

Love Me Forever by Sloan Parker

(featuring Sean and Gavin from [SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN](#) and [IT SAYS LOVE](#))

Length: 5,541 words

The flicker of an old dream flashed through my mind.

No, not a dream. More like a memory. From before Gavin admitted he was in love with me.

We were living on the streets, running from a trick who'd paid for both of us. He wanted one of us to kiss him while the other blew him. We'd taken the money, but when the guy threaded his fingers through my dark, unruly hair and pulled me in for that kiss, Gavin lost it. He shoved the man against the brick wall and shouted at him to get his fucking hands off me.

The guy wrenched out a serrated pocketknife in response. I tugged Gavin away from him, and we took off running down the alley toward the back of the public library.

Then the dream was gone, and I awoke to find I was still behind the wheel of my car, now driving off the side of the road, heading for a giant evergreen tree that someone had decked out in Christmas lights, large red and green bulbs twinkling in the darkening of day to night.

There was no time to do much of anything but slam on the breaks and instinctively brace myself for the inevitable. Snow-covered pine needles scraped the car's side windows and doors, and tree limbs bent around the windshield. The front bumper of the car slammed into the trunk of the tree with incredible force. The airbag exploded before me, and that was it. I was out again.

I came to as the driver's side door was being wrenched open. Someone tugged me out through the snow and mass of pine needles and tree limbs. I could hear the voices of the EMTs amid the haze of confusion. Pain radiated down my body as I was lifted

onto a gurney. A female EMT who looked me over as we drove to the hospital had kind eyes and spoke in a soft, soothing tone that reminded me of my grandmother, despite the EMT's proximity to my own age. I listened to her voice and tried not to let panic overwhelm me. Hard to do with what I'd just let happen.

Once in the ER, they asked me for a contact number and gave me something for the pain. Time and the buzz of activity around me became a blur. There were questions and scans, blood tests and needles.

When I was finally left alone for longer than five minutes, I drifted off to sleep again.

The next time I awoke, I was more aware and alert, less shell-shocked, but also in far more pain. My shoulders, neck, back, every inch of me ached. It would've been better had I stayed asleep during the crash. My muscles would have been nice and relaxed at the moment of impact with that tree.

With careful movements, I took inventory. Everything was still there, still moving. Arms, legs, fingers, toes. You don't give your toes too much thought on any given day, but it's sure the hell nice to know they're still there, still functioning when there was a chance they might not be.

I blinked rapidly, my eyes adjusting to the brightly lit room. I was still in the ER, the curtains now drawn closed over the open doorway of the exam room. I knew I wasn't alone any longer, even before I saw him.

Gavin sat in a chair beside the bed. He had his head down, elbows propped on the mattress beside me, his forehead resting in his palms. I lifted my arm. Not an easy task with an ache and stiffness that felt like thirty pounds of added weight. I settled a hand on the back of his warm neck.

At that contact, Gavin jerked his head up. His eyes were wide and held the look of real fear as he took in the sight of me, but the minute those green eyes made contact with mine, the relief was palpable.

He tried for a grin. Nothing like his usual, casual smile. "Hey, kid."

He hadn't called me that in such a long time that I couldn't help but attempt a return smile. "What happened?" I croaked out as I let my arm fall back to the bed.

"You were in an accident. But you're gonna be fine. You just got banged up pretty good. There's no head injury, which was their fear since you got knocked out."

It was coming back to me. The doctor who'd talked to me earlier said I had a cracked rib and a series of massive hematomas on my chest and right knee. But there were no other broken bones or damaged organs.

Gavin laid a hand over mine. "They just want you to stay a little longer for observation. I would've been here sooner, but I was asleep and didn't hear the phone ring."

I glanced at our combined hands at my side. "You wouldn't let him kiss me. Or touch me."

"What?"

"Nothing." I closed my eyes for a moment, then opened them again. "It's nothing." Something left over from another life. A life I couldn't forget. But one I'd never take back, even if that were possible, because it brought me Gavin. I sucked in a long, steadying breath. "I feel like someone used me for a punching bag." I laughed. Gavin didn't.

He rubbed the back of my hand with both of his thumbs. "Your grandparents are on their way. They were antiquing in Michigan. It'll be a couple more hours before they get here."

"Are they okay?"

Gavin scoffed. "*They're* fine, Sean." He paused as if he had to collect himself before continuing. "I made sure they understood it wasn't serious." Something like anger radiated off him. Which made no sense. He loved my grandparents, spent quite a lot of time with them without me there. I threw aside the concern. I could only imagine how worried he'd been when he'd gotten the call from the hospital stating I'd been in an accident. I turned my hand over and squeezed his. "I'm okay."

“Yeah.”

I studied him for a moment more, then let my eyes fall shut again, but I threw them back open when a thought slammed into me. “I didn’t hit any other cars?”

“Just a tree. The tree hit you back.”

I laughed, harder that time, and instantly regretted that action.

Gavin’s brows drew together in concern. “Hurts?”

“It’s not too bad.”

“The nurse said they can give you a stronger dose of pain medication if you need it.”

“Nah.” The meds had made me groggy, and I didn’t want to sleep anymore. Or dream. “I’m sorry about the car.” We only had the one. Gavin used it at night to get to work at the grocery store where he stocked shelves on third shift, and I drove it to school during the day and to my part-time hours at the store in the late afternoons. “Is it in bad shape?”

“I haven’t seen it yet.” He shook his head. “It doesn’t matter. That’s why we have insurance, right?”

Which was going to be more expensive because of me. “At least I got my paper turned in before all this.”

Agitation exploded across his face. He let go of my hand, got up, and went to stand at the foot of the bed, his back to me, his hands shoved into the pockets of his jeans, his entire body stiff and straight as he stared at the curtains across the doorway.

“Gavin?”

“Yeah?”

“Are you mad at me?”

He spun around in a rush, a look of shock on his face as if what I’d asked was the stupidest question in the world. The expression slowly faded, though. He sighed and returned to stand beside the bed, eyeing me for a long moment. “I’m not mad. I’m

just..." His head fell back, and he examined the ceiling as if it would give him the answer to my question, or he needed a minute to calm down, or to come up with the right words. Then he looked to me again. "You know why this happened. You can't keep—" He stopped, visibly swallowed. He held still for a moment more then dropped into the chair beside the bed. "Let's not talk about it now." He reached for me again and held my hand in both of his. "I'm just really glad you're okay."

I nodded, and a long stretch of silence passed between us.

Eventually he sat back and spoke again. "The hospital talked to your mom."

Despite the pain, I snapped my head in his direction. "What?"

"I guess someone who works in the ER knows her. The nurse who was in here earlier wanted you to know that this other person mentioned calling your mom. I think they're worried because it's a violation of your privacy or something." He paused. Maybe he didn't want to ask, but then he added, "Will she come?"

I shook my head, but the throbbing in my temples had me stopping that action before I got far. "No way."

"Good," Gavin said in relief. The one thing he hated about living in my hometown was being near the parents who'd rejected me. A week after we first moved in with my grandparents, Gavin asked me to make a list of the places I thought my parents might still frequent in town. At first I had thought it was so we wouldn't go to those locations and I wouldn't have to accidentally see them, but it became clear as we talked more that it was Gavin who wanted to avoid them. Which had me wondering, what was he afraid he'd do if he ever saw them? I didn't ask.

I still blamed my parents for everything that I'd had to do to stay alive on the streets. Every blowjob I gave while kneeling in a piss-reeking bathroom stall, every random guy who'd fucked my ass like he owned me.

If Gavin blamed my parents too...

I forced down a dry swallow. "Can I have something to drink?"

“I’ll check.” He stood and left through the part in the curtains, moving with clear agitation in his every step.

I stared at the pale blue pieces of fabric covering the open doorway that separated me from the rest of the world. Gavin loved me, and there was nothing he wouldn’t do – and no one he wouldn’t go after – to protect me.

Only this time there was no one to blame for my pain. Just me.

* * * *

“Goddammit, Sean.”

The slam of our apartment door followed Gavin’s hard, angry voice. He strode toward me where I sat on a stool at the counter that separated our kitchen from the informal dining room. I had books, handwritten notes, and my laptop splayed out on the counter before me.

I knew I had stayed up late studying, but I had no idea it was already morning and time for Gavin’s shift to end. He was still getting home at his usual 7:15 a.m. Our car had been too wrecked to fix, but we were borrowing my grandparents’ second car, a brown sedan that was nearly older than I, until we could find a new vehicle with the insurance money. We hadn’t gotten much since our car wasn’t worth a lot. It would take time to find a used vehicle in our price range that wasn’t a piece of junk. With his third-shift hours at the grocery store and my preparations for final exams, the search was made even slower.

Gavin stopped in the kitchen and propped his hands on the counter before me. “You are supposed to be getting some rest.”

“I will.” He worried too much. The accident had been over three weeks ago. There was no residual pain with normal movement, and the bruises were fading. “I just wanted to finish going over this chapter on marginal analysis. I keep missing questions about it on the study quizzes, and the final’s this Friday.”

Gavin shook his head and turned away. He went to the refrigerator and got out eggs and cheese, then a bowl and a frying pan from the cupboard. He moved to the

counter next to the sink and started cracking eggs into the bowl, forcefully chucking the shells into the sink, each one further shattering on impact. "Did you sleep at all?"

"I laid down for a while last night." I'd just been too worried about the exam to actually sleep, but I left that part out. "Gavin, I have to get a C or better on the final to get an A in the class."

He finally stopped with the eggs. He gripped the edge of the counter in both hands and stared down into the bowl of floating yellow yolks. "Sean, you can skip that exam and still pass the class. Your professor even said that when I talked to him after your accident to tell him you were going to miss his next lecture. Isn't passing the class what matters?"

"I don't just want to pass." I couldn't even fathom getting a B or worse. "We're breaking into study groups in class today, and I wanted to be prepared."

Gavin turned to face me. "You're going to class *today*?"

I checked the time on my laptop. Still a couple of hours until I needed to leave. I closed the lid on my computer. "I'll go get some sleep right now."

He stared me down for a moment more. "Okay." He turned back to the bowl of cracked eggs and began whisking. I left him to it.

In the bedroom, I stripped down to my underwear and crawled under the blankets. I was tired. Exhausted, actually. My eyes drifted close with ease. A moment later the bed dipped, and Gavin's warm body pressed in close along my back. He'd also gotten undressed, and the bare skin to skin contact felt amazing. His arm came around my middle, and he laid his hand carefully over my stomach.

I wanted to roll over and hold him, kiss him, caress his body with mine. It had been weeks since we'd been together like that. Long before the accident. Usually when he got home from work, I was asleep, and when I was awake later, I had to study or work. Then it was his turn to sleep.

As if he noticed a slight change in my breathing or sensed my desires, he whispered in my ear, "Just sleep, Sean."

“Okay.” I was quiet for a moment, then softly added, “It won’t be like this forever.”

He kissed the back of my neck and snuggled in closer. “No, it won’t.”

* * * *

I closed the apartment door behind me and sank back against the wood surface, sighing in relief. I was done. My last exam had ended an hour earlier, and I was pretty sure I’d aced it. Now I had three weeks off until the next semester started and only a few extra shifts at work that I’d picked up. A weight lifted from my chest. I felt like I could breathe again.

“How did you do?” Gavin’s voice floating out of the darkness of the apartment startled me. As my eyes adjusted to the dim light, I could see he sat at the table in the small open dining room just off the kitchen. The only light in the apartment was the faint cloud-covered sunlight filtering in through the patio door beside him.

There were boxes stacked at his other side with our two gym bags perched on top. I had no idea what he was up to, but the sight of all those boxes had my stomach churning.

I started toward him. “Why are you up? You have to work tonight.”

He didn’t answer until I sat across from him. “I’m not going in tonight.”

“What?” He never missed work. *Never*. “Are you sick?”

“No.”

“Oh, okay.” I pointed to the boxes. “What’s all this?”

He reached onto the seat of the chair beside him and lifted a small brown box. “I found these this morning. I needed a new razor so I looked in the last drawer on your side of the vanity. They were in the back inside this box. Which means you were hiding them from me.”

I watched as he lifted one item after another out of the box and set everything on the table. Eleven cans of the most potent energy drink on the market and four prescription bottles filled with various forms of amphetamines.

I expected him to ask where I'd gotten the pills. The names on the prescription labels certainly weren't mine. Shame overwhelmed me. I knew damn well that the guy in my econ class who'd sold them to me had probably stolen them. Or someone else had. At the time I hadn't cared. All that mattered to me was the reason I wanted them. I needed something to help me stay awake while I studied. It was my first semester taking classes full time, and I couldn't fuck it up.

Gavin let go of the last bottle he'd been clutching since he set it on the table. "All I want to know is..." He met my gaze, his stare intense, hurt, furious. "Have you been taking all this shit before you drive? Were you on these pills the day you crashed?"

"No! I got them *because* of that day."

"So, you fall asleep behind the wheel one time and this—" He gestured to the pills and other items on the table between us. "This is your brilliant solution? How about getting some more fucking sleep?" He shoved away from the table. The chair legs scraped along the floor, adding to the sound of the odd, sharp anger of his words. He stood and spun to face the glass door overlooking the evergreen trees in the yard behind our apartment building. "I'm sorry."

He was sorry? "For what?"

"I should never talk to you like that." He faced me, then looked to the boxes sitting next to the table as if he had to see them to remember what he'd packed inside. "Christmas Eve is in two days, and you haven't said anything about decorating the apartment."

It took me a moment to adjust to the shift in conversation. "I figured we could do that tonight."

“It’s not something I thought you’d put off this long. It was your favorite part of last year and moving in here together. You loved putting up the tree with all the ornaments from your grandma.”

I couldn’t stand that he was going on about a tree and decorating the apartment. I wanted to know what the hell he was really thinking and what he’d packed in those damn boxes. Then I got a better look at the stacked brown boxes beside the table. They were the Christmas decorations he was talking about, the ones we’d stored in the back of the hall closet last year. Each box was labeled with my own handwriting.

I met his gaze. He was carefully watching me. I indicated the two gym bags on top. “What’s in the bags?”

“Some of our clothes and shit.” He came back to sit across from me. “I got us both three days off from work. I was hoping you’d come with me.” He paused as if to emphasize his point. “We need to talk, but not here.”

“Where?”

A slight grin formed at the corners of his mouth. “That part’s a surprise.” He grew serious again and held very still like he had to carefully consider his next move. “You always say that I saved you that night we met when I walked up to you in the alley. Well...” He stood and held his hand out for me. “I’m not letting you destroy yourself. Not now. Not after everything you went through to get here.”

* * * *

The sun was almost setting when we reached our destination. I gaped at the view before me. “We’re staying here?”

“Yeah.” Gavin turned off the car’s engine.

Twenty minutes earlier, just after we’d turned off the highway on to a remote dirt road, Gavin stopped at a general store. It was the kind of place that sold a modest supply of groceries, staples like Pop-Tarts, two-liter bottles of Mountain Dew, and what looked like whatever fresh roadkill the owner had managed to scoop up on his way in to work, and where every morning a group of local elderly men gathered to sit at a table

in the corner, chew their tobacco, and share the latest town gossip. Gavin had spoken to the bearded gray-haired man behind the counter, clearly having talked to him on the phone earlier, and retrieved a set of keys to the place where we'd be staying for the next three days.

The store, the owner and his missing front teeth, the group of old men in the corner spitting chaw, none of it added up to what I was now looking at: a grand yet charming one-story log cabin in the middle of a forest, no other buildings in sight. Only trees and snow and a quiet stillness unlike anything I'd ever experienced.

Gavin spoke again. "I saw pictures on the rental site. It's pretty great inside. Cozy. There's a fireplace in the living room and a hot tub on the back deck overlooking the lake."

Soaking in a heated tub with freezing temperatures and snow all around sounded crazy but also decadent. I couldn't wait to try it.

The elegant cabin situated in the middle of nowhere looked like the kind of home rich people built as a vacation spot. Someplace they'd stay for two weeks out of the year when they needed to "get away from it all." It had to have cost a fortune to rent, even for just three days. "How did you..." I gestured to the cabin.

"Your grandparents helped. It's their gift to us this year."

"Staying here was their idea?"

"No. I went to talk to them this morning, told them what I wanted to do, and..." He stared out the front windshield. Snow had started falling, adding to the white stuff already covering the ground and trees, and giving the cabin an even more serene quality. "I asked them if they could take back any gifts they'd gotten us and help me with this instead."

"*You* went to them?" He was not the kind to ask anyone for help. Ever. Yet he'd gone to my grandparents twice now over the past two years, and this time, I knew it was more about me than him. That fact, more than anything else he said or did, told me

how much he loved me. He was willing to do the thing that was hardest for him, turn to someone, trust them with his vulnerability. For me.

As if he could hear my thoughts, he said, "You need this, Sean."

Did I? Just sitting there in my grandparents' sedan alone with Gavin, surrounded by the quiet tranquility of the forest and the falling snow had me feeling at ease like I hadn't in months. I did need this, and it meant the world to me that Gavin had known that.

He tipped his head toward the cabin. "Come on. Before we freeze out here."

We unloaded the car, including the boxes he insisted we bring along, and headed inside. We had the artificial tree up and decorated in no time, the blue ornaments from my grandma carefully perched on the limbs. Gavin lit a fire and made us hot cocoa, and both gestures only added to the intimate, inviting feel of the place. We sat on the sofa facing the fireplace, the twinkling lights on the tree beside us casting alternating colors of blue, green, and red across Gavin's face as he watched the flames of the fire. He had a last sip of the cocoa, set his mug down, and reached for mine, which he placed beside his on the side table. He opened his arms, and I slid into the embrace, resting my head on his chest.

We were quiet for a long while, and it felt amazing not to think or worry or memorize facts, just to sit and be and breathe with him. He was definitely right. Until that moment, I hadn't realized just how much I needed a break. From everything.

His voice was soft when he finally spoke. "You don't have to work so hard, or try so hard all the time, Sean. We're going to be okay."

"I know."

"No. You don't." He shifted us around until we were sitting up, facing each other. "You don't have to get a hundred percent on every damn paper, on every quiz and exam. You don't have to be perfect every single moment of every day."

“I know that. I just want to make sure I don’t screw up this chance. I have to graduate and find a good job. So we can have health insurance and dental coverage and a retirement plan and –”

He reached up and cupped my cheek. “You will. You’ll get a great job. I know it. But no matter what, we are not going to end up on the streets again.”

I shoved his hand away. “You don’t know that for sure.” I pushed off the couch, went to the fireplace, and stoked the fire with the metal poker. The fire blazed brighter. I kept jamming the sides of the logs, and sparks shot out every which way. If I wasn’t careful, I was going to catch the cabin on fire. I eased up.

I heard Gavin get off the couch, and then his arms came around my middle. He pressed his lips to the side of my head. “You are never going to have to go back to that life. We have people who care about us here, and we’re both working. We’re going to be fine.”

I nodded.

He held me tighter. “The only man who’s ever going to touch you like that again is me.”

I shook my head as I wrenched out of his hold and faced him. “It’s not about me. Don’t you get it? I can’t stand the thought of *you* going back there. Of someone touching *you*. I can’t stand thinking about all that shit you did near the end to keep me from having to turn tricks. You let –” I stopped to catch my breath. “You let that one guy hurt you. Choke you.” I had to stop again. The old man he’d spent a week with, his last trick, had paid Gavin for the privilege of tying him up. He hit him. He wrapped a scarf around Gavin’s fucking neck and choked him during sex. “He could’ve –”

“Hey.” Gavin reached for me and tugged me into his arms. “It’s over.”

I wrapped my arms around him and sobbed into the skin of his neck, the tears flowing and my body shaking without my consent. I couldn’t stop any of it. He’d put a crack in the dam, and there was no halting the onslaught now. Apparently I’d put off dealing with what we’d been through for far too long.

Gavin stroked the back of my head and held me close. "I'm okay, Sean."

I pulled back and wiped at my eyes. I searched his face, needing to see the truth as well as hear it. "Are you sure?"

He leaned in and pressed our foreheads together. "I've never been more okay. Or happier."

An audible sigh of relief escaped my lips.

He drew me into his arms once more. "No one will ever touch me like that again. Just you. Always you."

I held him in return until the intense emotion passed and I could speak again. I shifted back and laughed. "You want me to tie you up and spank you?"

The corners of his eyes crinkled up with one of the biggest grins I'd ever seen from him. When his laughter died off and the grin faded, he watched me with those intense green eyes. "I just want you to love me. Forever."

"Done." I cupped the back of his neck. Our lips met, and a rush of desire and emotion surged through me. Like the first time he'd kissed me.

I parted my lips, and his tongue brushed the tip of mine. He groaned and grabbed onto my hips as he kissed me deeper, harder, with more hunger, all the while moving his mouth over mine slowly, sensually. He turned us and backed me to the couch, trailing kisses down along the side of my neck as he went, his hands gripping, clutching like he couldn't get enough of me, like he'd been almost dying without this contact between us.

He laid me down on the couch, stripped away his clothes, then mine, lightly brushing his lips across each remaining bruise on my skin as he slid off my shirt, pants, and underwear. He made his way back up my body and paused with his lips over my bare stomach. "You okay to do this?"

"Oh God, yes. The bruises don't hurt anymore." I glanced down my torso at the remnants of what my stupidity had done to me. "They just look ugly now."

He surged up over me. "Nothing about you is ugly." He came forward as if he was going to kiss me again, but he stopped with his lips less than an inch from mine. "I love you. So damn much. And I don't want anything to ever hurt you again."

I didn't get a chance to promise him I was done with the pills, to tell him what he meant to me. He captured my mouth in a smoldering kiss that lit a fire in every part of me.

"Gavin..." I wanted him with even more intensity and desire than the first night we were together in that hotel room two years ago. I needed him in a way I couldn't even comprehend back then. It was more than sex, more than loving him, more than wanting, for once in my life, to be with someone I cared for. It was all of that and more now. Because I understood how far he'd go to be with me, to keep me safe, to stay rooted in one place and build a life with me. Everything he was afraid he could never offer someone. He'd given it all to me.

He was staring down at me, like he was still amazed I was in his life, that he was the one who got to be with me in that cabin.

I held his face in my hands. "I love you, Gavin." I spread my legs and wrapped them around his hips. "Don't hold back."

And he didn't. He thrust against me, his hips moving in long, slow stabs, his cock sliding along mine, brushing my sensitive flesh with each drive of his hips, his total focus on me. He moved faster and faster and groaned. It wasn't long and he was close.

He held himself up with one arm and reached for my hard shaft, teasing the tip with the pad of his thumb, then gripping the length and bringing me along with him. The sounds of our bodies coming together again and again and my uncontrollable breathy moans as he rocked against me drowned out the snap and sizzle of the fire.

I came first, my body surging up under him. I clasped on to his upper arms as the release rushed through me. Before my spasms of pleasure let up, he moved against me again. He buried his face in the side of my neck, snapped his hips faster, and then came with a long, muffled groan.

We were both breathing heavily, clutching each other, saying more with that lingering embrace than we ever could with words. Eventually, with a heavy sigh of satiation, he shifted off me and tugged me into his arms. I laid my cheek against his chest.

We were quiet for a time. I ran the tips of my fingers over the warm skin of his upper body, moving my touch back and forth, back and forth, just loving him. I turned my head and kissed his bare skin. "Thank you," I whispered.

He swept a hand through my hair. "For what?"

"Bringing me here. Making me see I've been worried about everything for nothing."

I could hear the smile beneath his words. "You're welcome." He wrapped both arms around me again, and we lay watching the glow of the fire as it pulsed and popped and warmed us. Contentment and peace like I'd never known settled over every ounce of me.

Gavin's voice was soft and full of love when he spoke again. "Merry Christmas, Sean."

"Merry Christmas, Gavin." I sighed and smiled against his skin, and I knew... Everything was going to be okay. "God, I love Christmas."

Copyright (c) December 2015 by Sloan Parker. This short fiction features Sean and Gavin from [SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN](#) and [IT SAYS LOVE](#).

About the Author: Award-winning author Sloan Parker writes passionate, dramatic stories about two men (or more) falling in love. Sloan enjoys writing in the fictional world because in fiction you can be anything, do anything—even fall in love for the first time over and over again. You can learn more about Sloan and her writing at www.sloanparker.com.