

Encounter: Guitar Boys

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Guitar Boys

When Kenny Lee got home from work, there was an old guitar propped against his apartment door with a note from his mother. The beautiful mahogany top was dusty and dull, and there was only an E string left. He opened the note.

I found your old guitar when I was cleaning out the basement. I remembered how much you used to like playing guitar with your friends and thought you might want to clean it up and play again.

Don't forget I'm leaving for Fiji next week.

Love, Mom

Fiji. He needed a vacation in Fiji. But Kenny Lee couldn't go anywhere. He was forty five and he had a hundred middle-schoolers every day, learning how much fun science could be. This week they were turning trash into worm casings for compost.

He felt his hands slide into place along the smooth neck. He'd been a guitar boy, spent his teenaged years playing the guitar, listening to rock and roll, drinking illicit beer. And every once in a great while, he would find another boy who looked at him with soft eyes, watched the way his hands moved over the strings, reaching out to touch him.

That all seemed so long ago now. The guitar felt as curvy and warm in his arms as a lover, but he looked down at his feet, and he was wearing Hush Puppies, suede, with comfort soles. Good shoes for a man who was on his feet all day, but guitar boys didn't wear Hush Puppies.

He had a spinach and feta salad in the fridge for supper, but he couldn't stand to look at its low-fat, organic green reproach. He kicked off the Hush Puppies, shoved the salad back in the fridge, and picked up the guitar. There was a store on Main and 5th where he could get some new strings.

His feet felt great in moccasins. He'd bought them on an impulse at an art festival a couple of years ago, but hadn't worn them much. Afraid to get their beautiful golden elk skin dirty. The guitar in his hands, moccasins on his feet -- Kenny Lee was starting to remember the boy he'd been at seventeen.

The Old Boise Guitar Company was full of men and boys, sitting on low stools and holding guitars in their hands. A man wearing old jeans torn at the knee and a black fedora smiled at him and nodded. "Looks like you need some strings, my friend."

"Yeah, I do. Don't stop playing, just point me in the right direction and I'll get them."

The man held out his hand. "I'm Ben James. Have you been in before?"

Kenny Lee shook his head. "No. I used to play, but I gave it up. I can't remember why right now."

Ben James was a good-looking forty, with a black moustache and big black eyes. Kenny Lee looked down, and laughed out loud at the man's Hush Puppies.

"What? I'm on my feet all day!"

"I just changed out of mine when I got home from work. They made me feel old."

"You're just a baby. Cool moccasins."

"Thanks." They looked at each other a moment longer, and Kenny Lee couldn't mistake the interest in the other man's eyes. It had been so long he wasn't sure he knew

the steps to this dance anymore. Did guitar boys still get it on like they used to? Did anybody even say "Get it on" anymore?

"Why don't you let me string that guitar for you?" Ben held out his hand, and Kenny Lee handed the guitar over. "Oh, she's a pretty one," Ben said, running his hands over the curves. "A Fender."

"Yeah. I got home from work today, and my mother had left it outside my apartment door. I think I put it in the basement when I was twenty."

"She's worried about you," Ben said. "Wants you to get out and have some fun."

"Is that what it is?"

"It's noisy out here. We can't talk with the store full of these boys playing sad country songs. Come on in the back and we'll string this baby." Ben grabbed a handful of steel strings, and Kenny Lee followed him.

There was a little studio apartment, and Ben gestured for Kenny Lee to sit down while he settled the guitar on his foot and started pulling out strings.

"You live back here?"

Ben looked up and smiled. "Yeah, I do. I couldn't give up the guitar when I was twenty, like you did." He shook his head. "I keep trying to find a way to make a living with a guitar in my hands."

"You're still doing what you dreamed about when you were a boy. I admire that."

"What do you do?"

"I teach science at the middle school."

"Good God."

Kenny Lee laughed. "I love it, really. I just have to be good, you know? I've got a lot of young eyes on me, watching."

Ben nodded. "Yeah, I can see that. If it's important, you do what you have to do." He set the guitar aside. "You want a beer?"

"Sure."

Ben brought a couple of bottles of Alaskan Amber from the fridge, then pulled the guitar back into his arms. "Let's get this baby tuned. Then maybe I'll play you a song." Ben looked up at him, pulled the fedora off. His hair was black and wavy, caught at the back of his neck in a ponytail. He grinned, and Kenny Lee caught a glimpse of a wicked dimple in his cheek. "I'll play you a song for a kiss."

Kenny Lee caught his breath, a tingle snaking its way down his belly. "Okay."

Ben smiled down at the guitar, his clever fingers moving over the strings. He sang a country song about wild hearts, and second chances. And then he put the guitar aside and stood up, walked to where Kenny Lee sat on the couch, drinking his beer and smiling up at him.

"I haven't done this in a long time, Ben."

Ben pushed his knees apart. "It's been a while for me, too," he said. "The guitar boys have gotten a little young for me. I've been looking for a grownup man. Maybe I've been looking for you."

Kenny Lee reached out for him, put his hand flat against Ben's chest, hunger filling his belly. Ben pushed him back and took his time smiling down into Kenny Lee's face. He tasted his mouth, sweet warm kisses, beer flavored, like all Kenny Lee's best kisses. "I don't have anything you need to worry about," Ben said, moving his fingers down the soft skin of Kenny Lee's throat. His fingers were rough from guitar strings, the tips hard with callus.

"Me, either," Kenny Lee said. "You got any condoms?"

"Nope. How about you?"

"Nope." He laughed, tugged Ben down and kissed him fiercely, let their tongues tangle, passion flowing like a river down his chest, into his belly, filling his cock. "I just came for the guitar strings, baby."

"That mean we've got to take it slow?" Ben pulled his shirt open. "Oh, nice," he said, and Kenny Lee closed his eyes, felt warm mouth and soft moustache and rough tongue across his nipple, then Ben sucked him in between his teeth.

He was hard in his jeans, felt Ben's cock through faded denim pressing into his. "I feel like a teenager again, making out on a couch, humping through a couple of pairs of Levis."

Ben slid a hand down between them, flipped open the button on Kenny Lee's jeans, slid the zipper down. "Let me just have a taste," he said, and bent his head over Kenny Lee's belly. Fingers rough with callus slid down his cock, and Ben rubbed his soft lips across the head of his cock before he took him into his mouth. Kenny Lee felt thumping heat between his legs, and he was thrusting into Ben's mouth, rough, splashing his semen deep in Ben's throat, fingers tangled in soft dark hair.

Ben rested his head on Kenny Lee's belly. "You're not gonna disappear, are you? Take your guitar and go back to your real life?" His voice sounded wistful.

Kenny Lee stroked the hair back from Ben's face. "No, I'm not. Not if you want me."

"I want you."

"I'm gonna let you get back to your shop. Can I come tomorrow night?"

"Yeah. Spend the night if you want."

"Okay. But I better go now," Kenny Lee said.

Ben sat up, nodded. "Yeah, okay."

Kenny Lee was halfway down the block, waiting for the evening air to cool his face when he realized he'd left the guitar. He walked back down to the store, pulled open the door. Ben was leaning against the counter, his black hair tumbled around his shoulders, mouth swollen, dark eyes a little sad. He looked at Kenny Lee and smiled. "You forgot your guitar," he said.

Kenny Lee pulled him into his arms, kissed him like he'd been missing the taste of his mouth forever. Ben held on to him, hands fisted in his shirt. The guitar boys in the shop set up a whoop and a cheer. "I didn't come back for the guitar."

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