

Shooting Star

Paige just really loved books. She loved the feel of them. She felt like she was holding a little world in her hands, someone's life. All she had to do was open the book and start reading, and she was somewhere else, falling in love with these characters she had just met. She realized in grade school that characters are a lot more likeable than real people. Real people were much more cruel and demeaning.

That was one reason she loved books, or maybe it was that her mom loved books. She remembered days when that's all they would do. She would sit with her and listen to her mother read to her. *Oh, what I wouldn't give to sit there in her arms, with her reading me a story.* Losing her mother at a young age really broke her down. She would lock her herself into her room and cry into her books. She found them as her escape from the real world.

It was no surprise that she grew up to own a small bookstore. *Pages* was her own little slice of paradise. She was surrounded by books and people that had the same love she did. She had plenty of people come in every day, that she could discuss her interests with. It was lovely to be able to do that, but still hadn't met a person she clicked with. She wanted to find the person that could be hers, which she could sit with for hours and just talk without getting bored. She wanted this so bad because there were nights when she would realize that they were just words on a page. All she wanted was for her own 'character' to come and be with her forever.

"I can't reach this book." Paige looked up from her book and over at the elderly lady glaring at her.

"Sorry, ma'am," Paige apologized, and she got up from the worn out chair in the corner. *It's probably unprofessional to run around the store in my socks but oh well.* She got the book

off the shelf. She looked at the book, handling it carefully. *I think this book might be as old as the lady.* She handed her the book, and she looked at her harshly.

Ding. She looked to the door, and watched two men walk in. One was in a long trench coat and he was very tall. The other was short and kind of chubby, with suspenders. They would have been perfect book characters. *The one in the coat could be a lawyer, and the chubby one looks like he would be a detective. They could be meeting to talk about a murder ca...No, Stop it! That's what mom and I used to do.*

Paige looked around the shop and smiled slightly. She remembered the day she found this place. It was really run down, and it hadn't been used for years. The plumbing was broken, there were cracks everywhere, and the apartment upstairs was tiny. She didn't care though, she loved the place. Yes, when she started she knew it would be so much work, but she didn't mind a challenge.

She looked down at the book, and ran her fingers over the pages. *You really are all I have. Dad never approved of this, he wouldn't even come to see it when it opened.* She picked up the book she had been reading that day and walked to bed, trying her best to not cry.

The next day she got ready to go downstairs, and start the day. She walked downstairs, and grabbed her coat and scarf. *Time for my morning routine!* She giggled to herself, and walked next door to the coffee shop. "Good Morning Jeff, I will take the usual," she said, as smiled at him.

"Coming right up," He said, and got her large coffee and a blueberry muffin. She paid him for the order and walked back over to her shop. The first half of the day was so slow. There was one customer, who stayed in the back reading.

That evening, it was just her in the shop. She had an awful headache, and knew it was time to walk down the block to the drug store. As she realized that neither her head was feeling better nor business was picking up, it was time to go. She bundled up in her coat, as an attempt to stay warm in the evening air of November.

As Paige walked to the store, she was thinking about everything under the moon. She was not exactly paying attention to where she was going, when she tripped over something and fell to the ground. She groaned and winced at the pain.

“I’m so sorry, you alright?” She heard a voice say as she pushed herself up. She looked around and seen that there was a man there. He was quite small, tucked in between two buildings, with gorgeous blue eyes.

Paige smiled and couldn’t help but think, *even with the worn out jacket and torn scarf, He would make such a beautiful character, the one you would dream about when you read.* She looked at him and said “Yeah...I’m fine, thanks for asking.”

Paige gave him one last smile and walked on to the drugstore. *What am I supposed to do? I’m not used to meeting beautiful strangers between two buildings. I have never had this problem, this is why I stick to books.* Paige got what she needed from the store and was on her way back home, when she saw the man again. He was in the exact same place, with his eyes shut and his cheeks were red from the cold.

“Are you ok?” she said before she could think about what she was doing. She wasn’t the one to start conversations with people, never had been.

The man opened his eyes and looked up at her. “Oh, it’s you again.” He smiled. “Yeah, I’m alright. How are you?”

She shrugged “I’m alright. Um...Why are you on the ground?” She looked at him concerned.

The man snuggled further into the crack between the buildings. “Because it’s cold out there and the wind can’t get me in here. So, why are you out?”

She was caught off guard by the question and said, “Oh, I was just heading back to my bookstore down the street. Well I guess I better get going.”

“See you around,” he said. She knew it was probably time to leave the poor man alone. Paige smiled and walked on back to the shop. As soon as she got there, she took some medicine and went on to bed.

The next morning, Paige went through her morning routine. When she got back from getting her muffin, she changed the sign to open. She went over and took a seat, sipping her coffee. *Ding. Ding.* She looked up at the door. She wasn’t used to having customers come in so early. When she saw who it was, she froze and just looked at him. It was the boy from last night. He was standing in the doorway.

When our eyes met it was like it brightened things up. Then he said “Hey, I hope you don’t mind me stopping by, it’s freezing outside.”

She smiled slightly and murmured “Not at all,” She watched him look at all the books. She was happy to have him here, she didn’t even know his name, but his company was enjoyable.

He said, as he got a book off a shelf “my name’s Jesse by the way, and yours?”

“It’s Paige, it’s nice to meet you.” She pushed her hair behind her ear and looked at him rubbing his hands together. *What are you doing Paige? You are sitting here watching him freeze, while you have a cup of coffee in your hand.* She said “Jesse, would you like it?” gesturing to the

coffee. He shrugged, but she could tell by the look in his eyes that he did. “Are you sure? I don’t really want it anyway.”

He shrugged again but took the coffee, and took a large drink and said, “You know, I can’t remember the last time I had a warm drink.”

“Well I have this muffin too, if you want it?” She said and smiled, pretty much giving it to him before he answered. He smiled at her and started to eat.

“Thanks for that,” He got up and walked back through the store looking at all the books, until he found one. She picked up the book she had been reading, but couldn’t seem to get into it, her mind kept drifting back to the boy. He sat back there the rest of the day, reading.

This went on for a few weeks. He would come every day and stay until closing, or later sometimes. She didn’t mind though. She really enjoyed having him around. She had gotten used to having someone who would read with her and didn’t want to lose it, anytime soon.

Every night she would ask him to stay in the shop, instead of going back out into the cold. She would sometimes get worried in the mornings, when he was late getting there. She felt comforted, and happy with something that wasn’t just words on a page.

One night at closing, She looked at him and said “Jesse, please stay here.” She hoped that he would, but knew she had never gotten him to before.

“Ok, I will Paige,” he said to her.

She didn’t want to lose someone again. “Jesse…” She mumbled hugging him.

“Yes, Love?”

“Can I be your shooting star?” she said, looking up at him.

He gazed into her emerald green eyes and said to her “Paige, you are already my entire universe.”

In that moment she knew he wasn't going anywhere, anytime soon.

And she was right...