Why don’t you have a nice girl yet, Trevor?”

Shane stood at the gate. His oval face glowed like gold in the warm light. He stared at Trev, his dark-brown eyes half-lidded, unwavering. His full lips turned down at the corners, but Trev couldn’t tell if Shane was angry with him about something or just sad.

Trev broke away from his auntie and wove his way through the throng of sweaty, well-dressed relatives. But by the time he reached the gate, Shane was gone. Trev looked all over and couldn’t find him, not that night and not in the weeks and months that followed. Shane had simply vanished, never to be seen again.

That last look Shane had given him still haunted his dreams. What had it meant? Trev sighed.

“Penny for your thoughts.”

Trev jumped and dropped his end of the sheet. “Oh, sorry. Just woolgathering.”

Bryan narrowed his eyes. “Whatever it is, it makes you sad.”

“I was thinking about someone I haven’t seen in a long time.”

“Well, why don’t you visit him, then?”

“I can’t. I don’t know where he is.”

“Oh. He’s not on Facebook?”

It had honestly not occurred to Trev. Was Shane on Facebook? *Don’t go down that road.* “It doesn’t matter if he is. The way we left things, I couldn’t just message him or something. It’s complicated.”

“‘Complicated’ is what my parents used to call anything they didn’t want to talk about.”



Trev raised an eyebrow. “That might be a hint, then.”

Bryan sighed. They made up two more beds, and then he said, “Do you have a boyfriend, Mr. Davis?”

“That’s none of your business.”

“So you don’t.”

“Bryan—”

“Well, it’s just that Viv and Dean and I have noticed you’re here all the time, working, and you never talk about going out or doing anything exciting. We figure you’re either married or alone.”

“Just because I’m not out every night painting the town red doesn’t mean I don’t have a rich and satisfying social life. Not that it’s any of your concern.” He wasn’t fooling Bryan, or himself. He had no life outside the center. But that was fine. He loved his work. It was important, and he’d rather be here, doing something that mattered, than engaging in another string of empty hookups that only left him feeling lonelier than before.

“Well, I think you deserve someone to make you happy, Mr. Davis.”

“Thanks, Bryan. You’re a good kid.”

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Trev was at the front desk sorting through mail when the door opened. He looked up and dropped the envelope in his hand. The man standing there was fifteen years older and vastly better dressed than he’d been the last time Trev saw him, but there was no mistaking those luminous eyes, or the high cheekbones and arching brows of that face.

It was Shane.

Trev’s heart hammered. How many times had he dreamed of this moment, only to shove the thought down deep inside? How many times had he rehearsed what he would say if he ever saw Shane again? All those words—angry words, joyful words, words of love and desperation—fled in the face of

the living, breathing reality of Shane, standing here before him. Their eyes met and he couldn't speak. He couldn't move.

"It's you." Shane strode toward Trev, grinning. His hair was cropped close to his shapely head. He wore black jeans, a white dress shirt open at the collar, and a black sport coat printed with a white fleur-de-lis pattern. "I can't believe it! It's really you."

Suddenly conscious of his own faded jeans and raggedy WSU sweatshirt, Trev nodded. His mouth hung open. With an effort, he closed it. "Sh-shane."

"Man, how long has it been?" Shane held out his hand, and like iron to a magnet, Trev reached for it. Shane's hand enveloped his in warmth and strength. It felt so good.

"Fifteen years," Trev said. *Make that fifteen years, two months, and three days.*

"You're looking good." Shane still held Trev's hand.

Heat radiated from their clasped palms, spreading through Trev's body. Sweat broke out on his forehead. He pulled away. "Thank you."

Shane reached out and touched one of the tiny, inch-long dreads that covered Trev's head. "I like your new do."

"I've been wearing my hair like this for seven years."

"Oh." Shane took a deep breath and nodded. He looked chastened for a moment, then he smiled. "Your glasses haven't changed, though."

"I got these frames a month ago. I like the retro style." Were they really having a conversation about Trev's hair and glasses? What the fuck was this? What was Shane doing here? Why had he come back after all this time?

"So... you're the director here."

"How do you know that?"

"Says so here." Shane leaned over and picked up the ID badge hanging from Trev's neck. His scent enveloped Trev.

The spicy aroma took Trev right back to their first time together in his old twin bed with the astronaut sheets. They'd been fifteen and in love. "Oh. Yeah." A fierce yearning for the days of their youth awoke in Trev's heart. He fought the urge to pull Shane onto the counter, tear all his clothes off, and have his way with him then and there. What would Bryan say to that? Or for that matter, the assistant director, Carlotta Hernandez, who was in her office preparing for Monday's meeting with CIC?

"It's good to see you," Shane said.

"Yeah?"

Shane nodded.

They stared at each other in silence. Trev forced himself to speak. "Looks like you've done well for yourself."

"I have my own company now."

What a relief to know Shane wasn't destitute on the streets, or dead, even. Trev had never realized how much that fear had weighed on him all these years. In its absence, he almost felt like he could float off the ground. "I'm so glad you're doing well."

"Thanks. You are too." Shane nodded at the center's lobby, a bright room with lots of windows, decorated with artwork from the residents. "This place is great."

"It is. We've really grown in the past five years. We're open seven days a week now, and we have ten beds."

Shane smiled that big, bright, irrepressible smile of his. "The Delany Center, huh?"

Trev couldn't help smiling back. Shane had never shared Trev's enthusiasm for science fiction, but he'd never mocked him for it either. That alone probably would have been enough to make Trev fall in love with him.

"Named for your favorite author, Samuel R. Delany—the first and for many years only openly gay black science fiction author," said Shane.

“You remember.” Something about that made Trev want to cry, though he couldn’t explain it.

“Of course.”

The years between them seemed to dissolve. The words, “Why did you leave me?” were on the tip of Trev’s tongue.

A shout came from behind him, and Vivienne ran into the lobby with Bryan right on her heels.

“I told you if you touched my stuff one more time I’d kick your tranny ass!”

“Hey, Bryan. We don’t use words like that here, remember?” Trev said.

“But he—she stole my magic markers again.”

“I didn’t steal them. I borrowed one.” Vivienne’s lips were bright red. “I was going to give it back.”

“After it’s been all over your mouth? I don’t want it!”

“Fuck you, transphobe!”

“Both of you, just stop right now,” said Trev. “Come with me.” He waved them into his office. “Sorry,” he said to Shane. “I have to take care of this.”

“I’ll wait.”

“Where’s Carlotta?” Trev asked the kids.

“Right here, right here,” said the center’s assistant director, rushing into the lobby with an armful of paperwork.

“Carlotta, this is Shane Edwards, an old friend of mine. Could you give him a tour of the center?”

“Of course.” She beamed at Shane.

“It was good seeing you again,” Trev said. “Take care of yourself.”

Carlotta gestured toward the rec room. “If you’ll come with me?”

Shane looked over his shoulder at Trev. He opened his mouth to say something, but Trev turned away and shut the door.

Trev sorted things out with Bryan and Vivienne and made a note to ask Carlotta to give Vivienne some of her cosmetics. The dispute between them was a welcome distraction, but within twenty minutes both kids had forgotten all about it and gone back to being friends again.

When Trev returned to the front desk, Shane was still there chatting with Carlotta. He leaned in close to her and said something that made her throw her head back and laugh. They both looked up to see Trev. Shane's eyes were bright, and his smile lingered.

"I didn't know you'd still be here," Trev said.

"I am."

Again, silence descended as they stared at one another. Unspoken words seemed to crowd the air, making it hard to breathe.

Carlotta looked back and forth between Trev and Shane. "Um. Well, if you'll excuse me, I've got some more work to do. Lovely meeting you, Shane." She picked up a stack of files and left.

Trev walked up to the counter and leaned on it, facing Shane. *Might as well have this out.* "Why are you here?"

Shane shrugged. It was the same liquid gesture he'd perfected at the age of thirteen. If anything, it was even sexier now. "I wanted to see you."

Now Shane wanted to see him. What about any of the previous fifteen years? "Well, you've seen me."

"And I wanted to thank you."

Trev took a step back. "For what?"

"You inspired me to do something with my life."

Great, now he was a source of inspiration. What was he supposed to say to that? "Well, you're the one who's made something of yourself. I'm proud of

you.” He didn’t feel proud. All he could feel was bitterness over being abandoned. How childish.

The smile Shane gave him was the same one he’d flashed when Trev taught him how to do fractions back in fifth grade. “Really?”

“Of course.”

“Thanks. Coming from you that really means a lot.”

Trev forced himself to smile and held out his hand. “Well, it’s good to see you again.” And it was true, if only to know that Shane was alive and well.

“Great seeing you.” Shane gripped his hand.

All Trev wanted to do was haul him in for a hug that would never end. But it was too late for that. Fifteen years too late. He let go. He turned away and headed back to his office. Tears filled his eyes.

“Wait, Trev.”

Shit. He stopped but didn’t turn around. “What is it?”

“I thought maybe we could get together later. Go out for some burgers or something. Catch up.”

For a moment he was tempted to say yes, but he couldn’t reopen that wound. Just seeing Shane again was painful enough. “Oh, sorry. No, I have plans.” If “plans” meant going home and anesthetizing himself with beer and television, then it was a perfectly honest statement.

Five minutes later, Carlotta let herself into his office. “Who in the hell was that?”

“I told you. An old friend.”

“He’s more than that,” she said.

“What do you mean? What did he tell you?”

She raised an eyebrow. “He didn’t have to tell me anything. I saw the look on your face. He’s an old flame.”

“Very old. And long since died out.”

“Oh, I don’t think so.”

“Don’t be ridiculous.”

“I’m not the one being ridiculous. You looked like you wanted to strip him naked and do him on the reception desk.”

Trev blushed. He picked up a pencil and rolled it between the thumbs and forefingers of both hands.

“And he asked me if you were seeing anyone.”

*Snap!* Trev held one half of the pencil in each hand. “What did you say?”

“I told him the truth.”

Trev threw the pencil pieces down on his desk. “Damn it.”

“You didn’t want him to know you’re single? I thought maybe—”

“Shane Edwards and I were best friends from the day he and his alcoholic ass-hat of a daddy moved in next door to me and my mom. Shane and I were both ten, and he’d been locked out of the house. He stayed with us that night and many more nights after that. When we were fifteen we became lovers. We kept each other’s secrets and tended each other’s wounds. We were going to get out of the neighborhood together and find some place where we didn’t have to hide. Then, on the night I graduated from high school, he disappeared. I never saw or heard from him again until today.”

“Oh, shit. Trev, I’m so sorry.”

“You didn’t know.”

“Still.” She put a hand on his shoulder and squeezed it. “Is there anything I can do?”

He took a deep breath. “Can you cover things here for the rest of the day? I want to go home.” He sounded pathetic.

“Yeah. Okay, but you sure you want to be alone?”

“I’m sure.”

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Trev lay on the couch in his underwear, watching old reruns and working his way through a couple of 40s. He was on his fourth episode of *Deep Space Nine* and his second bottle of Olde English when someone knocked on the door. “Go away,” he said.

“Trev. It’s me,” said Shane.

Fuck. “Go away.”

“Let me in. I need to talk to you.”

Now he needs to talk. “Why now?”

“I’ll explain, just let me in.”

“No.”

“I’m not going away, Trev.” He pounded on the door again.

Trev lay back on the couch and closed his eyes. The pounding continued. This was what he got for staying on in his childhood home after his mom moved to Tampa. Maybe if he finished his beer he’d pass out and wouldn’t hear Shane anymore. But a treacherous little voice in his heart said, “*What do you think he wants?*”

With a groan, he got up and opened the door. He didn’t greet Shane. He just went back to the couch and sat down. “What do you want?”

“Look, I get that you’re mad at me.”

Trev started laughing. He took another drink.

Shane eyed the empty bottle and the clothes piled on the floor. “This your usual mode these days?”

“None of your business.” Trev stood up. He advanced on Shane. “Who the fuck do you think you are coming into my house and criticizing me?”

“I’m just concerned, is all.”

“That’s hilarious, coming from you. You ran out on me fifteen years ago without a word. A day hasn’t gone by that I haven’t wondered and worried about you. Now you’re worried about me? Fuck you!”



“Trev.”

“No. Don’t ‘Trev’ me, Shane. I thought we were friends. More than friends.”

“We were. We are.”

“Oh, hell no. We’re not anything now. There is no ‘we’. You killed that on graduation night.”

“I know, and I’m sorry, believe me. If you knew how many nights I lay awake, regretting what I did. It’s been…” He sighed. “I miss you, Trev.”

“No. You’re not sorry. You don’t miss me. And you don’t get to be the one hurt by this. I am. You hurt me, Shane.” Great, now he was crying. He picked up a bottle for another swig. It was the empty one. He threw it.

It hit the wall and shattered.

“Hey, take it easy, man.” Shane grabbed him by the arms and pulled him close.

Trev fought him, but Shane always had been stronger. He put his arms around Trev and held him close. Even after all this time, his embrace was familiar. His smell, the shape of him—more filled out than he’d been at seventeen yet still unmistakably, uniquely, Shane. A thousand memories from their childhood and teen years flooded in on him.

Trev sobbed against Shane’s shoulder. This had to be the ultimate humiliation. It was bad enough Shane had left him. He had to come back and find him like this. “You fucker.”

Shane stroked Trev’s back and rocked him. “I know.”

The warmth and comfort of Shane’s embrace overwhelmed Trev’s anger. By degrees, he relaxed. Soon, he began to notice how good Shane’s body felt against his—firm and muscular. Trev’s cock twitched. He should push Shane away. He should make him leave.

But he didn’t want to.

He lifted his head and looked Shane in the eyes. Their faces were inches apart. God, those eyes. That mouth. Trev's cock hardened. He leaned closer, pressing his lips to Shane's.

Shane kissed him back, parting those voluptuous lips and drinking in Trev's pain and horniness.

He lost himself in the sweetness of the moment. His head spun. The room tilted around him. He wanted Shane. Now. He wrapped his arms around Shane's neck. He pressed his erection into Shane and began to flex his hips, dragging his hard cock back and forth.

Shane gripped Trev's arms and pulled free from his embrace. He took a step back. "No. Not like this."

"What? Why not? We're both adults." He looked down at Shane's hard-on tenting the front of his jeans. "You want it. I want it. Why shouldn't we?"

"Because you're drunk."

"So what? Here." Trev picked up the remaining bottle of Olde English. About three inches of malt liquor swirled around inside. "You can have the rest."

Shane just shook his head.

"Oh, so now you're too good to drink with me? Your old friend from the East Side? You're all fancy and you can't be associating with me anymore? Then why the fuck did you come here, Shane? Why did you come back?"

Shane ran one hand over his head. "I wanted to see you again. I wanted to try and make up for what I did and see if we could—" He let out a breath. "I wanted to help. But all I've done is hurt you more. This was a mistake. I'm sorry."

He left, and the world made sense again. Lonely walls echoed back the silence of fifteen years. Empty arms vibrated with the same hollow feeling they'd wrapped around for fifteen impossibly long years. Yeah, the world made sense. Trev lay back on the couch and finished his beer.

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Trev slept through most of Sunday and spent the rest of it trying to dispel the lingering effects of his drunk. By Monday morning he felt better, but there were still shadows under his eyes. All he could hope was that the Community Initiative Coalition people would chalk them up to hard work.

Thoughts of Shane still skulked at the back of his mind. Had he gone for good again? Did Trev want him to?

When he got to the center, Carlotta met him at the door. “Shane Edwards has been calling. He left his cell number and his hotel information. He wants you to call him back as soon as possible.”

So, not gone forever. Not yet. That was good. Trev didn’t want it to end in a drunken fight. He wasn’t sure how he wanted it to end, but not like that.

What if he *could* forgive Shane? What if they did get back together again? The memory of Shane’s body against his brought a rush of heat to his face. “I don’t have time for that right now. When are the CIC people due?”

“In a half an hour.”

“We have to set up the lunch room.”

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By the time they’d pushed tables together and set up the PowerPoint presentation, it was almost time for the meeting. Trev put on a fresh pot of coffee, and Carlotta set out some plastic bowls and filled them with peanuts and M&Ms. “One of us should go wait at the front desk in case they’re early,” she said.

“You go. I want to look over my notes one last time.”

She was back two minutes later, looking like she’d just met a ghost. “They’re here.”

“Everything okay?”

She opened her mouth to answer. Before she could say a word, Shane entered. Two other men followed him.

Trev stood up.

Shane held his hands out. “I tried to call.”

“I don’t understand,” said Trev. He looked from Shane to Carlotta to the other two men, one a white guy in his twenties and the other a black man in his fifties.

“This is the CIC project manager, Tony Gregson.” Carlotta indicated the older black man. “And this is Mike Peters, the financial analyst.”

“And I’m the president of CIC,” said Shane, stepping forward and holding out his hand.

Trev took Shane’s hand and they shook. Part of him watched the scene as if from afar. Shane was the president of CIC? That was the company he owned? “I...”

Carlotta said, “This is our director, Trevor Davis. We’re so pleased to have you all here. Now, if you gentlemen will be seated, we’ve prepared a PowerPoint presentation. Can I get anyone a coffee before we get started?”

Thank God for Carlotta. As the graphs and charts of the Delany Center’s financial status and mission implementation flashed on the screen at the front of the room, Trev fought to get his bearings. What in the hell was Shane trying to do? Was the man putting Trev off balance on purpose? Why?

Carlotta wrapped up the presentation by pitching the expansion plan they’d been working on for the past several months. “With CIC’s involvement, we could open two or three more centers in the city and thereby expand our outreach to cover most of the youth LGBT population in Detroit. Such a program is ambitious, and would require a significant commitment from CIC. My question is, just how much is CIC willing to invest in us?”

It was a bold move, essentially demanding that CIC step up with a major investment in time and money. Trev reminded himself there was more at stake here than two hearts that had been broken years ago.

Shane said, “I think we can budget enough for three more centers to be phased in over a period of three years: one in Midtown, another in Palmer

Park, and another on the East Side. That would offer good coverage and give your organization time to grow.”

That was exactly the approach Trev and Carlotta had arrived at as the most sustainable and effective.

“We do have a question about your financials,” said Peters. “Going over the information you’ve provided us, it appears the center’s current operating costs exceed its funding from state and federal grants. The extra support has come from a small private charity.”

At last, Trev found his voice. “The Mathis Foundation, yes.”

“If I may say so, they’ve been extremely generous to you.”

“We have been blessed.”

“And you’ve spent the money wisely, but I did a little research and I was unable to find any information on the foundation. No website, nothing.”

Shane jumped in. “I don’t think that’s something we have to worry about in this case.”

Peters turned to him. “These donations constitute over half of the center’s operating budget. If they suddenly go away, the center’s entire mission will be jeopardized.”

Funny. Shane looked like he wanted to stuff a handful of M&Ms in Peters’s mouth just to get him to shut up. What was that about? “I’m familiar with the foundation in question.”

“You are?” said Trev.

“It’s backed by a very private benefactor, and it’s not going away any time soon.”

Okay. Interesting. How did Shane know that? Still, he’d provided an opportunity to move this conversation away from the subject, and Trev wasn’t about to waste it. “With CIC’s involvement, we won’t be as dependent on donations. Perhaps, with the slow growth plan on the table, we can wean off of them by forming new partnerships with area businesses.”

“Yes,” said Shane. “We can examine that aspect in more detail later, but I think we can all agree that the Delany Center has a proven track record of responsible spending and that this current plan, with the adjustments I’ve suggested, is a sustainable one. I think we have what we need to move forward.” He looked at Peters, who nodded.

The meeting wrapped up, and everyone stood to leave. “Trev,” said Shane. “Can you hang on a minute? I’d really like to talk to you.”

Part of Trev just wanted to walk away, but he couldn’t do that. He had a responsibility to the gay youth of Detroit. Shane Edwards might be heartbreak on two legs, but he was also the president of CIC. Trev didn’t have to like his secretive ways, he just had to work with the man.

And, if he were completely honest with himself, he wanted an explanation for Shane’s disappearance all those years ago. Maybe getting to the bottom of that would help clear the air between them. “Okay,” he said. “Let’s get lunch. You still like barbeque?”

The look on Shane’s face told Trev he’d surprised the man. “Yeah.”

“Come on, then. I’ll drive.” He took Shane to Slow’s, an upscale barbeque place which, for all its trendiness, served some of the best ribs he’d ever had.

“Fancy,” said Shane.

“Yeah, it’s a far cry from Bobbie Joe’s Grits ’n’ Things, but I think you’ll like the food.”

They got a seat in a booth, ordered, and ate.

Shane devoured his pulled pork sandwich and mopped up the extra sauce with a slice of bread. “Listen, I’m sorry about this morning. I didn’t mean to blindside you.”

“That’s why you were calling.” Trev added his last rib bone to the others piled on his plate.

“Yes.”

“And it’s not like I gave you much opportunity to explain on Saturday.” He blushed at the memory of how he’d acted. “You must think me ungrateful.”

“What?”

“The way I’ve been behaving. Seeing you again stirred up a lot of memories. My reaction on Saturday was off base, but now that I know you’re here in a strictly professional capacity, nothing like that will ever happen again.”

“Trev.”

“I appreciate what you’re doing for the center. And I’m proud of the way you’ve made something of yourself and are giving back to our community. Really. You’ve moved on, and so will I.”

“Trev.”

“Whatever was between us back in the day is over. It won’t be an obstacle to our working together. Of course, if you’d prefer, Carlotta can take point with CIC. That way we won’t have to—”

“Trev. Stop. Please. Listen to me. I could have told you about CIC right when I walked into the center on Saturday. I didn’t.”

That was true. “So why didn’t you?”

“Because...” Shane looked down and fiddled with his fork. “I knew how unlikely it was you’d still have feelings for me, but I needed to find out for sure. I didn’t want CIC confusing the issue if there was even the slightest chance you might take me back.”

An invisible hand squeezed Trev’s heart. Was he hearing this right? “You want to get together again?”

Shane pinned him with his gaze. “Yes.”

“Why? I mean, after all this time...”

“Because, in all this time, I’ve never wanted anyone except you.”

An ache arose in Trev’s chest, at once so painful and so sweet he could hardly stand it. He tried to regain his bearings. “But... CIC...”

“Forget CIC for a minute, will you?”

“I can’t. Those kids are depending on me.”

“I promise, whatever happens between us won’t affect CIC’s involvement with the center. We’ll use go-betweens if we have to, just like you said. One way or another, I’m helping—CIC’s helping Delany and that’s final.”

“I don’t know what to say.”

“Then hear me out, please. First of all, and I should have said this the minute I saw you on Saturday, I’m sorry for leaving you.”

Trev’s head spun. “Sorry?”

“Yes. More than words can say.”

Wasn’t this what he’d been waiting to hear for the past fifteen years? “Why did you do it?”

Shane ran a hand over his head and looked down. “Because I knew I wasn’t good enough for you.”

“What?”

“You were smart. You stayed in school and got good grades. You had that scholarship. You were going places.”

“So?”

“The only place I was going was juvie or an early death, probably both.”

“No. You were coming with me, remember? You were going to get your GED and apply for financial aid and we were going to—”

“That was your plan, Trev. If you’ll recall, I never opened a single one of those books you gave me.”

“But—”

“I should have at least tried. It just seemed impossible. And I could see the way everyone watched us. People suspected we were queer for each other. Especially your mom.”

“Yeah. She’s still not all that comfortable with my orientation.”



“Well, she sure as hell wasn’t comfortable with it back then. I can remember the looks she’d give me.” He shuddered.

“You always said you didn’t care what people thought.”

Shane shrugged. “Bravado.”

Trev just looked at him.

“It was all I had in those days, Trev. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve cursed that stupid pride of mine, but honestly? I’m not sure I’d have survived without it.”

Trev leaned forward, bracing his hands on the table. “That was for everyone else, Shane. Not me. Never for me.”

“You’re right. And the judgments of others wouldn’t have made me leave you. Not if I thought for one second I was worthy of you. But I knew I wasn’t.”

“That was for me to decide, not you. You should have talked to me.”

“You never would have abandoned me. I knew that. You’d have stuck by me and let me drag you down with me. I couldn’t stand the thought of that.”

“It never occurred to you that we could both make something of ourselves?”

“No. It didn’t. Not then. It took me a long time to realize it was even a possibility for me.”

“So your answer was to disappear without even saying goodbye? Do you have any idea what that was like for me?”

“I know. It was terrible. I don’t know what more to say except that I was seventeen and I’m really sorry.”

Trev stared at Shane, seeing in him his seventeen-year-old self, cocky and streetwise and secretly hurting. He ached for that boy, but he still wanted to strangle the man sitting in front of him. “Okay. I can see that part. But you should have written me, later, when you wised up. All this time, I didn’t know

why you'd gone, or where. Were you okay or in trouble or alive or dead? Did you still love me or hate me? Had you ever loved me at all?"

"I do love you. I always will."

If only Trev could believe that. If only he could trust Shane. "You've got a fucked up way of showing it."

"I know. I made a mistake."

"It was more than a mistake, Shane. You broke my heart." His chest smarted as if the broken shards were trying to fit themselves back together, only to miss and stab one another instead.

Shane grabbed Trev's hand and gripped it tightly. "And mine. You have no idea. A day hasn't gone by that I haven't thought of you."

Trev tugged his hand back and crossed his arms.

Shane turned his hand palm up. "So many times I wanted to write or call."

"So why didn't you?"

"Because I didn't think I'd be strong enough to stay away if I did."

"And exactly why was staying away so goddamned important?"

"I was ashamed of myself. I wanted to wait until I had more to offer than an apology."

Goddamn Shane's pride. And what about him, pining away all these years? Was there anything more pathetic than that?

Shane caught the look in Trev's eye and flinched. "Look, I left because I felt unworthy. I know it was messed up, but that was the path I chose and I had to see it through. I had to be able to look you in the eye when I saw you again."

"If you think fancy clothes and a lot of money are what make a man worthy in my eyes, then you've never known me at all."

"No. I do know that. But what money can do is important, for a lot of people. Just look at the center. You know, when I see the faces of those kids,

it's like I'm looking at us, like I've been given a second chance. I don't know if I can ever make up for how I hurt you, but if I can work with you to give these kids a better chance than we had, then I'll take that and still consider myself fortunate."

Trev took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He almost expected Shane to be gone when he opened them again—vanished like a ghost. But Shane was still there, still watching him with that look in his eyes that took Trev back to that first day in the backyard, all those years ago. "Well, you've given me a lot to think about."

"Okay. I guess I'll take that over 'I never want to see you again.'"

"We will be working together."

"You know what I mean."

Trev stood. "I have your card. I'll call you if..." He trailed off, not sure what to say. *If I forgive you? If I need a late night shag down memory lane? If I decide I can't live without you?*

Shane nodded, and Trev left. He wasn't proud of it, but part of himself took satisfaction in the fact that this time, he was the one walking away.

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When Trev got back to the center he found Carlotta, Peters, and Gregson still in the dining room, their heads bent over a folder full of paperwork. Carlotta looked up. "Trev!"

The other two saw him and closed the folder. Peters shoved it back in his briefcase.

"What's up?" asked Trev. "Anything wrong?" He almost welcomed the distraction from his tumultuous thoughts about Shane.

"No," said Peters. "Just dotting all the i's and crossing all the t's." He turned to Carlotta. "I think we're good, then?" He glanced at Trev and back to her. "We all have the information we really need?"

Carlotta raised one eyebrow and tilted her head. "I'll be the judge of that."

Peters opened his mouth and then cut his eyes at Trev again. He sighed. “Very well.” He and Gregson left.

“What in the hell was that about?” asked Trev.

Carlotta grabbed him by the arm and ushered him into his office. She shut the door behind her. She stood with her back to it, grinning.

“What?”

“Sit down.”

“You’re freaking me out.”

“It’s the Mathis Foundation. We figured out who it really is.”

“What? You and Peters and Gregson?”

She nodded. “We didn’t mean to. We were looking at the pattern of the donations over time and Peters let slip that the timing and amounts matched CIC’s donations to the East Side Project.”

“Okay, well, that’s an odd coincidence, but—”

“It’s not a coincidence. I did some checking on both East Side and Mathis and their inflows and outflows match up exactly.”

“You mean—”

“One hundred percent of the East Side Project’s inflow comes from CIC, and one hundred percent of the Mathis Foundation’s outflow comes to us.”

Trev’s pulse quickened. “CIC is funding the East Side Project and the East Side Project is funding the Mathis Foundation.”

“Who’s funding us.”

“And Shane’s behind it all?”

“Who else?”

Trev sat back in his chair. “Wow. All this time he’s been supporting the center. Hey, wait, those donations from the Mathis Foundation go back five years. CIC’s only been around for three.”

Carlotta shrugged.

“You think it was still him?”

“Probably.”

“How in the hell did he afford it before CIC?”

“I don’t know.”

Shane still wasn’t being honest with him. He was still hiding things.  
“Damn it!”

“I thought you’d be happy.”

“I don’t know what I am.”

“How was your lunch?”

“Confusing.”

“Oh.”

“He wants me to forgive him.”

“Can’t you?”

“I don’t know. Maybe. Yes, of course. But that’s not all. He wants to get back together again. He says he still loves me.”

Her face lit up. “That’s wonderful!”

“It is?” Why didn’t it feel wonderful? Why did it feel like he was slowly being torn in half?

“Of course, Trev. I mean, obviously you’re still in love with him, so—”

*Oh God.* “Obviously?”

She nodded.

Trev sighed. His whole body felt heavy, like he was stuffed with wet rags.  
“He’s still not being honest. How can I trust him?”

“You can trust him to fund the center.”

“That’s true.”

Carlotta leaned forward. “All this time he’s been funneling money to us. He cares about the center and about you. I think you both deserve the chance to work this out.”

She was right. Was he just being a coward? No. “There’s still something he’s not telling me. I need to know what it is.”

“He’s in room 607 at the Westin,” she said.

Trev took a deep breath. “Right.”

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Trev knocked on the door of Shane’s room. “Open up, Shane, I need to talk to you.”

The door opened and Shane stood there, still in his dress pants and shirt but without the jacket or tie. “Come in.” His face looked puffy. Had he been napping?

The room was tidy but the bedspread was rumpled, like Shane had been lying on it. His shoes lay in the middle of the room, one of them on its side. Shane picked them up and put them in the closet. He hung his head the way he always did when he was upset. “I didn’t expect to see you again so soon.”

Trev sat down on the couch and took a closer look at Shane. The puffiness was mostly around his nose and eyes. Had he been crying?

“Can I get you anything?” Shane said with all the enthusiasm of a condemned man. “There’s the mini bar, or I could call room service.”

“No, thank you.”

Shane took a seat in the swivel chair and turned to Trev as if facing his executioner. “What can I do for you?”

Trev fought the impulse to comfort Shane. He was in the right, damn it. Why should he feel bad? “You can be honest with me. Completely honest this time.”

Shane drew his brows together. His gaze flickered over Trev. “I don’t know what—”

“The East Side Project.”

Shane’s nostrils flared and he stood. He turned away from Shane and looked out the window.

“The Mathis Foundation is you. It’s been you all this time. Nice one, naming it after the famous closeted musician.”

Shane clenched his fists. “How did you find out?”

“Don’t bother about that now. Though I should have known. You always did have a soft spot for that old school music. The point is, you haven’t been honest with me. You’re still hiding things.”

“I didn’t want you to know the money was from me.”

“Why?”

“Because by then I knew I was never going to get over you. I knew one day I’d come back, even though I had no right to expect you’d still be single, or that you’d want me even if you were. If there was a chance for us, I didn’t want the CIC money to be part of the equation.”

“But you were funding the center two years before you even formed CIC.”

Shane stared at him, his mouth open.

Trev pushed on. “You say you want to be a part of my life again.”

“Yes.” For the first time since he’d opened the door, a glimmer of hope brightened Shane’s eyes.

It awoke a similar spark in Trev. One he tried to ignore. “And you want me to forgive you.”

“More than anything.”

Trev forced himself to hold the line even though all he really wanted to do was hold Shane. “I want the same things you do. I want to forgive you, but I can’t do that unless you’re completely honest with me. I need to know everything that happened the night you left, and everything that happened afterwards.”

Shane's shoulders drooped. "Everything?"

"Yes. Including how you were able to make donations to the center before CIC even existed." Trev's stomach knotted. On some level, he didn't want to know.

Shane closed his eyes and let his head drop back.

Just get it over with. "Was it drugs? Is that how you made the money?"

Shane shook his head.

Okay, good. Not drugs. But there were still worse things. "Well what, then?"

Shane went to the mini bar and opened a tiny bottle of scotch. He poured some in a glass and offered it to Trev, who took it in a white knuckled grip. Then he poured himself twice as much and downed it in one gulp.

God. It had to be bad, whatever it was.

"You remember when my father left," Shane said.

"Of course."

"You remember I was looking for a roommate."

"Yeah. Nothing ever came of it. I was just as glad. I liked having you stay with us. I never saw why you needed to—"

"Well, that ad I answered turned out to be a front for something else. This older man met me and bought me dinner. And then he offered me fifty dollars to blow him."

Trev took a deep breath and let it out. So that's what it was. So many things made sense now. His heart hurt for Shane but at least this was something he understood and could help with.

"I took it." Shane's words were hard, like a fist he beat himself with. "And then I answered a bunch more of those ads. Eventually I met a guy who paid me seventy-five to let him blow me." Shane turned away and bent his head. His breath hitched.



“Shane.”

“I didn’t want you to know. I never wanted you to know.” His voice was thick.

Trev went to him. He put his arms around him and held him tight. “Shane. It’s okay.”

Shane didn’t seem to hear him. He broke from Trev. “That’s why I left. I couldn’t stand the shame. You were so innocent. So good. I was a whore. That man—”

“The seventy-five-dollar blow job one?” Trev wished he were ten inches taller and fifty pounds heavier. He’d find that asshole and make him answer for what he’d done.

“Yeah, him. He offered to set me up in New York. I accepted and instead of fifty and seventy-five dollars it was one and five thousand dollars, and it was a lot more than just blow jobs, but I did it anyway. I made money hand over fist. One thing—one thing I did was I always used condoms and I never used drugs.”

That was two things, but Trev didn’t mention it. Poor Shane.

“Since I wasn’t using, I could save my money. A client who worked on Wall Street taught me how to invest. I made some good buys and sold them at the right time, and that’s when I formed East Side and Mathis.”

“Jesus, Shane.” Trev didn’t know how to say how sorry he was, and how relieved that Shane hadn’t murdered somebody or become a pimp himself.

Shane walked to the door and opened it. He looked down at the floor. “Now you know.”

Trev went to him. He shut the door. He took Shane’s hands in his and looked up at him. “Now I know. Thank God. Finally.”

Shane stared at Trev like he had that day they first met, when Trev found him crying because his daddy had locked him out of the house again. Shane furrowed his brow. He looked down at their clasped hands and shook his head. “Thank God? I don’t understand. I told you all of it. Why are you still here?”

Trev pulled Shane close. “You can be so stupid about some things, Shane. Did you really think I’d give a fuck about something like that?”

“But—”

“No. I get that you feel shame over it. For that I’m deeply sorry and I want to help. But for myself? Honestly, I thought it was something much worse. I was afraid it might be something that would change how I feel about you.”

“It hasn’t?”

“That you were a victim of sexual predators when you were young and vulnerable? That’s something you expect me to abandon you over? Christ, Shane, I work with runaway and homeless LGBT youth. What the fuck?”

Shane stared at him a moment and then laughed. “Oh my God, you’re right. What the fuck indeed? I just—” He shook his head. “I don’t know what to say. Once again, you’ve turned my world upside down. How could I have ever put my pride at a higher price than being with you?” He wrinkled his brow and inhaled sharply. “Oh, fuck! I’m so sorry!” He fell against Trev and clung to him. “Shit! All this time, I thought it mattered.”

Trev held him back as tight as he could. “It mattered to you.”

“I should have trusted you.”

“Well yes, of course. Still, you were seventeen. For that matter, so was I. Who knows how I might have fucked it up, given half a chance.” Trev pulled Shane over to the bed, and they sat down.

Shane said, “Remember when we used to lie in bed, facing each other, and we’d talk about all the things we wanted to do?”

“Yeah. I remember that.” Trev scooted up on the bed and lay down on his side. He patted the space across from him.

Shane reclined. They lay side by side, facing each other, and it was as if the years just melted away.

“Do you know how many lives you’ve changed for the better, Shane?”

He didn't answer, so Trev told him about Vivienne, Bryan, Dean, Hampton, Elise, Samantha, Iris, Malcolm, June, and Evander. The list went on and on. Each kid with their own unique story, but all of them with two things in common: Trev and Shane. "You've done good. You've done everything you set out to do."

"So did you."

Trev nodded. "And here we are."

Shane took his hands. "Together."

Trev squeezed back. They both leaned in, and Shane pressed his lips to Trev's.

It was like coming home.

Shane cradled Trev's face in his hands. He devoured Trev's mouth as if it were made of whipped cream.

Trev's cock stiffened. He grabbed Shane's hips and pulled him in close so Shane could feel how much he was wanted. "You're home," Trev said when they broke their kiss. "We both are."

Shane nodded and dove back in for another mouthful of Trev, sliding his tongue between Trev's lips, licking and sucking. Little whimpers escaped his throat.

The needy sounds awoke Trev's own longing. He threw one leg over Shane and wrapped his arms around Shane's chest, holding him tight. "I'm never letting go of you. Never again."

Shane's breath hitched. "Don't. Keep hold of me. I don't ever want to go away again." He trembled.

Trev ran a hand up the side of Shane's face and over his head, stroking his skin and the close-cropped hair on his scalp. "Oh, Shane, what you've been through. I'm so sorry."

Shane shook his head. "I took care of myself, Trev. I get tested twice a year and I haven't had sex with anyone in three years. I'm healthy."

“I wasn’t asking that.”

“You should.”

“But I wasn’t. I need to know if there’s anything I shouldn’t do, or should do, or if you’re up for this, emotionally, I mean.”

“Do you want me?”

“God! Of course I do.” He tilted his hips. “Can’t you tell?”

“Well, I want you, too. Need you. Remember how it was, when we had a fight?”

“We always had to have sex before you could feel like we were really made up.”

Shane nodded. He took Trev’s hand in his and clasped it, raising it to his lips and kissing the knuckles. “Please, Trev.”

Trev swallowed the lump in his throat and started unbuttoning Shane’s shirt. Inch by inch he exposed Shane’s beautiful, sculpted torso. “You are so fucking beautiful. I’ve never been able to get over that. I’ve always felt out of your league.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s ridiculous.”

Trev pushed Shane’s shirt off his shoulders.

Shane’s chest was smooth and hairless, his nipples peaked like buds on a tree in early spring.

Trev dipped his head and ran his tongue over one of them.

“Ah! You are a handsome, sexy man, Trevor Davis.”

“I’m your man. That’s all I care about.”

Shane sucked in a breath and then whimpered again as Trev bit down gently on his tender flesh. He thrust his hips, rubbing his big, hard cock against Trev’s belly. “Want you so bad.”

Trev remembered something Shane said a moment ago. “You haven’t had sex for three years?”

“Yeah. Since I left the life.”

“Then... you haven’t been with anyone since me?”

“Uh...”

“Johns don’t count.”

“Then no.”

Maybe it wasn’t right, but Trev was glad. He unzipped Shane’s fly and drew his cock out. The warm, velvet skin caressed his palm. The weight of it, the shape, the texture—all were known to Trev, as familiar as his own.

Shane gasped. “I’m not going to last.”

“I know.” Trev slid down to suck him.

“Wait. Turn around. Here.” Shane undid Trev’s pants and pulled them down over his hips.

Trev took them off, then knelt and removed his shirt.

Shane skinned out of his pants and tossed them on the floor. They were both naked, except for their socks. “Let’s suck each other off.”

That sounded like a great idea. Trev gripped Shane’s cock at the base. It was magnificent—long, thick, and curved. He kissed the tip.

Shane gasped. He wrapped his fingers around Trev’s cock.

Oh, God. Shane’s hands. No one had ever touched Trev the way he did. His long fingers danced up and down Trev’s straining shaft with the grace and dexterity of an artist.

Trev’s cock throbbed. He wasn’t going to last either. “God, Shane.” He tilted his head and rubbed his cheek against Shane’s warm, velvety length.

Shane licked Trev from base to tip.

Trev curled his toes. Already arousal pooled in his belly, a warm fizzy feeling that spread throughout his body. He opened his mouth and sucked Shane down to the root.

“God!” Shane jerked.

Wet heat enveloped Trev’s cock as Shane took him in his mouth.

Trev swirled his tongue around the head of Shane’s cock, circling in to lap at his slit. The sweet, sharp taste of precum filled his mouth. Meanwhile, Shane’s wet suction on Trev’s cock made the pool of need in his belly simmer. Trev thrust shallowly and pressed his tongue to the cleft on the underside of Shane’s cock head.

Shane moaned. The sound made Trev’s skin tingle all over. He knew that moan. Shane was going to come soon.

Shane bobbed his head, dragging his lips up and down Trev’s shaft. Trev’s balls tightened. He was going to come soon, too. He pulled off Shane and flipped around so they were face to face again.

“What are you doing?” said Shane.

“I want to see your face when we both come.” Trev took Shane in hand and stroked, his fingers gliding over the hot, damp flesh.

Shane opened his mouth, and his eyes went wide. He grabbed Trev’s cock and pumped him.

Trev flexed his hips, thrusting into Shane’s hand.

Sweat glistened on Shane’s chest and ran in little trails down the side of his face. His eyes clouded over with desire. His breath was warm on Trev’s face.

Trev could scarcely believe this was happening. How many nights had he dreamed of this, only to wake up alone?

“Oh God, Trev, I love you so much!” Shane’s cock swelled.

“I love you too.”

Their eyes met.

Desire, heartbreak, and joy mingled together in the pit of Trev's stomach, swirling around until he couldn't tell one from the other. It all boiled over, spilling through him in a rush of warmth and sweetness.

They came together, shooting cum all over each other's chests. Shane pulled Trev close, and they clung to one another through the aftershocks.

Trev closed his eyes and breathed deep the smell of their mingled bodies.

Shane shivered.

"Here. Get up for a sec." Trev pulled the covers down and got in, holding them open for Shane.

Shane climbed in and wrapped his arms around Trev. They lay entwined together, sticky with sweat and cum.

Lightness filled Trev like a helium balloon. He could float right up into the sunny blue sky with Shane, the two of them shocking airplane passengers. He giggled. Had he ever felt like this before? "I think this is the happiest moment of my life."

Shane rested his head against Trev's. "It is mine."

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They must have dozed, because the next thing Trev knew the room was dark and Shane lay beside him, gazing at him with a soft smile on his lips.

"Did I fall asleep?"

"Mmm hmm."

Trev's stomach growled.

Shane grinned. "Room service?"

"Why not? Just tell them to leave it outside the door so we don't have to get dressed."

Shane ordered burgers and fries and, in a fit of guilt, fresh fruit. He threw on a robe to retrieve the food. They picnicked on the bed, feeding each other

fries and throwing grapes at each other. Trev caught one in his mouth and then spit it out at Shane. He hit him in the eye.

“Oh. You’re going to get it now,” said Shane. He picked the tray up and set it down on the coffee table, dipped a fry in ketchup and advanced on Trev.

“What are you doing?” Trev scrambled across the bed. “You’re going to get ketchup on the sheets.”

Shane knelt on the bed and grabbed Trev by one ankle. He hauled him down until Trev was under him, and then he straddled Trev’s hips.

Trev was laughing too hard to resist.

Shane pinned him down with one hand in the middle of his chest and poked Trev on the nose with the French fry, daubing him with ketchup. Then he marked Trev’s forehead, cheeks, and chin.

“Agh! What are you doing?”

“You’ll see.” Shane ate the fry, then leaned over and ran his tongue over the tip of Trev’s nose. He licked Trev’s forehead, cheeks, and chin. His warm, smooth tongue glided over Trev’s skin.

“You’re a freak, you know that?”

Shane, his face inches from Trev’s, grinned. “Takes one to know one, Spaceman.”

Trev lifted his arms and wrapped them around Shane’s neck.

Shane lay down on top of Trev. His hard-on pressed into Trev’s belly.

Trev’s pulse quickened. He spread his legs and wrapped them around Shane’s hips. Already he imagined Shane sliding inside him, fitting into place.

Shane flexed his hips, dragging his cock over Trev’s balls and perineum.

The heat and friction made Trev’s hole pulse. “You got any lube?”

“Yeah.” Shane got up and went into the bathroom. He came back with a tube of Astroglide and a box of condoms.

“A whole box?”



“Why not dream big?”

The thought of Shane buying the big box just for him warmed Trev all over. He took a condom and tore open the packet.

Shane knelt between his legs.

Trev rolled the condom down Shane’s big, beautiful shaft. He traced the vein bulging on the underside. Even through the latex, he could feel the heat.

Shane’s breath hissed between his teeth. He licked his lips. He scooted back and dropped his head down between Trev’s legs. Trev lifted his knees to accommodate him.

Shane painted Trev’s ass with his tongue, stroking and lapping at Trev’s tight hole.

It was like a warm bath to Trev’s long-neglected muscles.

“When was your last time?”

“A year ago.”

Shane pressed the flat of his tongue against Trev’s hole.

Trev quivered against him.

Shane ran the tip of his tongue around Trev’s perimeter.

Trev pulsed in invitation. Shane’s soft, full lips on Trev’s asshole made heat shoot up his body like a column of fire. “Shane!”

Shane speared Trev with his tongue. Muscle to muscle they met, and Trev melted under the onslaught. He bobbed in a sea of desire where ripples of pleasure coursed over and through him.

Shane stroked Trev’s channel with his tongue and reached for the lube. He pressed some into Trev’s hole and then coated his fingers. It was cold, but it warmed up fast. Shane slipped first one and then two fingers into Trev. He turned his hand and extended his middle finger, up, over...

A white-hot bolt of delight shot through Trev. He arched off the bed. “Oh God!”

“I knew I hadn’t forgotten.”

“That’s right.” Trev panted. “You always did know.”

Shane leaned forward and kissed Trev, his fingers still stroking deep inside.

Trev abandoned himself to Shane’s touch, his kiss. Their lips met. Their breaths mingled. Trev lifted his hips, thrusting himself onto Shane’s hand.

With a groan, Shane broke their kiss. “I have to have you.”

“Yes,” Trev said, “you do.”

Shane kissed him again and knelt back between Trev’s upraised legs. He slathered lube on his cock and more in Trev’s ass. Meeting Trev’s gaze, he lined himself up with Trev’s quivering hole and pressed in. Shane filled Trev like love should fill a home, touching everything with warmth and satisfaction.

Anchored by that love. Trev flexed, stroking Shane with his body, reveling in the feeling of that hard length deep inside him.

Shane’s breath gusted across Trev’s face, warm and sweet. He gazed into Trev’s eyes as if he didn’t dare look away for fear all this might evaporate like a dream. But it was no dream. They were here, together again.

Trev met Shane’s gaze. In those deep, dark eyes, Trev saw the boy Shane had once been and the man he’d become. And he saw himself too, then and now.

How far they’d both come.

Shane pulled back and started to move. Each thrust rolled over Trev’s prostate with majestic force. Sparks flew through Trev’s body, gathering at the base of his balls. “God. So good. Oh fuck, Shane!” He realized this was the first time they’d ever been able to be vocal together. Suddenly he wanted to open the window and yell at the top of his lungs. “It’s so good! I’ve wanted you so bad! All this time!”

“I know. Me too. You. Always you.” Shane fucked him harder, pounding Trev down into the bed with each thrust. His cock was so hard and so hot it set

Trev on fire. He wrapped his legs around Shane's hips and thrust up to meet him.

Their words were lost in a frantic tide of gasping. Something incandescent radiated from Trev's belly. He flexed his muscles, wanting to bring Shane with him.

Shane thrust up into Trev and cried out, his hips slipping from their rhythm as he pushed up and in as far as he could go. His cock swelled inside Trev as he came.

The flower in Trev's belly bloomed, and he came in a rush of joy. They held each other close.

Trev exhaled as if he'd been holding his breath since he was seventeen. It was over. That long time of being without Shane was over. Soon it would fade and take its proper place as part of the past. "Here we are. Together."

Shane smiled, and his eyes were just like they'd been when they were thirteen and had kissed for the first time. "Yeah. Finally."

The world made sense again.

**THE END**

## Author Bio

*Jessica Freely can't resist a wounded hero. As a reader and a writer, her favorite stories are of soul mates finding redemption in each other's arms. Married to the love of her life in a beautiful relationship based on mutual goofiness, Jessica also warps minds as an instructor in Seton Hill University's Writing Popular Fiction MFA program. Her dog, Ruthie, doesn't seem to care that Jessica's an award-winning and best-selling author in multiple genres. She just wants to play tug of war with Jessica's pages.*

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