A Change in the Weather AU (inspired by Cacophonylights's A Change in the Weather)

by Lady Divine (fhartz91)

Summary

This is an AU ending to Cacophonylights's story 'A Change in the Weather'. I was approached by some fans to write an ending, and after a lot of hoop jumping (which included getting in contact with the author herself) I was given permission to right my own twist on the ending, starting from where the original left off. A copy of her permission can be found http://cacophonylights.livejournal.com/tag/blanket%20permission.

I acknowledge that the story A Change in the Weather DOES NOT belong to me, not the story or the original characters or their story line. I am writing this for the fans and in honor of the author. The only thing I take ownership of is what I write.

Notes

Since Cacophony has mentioned that she will be continuing her story at a time later to be determined, what you will read from me will be ENTIRELY my AU. I do know how her ch 23 was supposed to go and have (as some of you do) 100 words from that chapter. I thought it would be silly for me to follow her vein since she’s going to write it herself anyway. The one thing I am adopting from her notes is her story arc. She had two story arcs planned. The first one ended in ch 21. That story arc was ‘miscommunication’. The second story arc in an equal number of chapters was to be ‘communication’. And then an epilogue.
So what you can expect from me is around 21 chapters based on the arc theme ‘communication’. What does that mean? That means, basically, this is the point where questions will be answered and secrets/intentions/motives will be revealed. We will get a confrontation with Blaine at some point. I am giving Kurt and Sebastian a week at the beach house to work through their relationship before any real s**t hits any proverbial fans.

As for the question of an ending, I’m not giving anything away except that Cacophony’s intention was that this was ultimately a Kurtbastian story. That’s mine as well. So even if things go wonky, that’s where it’s headed. How it gets there is another story.

- Inspired by A Change in the Weather by cacophonylights
- Inspired by A Change in the Weather (full story on LiveJournal) by Cacophonylights
Chapter 23A

The muted sound of the waves pounding on the surf invades Kurt’s dreams. It starts out as a soft symphony that punctuates the quiet moments between Sebastian’s kisses, and sings to him long after his eyelids flutter shut and he drifts away to sleep. But the constant ebb and flow persists, waves chasing one another in a constant dance, culminating in a crash against the shore that is almost too loud to be soothing. But exhaustion wins out, and he finds himself swiftly transported to that place where he can review the events of the day from a safe distance, with a tiny dash of the surreal and the bizarre thrown in.

All through the night, Kurt has powerful dreams, so vivid and full of sensation that even when his eyelids open and part the veil between awake and asleep he has a hard time deciphering real life from fantasy. Once or twice in his dreams, time turns back and instead of Sebastian lying beside him in bed, Blaine is there, sleeping deeply, hazel eyes shut behind tan eyelids, a mop of dark curls creeping down over his brow. It’s not that he has any desire at the moment to travel back in order to be with Blaine, but that past seemed simpler at the time, his future seemed so assured.

In a single, horrifying dream, he wakes up alone – completely and utterly alone. In this dream, he has no future.

As night inches towards daybreak, Kurt’s eyelids start to drift open at almost half-hourly intervals. They sweep around the room, over the unfamiliar furniture, focusing on the large glass windows with their view of the turbulent ocean, then the sky as it passes through gradients from dark to light by miniscule increments, finally settling on Sebastian, just to reassure himself that yesterday was real, and that this incredible boy was a part of it.

Kurt smiles as he realizes Sebastian is more than just a part; he’s more like the linchpin. He gave Kurt this opportunity, and not just to spend some time away from his problems in this gorgeous house on the beach, but a chance to try something exciting and new; a chance to lose his heart all over again – this time to Sebastian.

Something about the sound of the waves crashing outside the bedroom window calls to Kurt. He assesses his current situation as the fog in his head lifts and the last traces of dreams are blinked away. He had fallen asleep partially tangled around Sebastian’s body. At some point they had pulled apart, but their hands had found each other and held on tight, fingers laced together beneath the thick, down blanket. Kurt catches a glimpse of Sebastian’s sleeping face and smiles. The handsome countenance of the sleeping cynic looks so young, so unexpectedly innocent, with just the tiniest hint of his true nature hiding in the curl of his lip, even in sleep. Kurt would happily spend all morning in bed with Sebastian, but the pushing and pulling of the water, its unceasing movement, and the muffled roar of the rushing tide all prompt him to move.

Kurt carefully stretches his sore limbs, shivering when his exposed arms breach the warmth of the blanket and are immediately assaulted by the chill air. With an internal groan at his own damned stubbornness, he slides from the blankets, inch by inch, trying with concerted efforts not to budge Sebastian as he sleeps. Kurt squeaks when his feet come in contact with the ice-cold floor. He claps a hand over his mouth, watching Sebastian’s face for any sign that he might wake up. Sebastian takes a deep breath, muttering something so unintelligible that Kurt can’t discern a single syllable. Then his face relaxes, and Sebastian is sleeping soundly again.

Kurt patters on soundless footsteps to the windows and gazes down at the water. An early morning fog has settled, a light patch of gray obscuring the horizon, filtering the light from a bright orange sun promising a hot summer day. He considers for a moment the swing sitting on the private porch,
swaying back and forth in the breeze coming off the water. It conjures daydreams of sitting with a steaming hot cup of coffee warming his chilly hands, a brand new issue of Vogue on his lap as he takes a perfect first sip and sighs, a tiny cloud escaping his lips as his hot breath meets the cold in the air around him. It sounds so appealing that he almost gives in, but no.

It was the sound of the waves that called him from his sleep.

He quickly changes his pajama pants for a pair of skinny jeans, smiling to himself at the memory of the last time he stripped down to his underwear in front of Sebastian. Granted Sebastian was sleeping now, so maybe it doesn’t exactly count. Kurt might have to find a way of bringing it up later, tease Sebastian about what he missed, just to see his reaction. Kurt eschews his trusty pair of Doc Martens in favor of the feeling of the cold, loose sand slipping over his feet. Besides, the sand would provide a touch of natural exfoliation for his somewhat neglected feet, which couldn’t hurt. The last thing he grabs is the hoodie Sebastian leant him, which Kurt had conveniently forgotten to return, relegating it on his mental ‘to do’ list somewhere between graduating from NYADA and becoming a Broadway sensation. This time, with only himself to witness his moment of weakness, he brings the fabric of the sleeve up to his nose and inhales deeply, closing his eyes to better appreciate all the scents that clearly belong to Sebastian – a faded trace of lilac-scented laundry detergent, a spicy hint of Sebastian’s cologne, and a subtle tone of chlorine. Kurt had refused to wash the hoodie. He didn’t want to erase those smells, so strongly linked to memories; memories of Sebastian’s dark eyes as he watched Kurt lick tequila off his body, of talking dirty in Sebastian’s ear and hearing his sinfully delicious moan, of Sebastian admitting he wanted to take care of Kurt, and of the two of them spooning in bed as they drifted to sleep.

Kurt takes one last look at Sebastian, curled on his side with a single arm outstretched, hand covering the spot where Kurt once lay. Kurt resists the urge to brush the hair from his eyes and peck a small kiss to the smooth, tan skin of his forehead. Another urge bubbles up within him, the urge to wake Sebastian up and ask him to accompany him down to the beach. But Kurt needs this time; he needs to get a little perspective.

The first step out of the house and the brisk ocean air slaps Kurt in the face, waking him up immediately. He rethinks his decision with only a second of hesitation before he trudges ahead, retracing his steps from the previous evening until he reaches the sandy path and follows it up the gentle rise that leads to the water. And suddenly, there it is. Kurt hadn’t expected it to take his breath away quite so much as the first time, but it does. The wind whips around him, and gets notably stronger the closer he gets, until he’s leaning into the wind to keep from being pushed back. The sand beneath his feet gets more hard-packed and colder. Small droplets of salty spray cling to his clothes as well as the exposed skin of his face and hands. He decides to stop far enough from the water to avoid being surprised by a sudden powerful wave or unexpected rise in tide. He plants his feet into the ground, burying his toes beneath the wet sand, and stares in silent wonder at the spectacle before him.

Kurt watches the water move, gaping ridiculously at its immense power, swaying slightly with the waves as the white cap rushes for him, and then backs away. Losing himself in the churning waves is so cliché. He refuses to make it a metaphor, refuses to make it into anything more than what it is. But watching the ocean seems to have a strange, calming effect on him, as if the push and pull are actually within him, helping his heart pound, keeping his breaths even. His thoughts become clear, and he examines his life from this new starting point.

He pictures a blank slate set against the lightening sky and tries to fit the pieces of his life into place, moving them around until they make sense. Before the gala and Cooper’s ill-timed confession, Kurt had been marking time by what was left of the summer and Blaine’s homecoming, which Kurt originally dreamt would be full of tearful kisses, confessions of undying love, and long
stretches of time alone to get ‘reacquainted’ with one another. Now all that planning and pining is moot. His new timeline takes him to the end of summer, and when he gets there, a whole new crop of questions and problems will confront him. NYADA is the big one, of course. There’s no way he can take $10,000 from Sebastian…not now. It wouldn’t matter if it is payment for being a fake boyfriend, or a loan (if Sebastian or his family offered). Kurt would definitely and politely decline, even if his heart did shatter into a million pieces and blow away like dust.

And what about Sebastian? Kurt suddenly feels like a heel realizing that through all this - even as their relationship crossed the bridge from casual archenemies, to sort of frenemies, to friends, to this more that they have as yet to assign a label to, Kurt never thought to ask. He had so many opportunities, but the question simply didn’t occur to him. An intelligent young man like Sebastian - a success academically, athletic, with an affluent family - surely has plans, most likely at some expensive, prestigious university. Harvard, Stanford…what if he decides to attend college abroad? Kurt can picture Sebastian walking the grounds of some picturesque campus nestled somewhere between the romantic mecca of Paris and the rolling French hillsides, taking study dates in quaint little cafes while speaking fluent French with an almost intimidatingly handsome and statuesque man with a name like Pierre or Francois…

Kurt gasps, sucking in a sharp, deep breath of crisp morning air, unaware until just that moment that he has been holding his breath while self-doubt crept into his brain and spun the most painful story it could weave, stringing threads from his own fears of failure, connecting them to his ever-lingerling self-doubt, and wrapping around his occasional questioning of his own appeal. Kurt Hummel knows he’s a star. He just wants the chance to convince others likewise.

He sighs, not looking forward to the prospects of a year left alone in Lima – no NYADA; his friends gone, following their respective paths; and no Sebastian.

What started out as Kurt’s morning of calm reflection has quickly turned into Kurt Hummel’s pathetic pity party of one, and if there’s one thing he loathes, that’s self-pity. He wants to forget about his life and his future for a little while. He longs to climb back up to the house, burrow beneath the covers with Sebastian, crawl into the safety of his arms, and snuggle against him. He finally feels like he belongs there. But with a slight brush of his fingertips beneath his eyes to scrape away some bothersome grains of sand, Kurt realizes to his own disgust that he’s been crying. He doesn’t relish going back to the house and having to explain why he woke up early to explore the beach just to return in tears. Sebastian would have a field day, and normally Kurt wouldn’t mind. In fact, on any other day, moping over any other problem, Kurt would be grateful for the distraction of a good-natured bitch fight.

But not today. Not with this particular problem.

Kurt knows he can’t dodge this forever. Sebastian can drive their happy asses up and down the eastern seaboard and back in his sexy red Mustang, but sooner or later, it will all catch up with him. Kurt needs to hash it out, needs to trust Sebastian with the complete, unabridged and unedited story of Blaine and NYADA and the future.

Kurt comes to a decision – probably an extremely selfish decision, but he’s pleased with it. It makes him feel better, hopeful; in a pithy greeting card message sort of way, he finally believes that everything will be all right in the end.

He grants himself a week’s reprieve – one week to focus on little more than making a go at a relationship with Sebastian. Kurt Hummel is on vacation – the first honest to God vacation he’s had all summer. Everything up till now has been such a chore – crying and not sleeping and acting the part of the dutiful boyfriend – it all felt like a job.
He changes his focus and now breathing seems easier, his shoulders seem lighter. The sun is higher in the sky, burning off the fog and sweeping the grey away. Kurt takes another deep breath, one that stings less, letting it fill all the voids and collapsed crevices of his lungs until his entire body feels cleansed. He wipes his eyes one last time, declaring the discarded tears of woe to be the last he will shed this week, and slips his hands back into the pockets of the hoodie, surprised to find another pair of hands filling the space, startlingly warm against Kurt’s frigid skin.

Kurt’s smile is automatic, ingrained in his blood, like shivering in response to the cold, or crying during the bittersweet beauty that is The Notebook. Kurt knows these hands – they held onto his while dancing, and all night long in the dark while they slept. The simple act of holding hands will always be at the top of an ever-growing list of Kurt’s most-loved intimate acts, and the hands holding his in the pocket of the hoodie are quickly becoming his favorite.

“I thought maybe you changed your mind and took off,” a rough, gravelly voice confesses, and spaghetti God up above if Sebastian’s voice doesn’t sound completely debauched first thing in the morning. Kurt can hear Sebastian’s patented smirk coloring his voice, but Kurt can detect another tone, too. A small layer of anxiousness, like maybe Sebastian truly thought Kurt had run off and left him.

“Really?” Kurt turns his palms up in Sebastian’s hands, and Sebastian laces their fingers together.

“A-ha,” Sebastian responds, all trace of anxiety exorcised from his voice as he pulls Kurt closer to him, giving Kurt his warmth. “But you left your phone by the bed, and all your clothes, and since those are two things I know you can’t live without, I figured you were either out here, or you’d been kidnapped.”

“You don’t seem like you were too worried,” Kurt huffs, lifting his chin defiantly, unintentionally lengthening the column of his neck.

Sebastian takes that as an invitation to press a soft kiss to the delicate skin beneath Kurt’s jaw, right against the spot where his pulse thrums visibly through pale skin. The kiss is tentative at first as Sebastian waits for Kurt to pull away, but Kurt doesn’t. In fact, he leans into the kiss, a silent request for more please, and as Sebastian continues to talk, he pecks a line down to Kurt’s shoulder. These kisses (Kurt counts fourteen of them total) aren’t heated, not too bold. Just tiny brushes of skin against skin, innocent and undemanding, but they still manage to make Kurt tremble, something he can pass off as a reaction to the cold even though Kurt’s sure that Sebastian knows better.

“I’ve seen the muscles on you, Kurt. I’m pretty sure you can handle yourself,” Sebastian mutters against Kurt’s neck between kisses, and he does feel the shift in Kurt’s skin as he trembles after each feather-light touch, watches with darkening green eyes as goosebumps bloom, but he doesn’t say anything, opting to store the information for later. “Besides, I figured one wrong move, they ruin your perfect hair, and they’d be done.”

Kurt giggles, trying hard not to move too much, not wanting to discourage Sebastian in any way from continuing the trail he’s created. Sebastian moves back up Kurt’s neck, and Kurt can’t help the way he shifts to accommodate, his body moving of its own accord to chase Sebastian’s lips, nor can he help the tiny gasps and whimpers a touch to certain sensitive spots elicit, and Sebastian back tracks to cover those spots again. Sebastian kisses slowly towards Kurt’s mouth, lips parted, waiting, beckoning, but at the last second Kurt flinches, throwing a hand up over his lips to stop him. Sebastian leans back, startled by the gesture, and stares accusingly into Kurt’s wide blue eyes.

“What…you don’t want me to kiss you?”
Kurt hears the edge of self-doubt in Sebastian’s question, just a thin thread of vulnerability that tugs at Kurt’s chest, twining through his heart and squeezing.

“No!” Kurt says quickly, his voice muffled by the press of his hand against his lips. Sebastian lets go of Kurt’s hands and steps back, visibly hurt. Kurt turns his back on the ocean, catching up Sebastian’s retreating arms as he attempts to wrap them back around his waist. “I mean, yes, Sebastian. Yes, of course, I want you to kiss me, it’s just that…”

“Just what, Kurt?” Sebastian demands a little more than asks, his jaw set tight, his back rigid and unyielding, eyes fixed a bit above Kurt’s head at the pounding surf. Kurt sighs and finally takes a good long look at the young man in front of him, standing barefoot in the sand, still dressed in his pajama pants but with a navy blue Dalton hoodie pulled over his torso. The hood is down, and his hair hasn’t quite been brushed – probably just carded through with tired fingers – but it has such an attractive devil-may-care quality to it. He looks so dressed down, so comfortable, and it warms Kurt’s heart that he gets to see Sebastian like this, even if at this particular moment he is scowling hard enough to boil the sea. Kurt bites back the urge to call Sebastian a drama queen, realizing he might not be up for the taunt.

“I…I didn’t brush my teeth yet this morning,” Kurt stammers, hoping to sound as apologetic as he feels. His admission breaks through the steel of Sebastian’s grimace, and he cracks a slight smile, turning his eyes down to meet Kurt’s, crowding back into his personal space and tightening the circle of his arms.

“That’s okay,” Sebastian murmurs, inching closer to Kurt’s lips, eyes trained on the spot where Kurt is worrying his bottom lip between his teeth. “I brushed before I came down here…”

“Wait,” Kurt interrupts, looking at Sebastian, his voice suddenly cross, “you thought I might have run away or been kidnapped, and you stopped to brush your teeth before you came looking for me?”

Sebastian rolls his eyes fondly, nipping the tip of Kurt’s nose.

“I saw you from the window, doofus,” Sebastian chuckles, “so I was already sure you weren’t in any danger. Anyway…I brushed my teeth, and rinsed with that disgusting antiseptic shit that burns the inside of your mouth and scalds every nerve ending on your tongue. Ergo, through the transitive property of oral hygiene, I think I’ve got us covered.”

Sebastian smirks triumphantly as he moves in, confident that he has squashed all of Kurt’s objections. Kurt holds his breath, waiting until Sebastian’s mouth hovers close enough to feel the cool of his breath tingle his skin.

“But, I’m not sure that’s how transitive properties work,” Kurt mutters quietly, the words sliding in tiny puffs across Sebastian’s lips.

“Hummel,” Sebastian says firmly, making his point exceptionally clear, “just shut the fuck up and kiss me.”

Sebastian doesn’t let Kurt object this time, and Kurt doesn’t dare try, because this kiss is perfection. There’s no other way to describe it. Sebastian’s lips are still warm, not suffering the same exposure that Kurt’s have, and they slot against Kurt’s flawlessly. There’s no awkward readjusting, no comical mishaps where noses bump together. They fit seamlessly, like they were made to kiss each other, and moments like this were already written for them, waiting to be played out on beaches, in parks, beneath trees and in the rain. They just had to find them together.
And then Sebastian’s hands move - one slipping into the back pocket of Kurt’s jeans, just barely able to sneak into the tight fabric; the other traveling up Kurt’s back and cupping the nape of his neck. With strong, sure fingers, Sebastian works at the muscles there, massaging in circles and why, oh why hasn’t Sebastian done this before?

Because, Kurt realizes, this experience is new for Sebastian. He’s experimenting, discovering what it’s like to read someone’s body in a different way than he’s used to. Kurt’s hands move, too, not content to sit lamely on Sebastian’s hips. He slips them beneath Sebastian’s hoodie, toying at the hem of his t-shirt. Sebastian doesn’t break their kiss, but nods subtly against Kurt’s forehead. The pads of Kurt’s fingers brush bare skin, and he feels Sebastian’s breath hitch in his throat. In his mind, Kurt can isolate the exact moment when he stole all the air from Sebastian’s lungs with a single touch of his fingertips. This new-found power makes Kurt heady, his cheeks flushing when he slides his hands up the muscular lines of Sebastian’s back and Sebastian moans into Kurt’s mouth.

Kurt is more than a little flustered, unsure of what to do or how far to go, only vaguely aware that Sebastian has a hand shoved in the back pocket of his jeans, outside in broad daylight, but Kurt can’t find it in himself to care.

“So,” Sebastian whispers against Kurt’s lips, unwilling to pull away much further, “is this something we do now?”

“What’s that?” Kurt asks, happy to remain within kissing distance of Sebastian’s talented mouth.

“Make out in public,” Sebastian mutters, as if the answer was painfully obvious.

“I would hardly say we’re making out in public,” Kurt argues. “Nobody’s even here.” Kurt’s eyes shift left to right, darting down the length of sand that he can see without turning away from Sebastian’s face. “Uh…why isn’t anyone else here?”

“Well, babe, it’s barely past six in the morning, for one. And another thing is this is a private beach.”

“Private beach?” Kurt stammers. He can barely wrap his mind around the excessive wealth he’s already seen from the Smythes, but this…he never even knew someone could own a beach, except for those islands in the Pacific that always seem to be for sale, and even then, not unless you happen to be Tom Hanks. Kurt is not so awestruck that he can’t appreciate the appeal of a private beach, and suddenly another number from his bucket list springs to mind - #71 ‘Sex on a beach’.

“Yeah,” Sebastian laughs gently, that genuine laugh that Kurt loves so much. “Well, mostly private, for a couple of miles at least until the sandbar catches up to the Crystal Coast. Atlantic Beach is separated from us by a short chain link fence and a sign. People jump it from time to time.”

Sebastian lifts his head to the sound of irregular splashing in the surf, and raises an eyebrow as his gaze drifts off to a point somewhere behind Kurt’s head.

“Like, apparently, those Amish chicks over there.” Sebastian gestures with his chin to a spot Kurt can’t quite see when he turns his head. His small squeak of confusion prompts Sebastian to turn Kurt’s body slightly. Kurt sees two girls, no more than sixteen years old, waving like giddy fools in their direction, and dressed in the most tragically drab grey linen dresses Kurt has ever seen. They are dancing barefoot in the wet sand, letting the waves chase them up the beach, and then rushing to follow them back. Kurt cringes when he notices how their hemlines are quickly soaking up the salt water, knowing the fabric will be ruined when it dries, though in the end that may be a blessing
in disguise. But despite the flaw in their fashion choices (and yes, Kurt realizes that basically they have no say in that department), they look so blissfully happy, so free, charming Kurt with their infectious laughter.

“Rumspringa,” Sebastian says, pressing Kurt’s back against his chest as he folds Kurt in his arms.

“Gesundheit,” Kurt quips back.

“No. They’re here for rumspringa.” Sebastian places a kiss lightly in Kurt’s hair, and Kurt leans back to mold himself against Sebastian’s body. “If they piss us off, we can ask them to go back over the fence, but they probably won’t stay for long anyway.”

“It’s okay,” Kurt says. “What’s that?”

“What’s what? A fence?”

“No.” Kurt swings around and slaps Sebastian’s arm, grinning when he hears Sebastian mutter a petulant, “Ow!”

“Rumspringa,” Kurt repeats. “What is that?”

“It’s some Amish coming-of-age thing,” Sebastian explains. He tries to release Kurt to nurse his sore arm, but Kurt doesn’t let him, gripping Sebastian’s wrists tight and locking them back together around his waist. Kurt can feel Sebastian’s chuckle resonate throughout his whole body. “These Amish kids get to leave their farms and experience life in the city. You know, see firsthand the dangers of our big, bad, corruptive lifestyles, and then go running back to plowing fields and building barns.”

“How do you know all that?” Kurt asks, wondering if any Amish boys learned anything about ‘corruptive lifestyles’ from Sebastian while he was vacationing over the summer.

“Julian met a couple of them a while back. He told me that there’re two things all the Amish kids do when they come to the coast.”

“And that is?” Kurt feels like he’s pulling teeth, getting the answers from Sebastian little by little.

“Well, the first is to see the ocean, obviously.” Kurt can hear Sebastian’s eyes rolling.

“And the second?”

“Parties…sex…drugs and alcohol.”

Kurt nods.

“That’s four things,” he says, counting them out obnoxiously on his fingers so Sebastian can see.

“Yeah, but they all kind of go together.” Sebastian nibbles at the shell of Kurt’s ear, delighted when Kurt jumps a bit in his arms.

Kurt watches the girls as they wave again, this time in good-bye, and make their way to the fence that leads to the public side of the beach. Kurt doesn’t care that these wide-eyed and innocent young girls will soon be on the prowl for drugs and sex. They’re breaking loose, bucking tradition, freeing themselves from the bonds of an oppressive, religion-controlled society, and hopefully will find the courage to explore new fashion trends. Kurt feels an unexpected sense of camaraderie with them. Kurt watches them walk away, the final flutter of their ankle-length skirts whipping out
behind them as they round the bend and disappear from view.

A comfortable silence stretches between them, and Kurt sinks into it, happy to know that they can still have these moments, still just be themselves, when they can talk and flirt and tease and sometimes just enjoy the silence.

But Kurt is also ready to start breaking loose himself.

“So, what do you want to do today?” Kurt asks, bouncing eagerly on the balls of his feet at the thought of getting his vacation started.

“Well, we need to pick up some food because I took a look around and all we seem to have that’s edible is a half-eaten bag of oyster crackers and a can of spray cheese.”

“Sounds lovely,” Kurt scoffs playfully.

“Other than that, I was hoping you might let me play cruise director.” Sebastian sways slowly to the rhythm of the waves, the crashing water more subdued as the tide makes its way out further and further from the shore. Kurt shuts his eyes and moves with him, following where Sebastian leads, even if it is in just a small arc in the sand. “There are a couple of things we absolutely cannot do until everyone else gets here, but if you don’t mind humoring me, I had a sudden stroke of inspiration while you were out here playing in the sand…”

“Oh please tell me that’s not code for ‘you had an idea while you were masturbating’?” Kurt groans.

Sebastian laughs, his shoulders shaking, his entire body vibrating, and Kurt feels a swell of pride that he can bring that out in him.

“As sexy as that sounds…no.” Sebastian spins Kurt back around and traps him in his embrace. “Just trust me. Okay?”

Sebastian’s green eyes soften, his face almost pleading, asking Kurt without words to let him do this his way, to give him the chance to try and get it right.

Kurt makes a show of sighing dramatically, rolling his neck on his shoulders.

“Oh, alright,” Kurt moans. “If it means that much to you…especially since we all know I have a thorough and extensive knowledge of all the happening things to do out here.”

Though, to be completely honest, Kurt did have something in mind, and even with his face still mostly numb from the cold, he can feel his cheeks glowing redder than a stop light. Sebastian catches the blush, notices immediately when it spreads up Kurt’s neck to the roots of his walnut-colored coif. He tilts his head inquisitively, hoping Kurt will elaborate, but Kurt’s lips remain unwaveringly sealed.

Sebastian starts to walk backward, leading Kurt along on a trail back to the house.

“So, let’s get ready and hit the road. We have about an hour’s drive inland, and it might be a good idea to start before it gets too hot.”

Kurt nods, intrigue cooling the flush on Kurt’s cheeks as he tries to guess what Sebastian might have planned. They make their way back up the path in silence while Kurt’s mind whirls with possibilities. Right before they reach the bedroom, Sebastian turns around and meets Kurt nose to nose.
“Oh, and Kurt…” Sebastian whispers, his voice almost a purr, “dress to get dirty.”

Kurt wants to object to the idea of getting dirty, but the words turn to nonsense, lodging in his throat and stopping just south of his vocal chords at the subtle smolder in Sebastian’s stare.

Suddenly, getting dirty didn’t sound like such an undesirable thing.
Chapter 23B

Chapter by fhartz91

Chapter Summary

I wanted to take a moment and explain my line of thinking here, since some people might read this and be curious. I see this week at the beach house as Sebastian’s attempt to woo Kurt, which is something he’s more than likely not familiar with. He wouldn’t want to treat Kurt the way he treats his hook-ups. He’ll want to make every day into something special, and a few times, he might fail spectacularly. It’s going to be cute and awkward, and culminate to a bigger event as the week comes to a close and the family joins them. So please bear that in mind, and also know that any questions you have will most likely be answered as more chapters are posted. This is the second portion of chapter 23.

Sebastian grabs his duffel and heads for the bathroom, shooting Kurt another suggestive wink and slow, alluring smile. Outwardly, Kurt rolls his eyes with an unimpressed demeanor, but in his chest, his heart thrums against his ribcage and the air around him, cool with the sea breeze spiraling through the room, suddenly feels stifling and oppressive. Kurt swallows hard to relieve the tightening in his throat, and shakes his head, trying to get himself back on track. He spots his luggage stacked in the corner of the room, and his focus returns to Sebastian’s mysterious plans for the day.

Getting dirty.

Kurt pulls open the first bag and rifles through it, bypassing his own wardrobe in favor of the pile of Puck and Finn’s borrowed clothes buried underneath. As enticing as Sebastian’s invitation to get dirty is, it’s not enough to make Kurt sacrifice one of his own casual yet still designer outfits to the cause. Especially not, if say, an article of clothing should get torn off him, Kurt muses, the thought immediately making his cheeks go from pale to pink. He smiles, pinching his lower lip between his teeth while he allows himself a moment to entertain the thoughts playing in his head like the trailer of a movie; not letting himself indulge in all the details, just enough of the really juicy parts to tease. Lately, just being around Sebastian brings these thoughts barreling to the forefront of his imagination, which Kurt can’t say that he minds too much. But what has started to become annoying is how Kurt can’t seem to control the thoughts…or the effect they have on him.

With all his past crushes, unexpected daydreams were very happy to linger somewhere in the neighborhood of a wholesome, old-fashioned, early 20th century musical – something sweet and uplifting, with a lot of scandalous hand holding, a stolen kiss or two, and a gigantic musical number at the end. To a degree, so do his thoughts of Sebastian, so it’s nice to know that some things haven’t changed. But more and more, the sweet turns sexy, the handholding becomes sordid and racy, and the musical number morphs into the background soundtrack of something a little more R-rated.

Something a little more dirty, hence his current dilemma.

Kurt buttons the pants easily, scowling a bit at the fit – slightly baggier than would suit his normal
taste, but still functional, with a certain rugged chic. As Kurt finishes dressing, his eyes drift to the abandoned bed, comforter still rumpled and pulled askew. He reaches out a hand and runs his fingertips along Sebastian’s side, following the dips and curves where tossing and turning in his sleep has left a wrinkled imprint of his body. Kurt follows the disheveled pattern to the pillow, an indent remaining where Sebastian’s head had lain. Kurt imagines Sebastian laying there, envisions climbing back beneath the covers, greeted by his sultry smile and those eyes, clear as the sea and so damned inviting. Kurt’s mind doesn’t wait a moment longer before supplying the rest. To his own disgust, he thinks he actually moans. He bites his own tongue quickly, hoping the broken sound wasn’t loud enough for Sebastian to hear, and wonders when exactly he became such a teenaged boy. Where had all these rampant hormones been hiding?

A persistent rapping on the door breaks Kurt from his fantasizing. He turns to a nearby mirror to give himself a final appraisal and as his eyes travel over his body from head to toe, panic sets in. He can forgive the windblown hair, but a more obvious faux-pas than that is his untimely partial erection, visible even in the loose cut of his pants. Kurt’s mind whirls disjointedly in search of a quick solution (jumping out the window comes desperately to mind and Kurt knows then that he’s doomed). Sebastian opens the door without invitation and Kurt turns quickly away from the bed and walks towards the windows, keeping his back turned in an effort not to get caught. Kurt breathes in deep from the pungent air blowing in through the open window, trying to calm his urges, ignoring the stench of low-tide and the way the wind seems determined to further destroy his coiffure.

Sebastian steps fully into the room, dressed simply in torn pale denim jeans and an artfully faded t-shirt. He tosses his duffel in the corner alongside Kurt’s pyramid of luggage. Their eyes meet only briefly, and though Kurt crosses invisible fingers and hopes against hope that his retreat was as smooth and relaxed in appearance as he had intended, he can see the teasing glint in Sebastian’s eyes that tells him that Sebastian more than noticed his sudden distress. Sebastian’s soft smile widens into an amused, if not devilish grin as he ambles up behind Kurt, keeping an arm’s distance to better appreciate his view of Kurt from behind.

“I didn’t take you for a desert camo and *Fall-Out Boy* kind of guy,” Sebastian observes, taking in Kurt’s unusual (for Kurt, at least) ensemble.

“Well, these aren’t exactly my clothes,” Kurt explains, happy to see that his voice can stay cool and unaffected under pressure. “My current ensemble comes courtesy of Noah Puckerman.” Kurt receives a raised eyebrow from Sebastian as he reassess Kurt’s outfit. Confident that he has his body a little more under control, Kurt turns away from the window to give Sebastian an unobstructed view. “You didn’t exactly indicate the level of dirty you were expecting to subject me to, and I can’t very well risk my own clothes to your whims now, can I?”

Kurt doesn’t miss the way Sebastian’s eyes linger for a moment right at the swell of his hipbone, his tongue darting out to wet dry lips. The two actions could be completely unrelated, Kurt reasons, but considering the reaction Kurt got from a quick nip to Sebastian’s hipbone while doing body shots, he seriously doubts it, and his cheeks burn deeper.

To Kurt’s surprise, Sebastian scoffs.

“Look, I know you and Puck have some kind of kinky cuddle-arrangement going on,” he groans, “but please tell me you aren’t getting a woody just from wearing his pants.”

Kurt’s mind is immediately removed from his problematic half-hard on by the tone of Sebastian’s voice. Kurt is sure he detects something bordering close to fondness when Sebastian refers to Puck. *When did that start?* Kurt wonders. Most likely somewhere around the time when Puck escorted a
certain drunken asshole out of Julian’s party by his neck; the same night they all spent sleeping in an inebriated puppy pile on Sebastian’s bed. Kurt can’t help smiling thinking about how easy it all could be; Sebastian’s presence in his life, slipping seamlessly into his group of friends, because really Kurt’s friends are his family. It would be nice if there was a space available for Sebastian there, too.

If his friends could be as cool as Puck and Finn have already been…and if Sebastian wants to be included.

Kurt could sputter out any number of excuses for his current state of partial arousal, but instead he recovers with a cheeky grin, posing arrogantly, hands on his hips.

“Jealous?”

Sebastian shrugs, but Kurt can see by the way his green eyes shift away from his body that Sebastian has a scenario of his own concocted in his head for the reason behind Kurt’s condition, and he doesn’t seem too amused at all.

“Hardly,” Sebastian says, covering by grabbing up his bag again and rummaging through it, completely engaged in searching around the small sack for something of such extreme importance that he can’t lift his eyes for a moment to spare Kurt even a passing glance. Kurt sighs. This is part of what they are going to have to figure out in this new arrangement of theirs. Taunts and barbs are a big part of what they are together. In fact, (and Kurt never thought he would find himself admitting to it) it’s one of the cornerstones of the relationship they have. It started from there, built up from it, and Kurt hopes they don’t lose it. But it seems that Sebastian’s impenetrable hide has a few gaping soft spots, and Kurt needs to learn not to use them as the punch line of a joke.

“What if I told you,” Kurt begins, turning up his own irresistible charm, “that I was imaging you and me climbing back into bed and spending the rest of the afternoon here?”

He drifts up beside Sebastian, hands creeping up his back and over his shoulders, massaging slowly. Sebastian doesn’t react at first, doesn’t even acknowledge Kurt’s remark, but soon a crooked grin starts to pull at the corner of his mouth.

“I would say you’re not getting out of what I have planned that easily.”

Sebastian pulls out a large, yellow bottle, and shakes it in front of Kurt’s face.

“I recommend sunscreen,” Sebastian continues, the light-hearted quality of his voice returning. “The midday sun inland can be merciless.”

“Aww,” Kurt teases. “Are you worried about me getting burned?”

“More like I’m worried about you baking and spending the rest of the week whining every time I try to touch you.”

Sebastian flicks open the lid to the bottle and grabs Kurt’s hand. Kurt tries to pull his hand away, but Sebastian’s fingers wrapped around his wrist are a bit stronger. Sebastian squeezes a massive dollop of thick white lotion into Kurt’s palm. Kurt sticks out his tongue in a mock look of disgust, and Sebastian laughs, scooping up half the lotion with his own fingers, intent on slathering it over his own skin, but stopping a moment to paint a drop on Kurt’s nose.

Kurt enjoys this, the quips and the teasing, the easy way they communicate through jests and jabs, knowing that no matter where this week takes them, they can still be this – Kurt and Sebastian, the people they were before they fell in…deep, deep like with each other (Kurt quickly amends for
himself). No need to become some strange amalgam just to be together. Kurt didn’t need to change to fit Sebastian.

Somehow, Kurt and Sebastian were always a fit.

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Kurt is reluctant to leave their hideaway on the beach with its karma cleansing ocean behind, but he’s thoroughly intrigued by what Sebastian has planned for their first day. Driving inland away from the Atlantic Coast, the sand turns into asphalt, and then bleeds into a long stretch of road flanked by vast, running expanses of vibrant green. In many ways it looks a lot like the more rural areas of Ohio, but Kurt knows down to the fringes of his soul that it’s not. He cannot be fooled. He can feel the distance in his skin. He can smell the difference in the air, which seems cleaner and sweeter, carrying with it subtle notes of sweet corn and the ubiquitous aroma wild flowers.

There’s something refreshing about leaving his life behind him, with all its obstacles and complications, for a while. It makes everything seem fresh and new; a do-over, like anything is possible. He can make something good for himself with his time away; he can be someone apart from his usual, put together, hyper-overachieving, sometimes snobbish self.

Cheers to the new Kurt Hummel!

As acceptance for this new adventure to find himself sinks in, he wonders for a brief and bitter second if those were the exact same thoughts Blaine had when he stepped off the plane and got his first glimpse of California, with new prospects and opportunities waiting for him – new friends, new experiences…a new love-interest.

Kurt forces himself to push those thoughts aside and focus solely on the good that surrounds him. He turns his face to watch Sebastian drive. The windows are rolled down, and the wind blows his hair around his face. He looks serene, lost in thought as he gazes off into the distance with a secretive smile dancing on his lips. Kurt never realized how intimate sharing silence with someone could be. No burden of conversation needed to make it tolerable, just existing in the same space together and feeling whole, at peace. Sebastian tilts his head to meet Kurt’s eyes and the smile grows brighter, clearing all thoughts of Blaine and California away as quickly as if Sebastian had reached into Kurt’s mind and erased the images with a wave of his hand.

As Sebastian predicted, it gets hot early. Sweat beads along Kurt’s shoulders beneath his borrowed shirt and runs in tiny, torturous rivers down his back. The wind rushing through the open windows of the Mustang does little more than push the heat around, but it’s a silent agreement not to close the windows in favor of the air conditioner. The wind whipping around him, scouring over his skin, makes Kurt feel carefree, and at this point he’s willing to suffer through any negligible discomfort to keep hold of that feeling for as long as possible.

The longer they drive, the more Kurt becomes aware that there is nothing, literally nothing, but farms and grass and wildflowers for miles, and Kurt begins to worry about the real meaning behind the words ‘get dirty’. Sebastian doesn’t strike Kurt as the ‘farmer’s market’ type, but that’s still a possibility. At least, Kurt hopes. What else is there to do in a farm town? Milk goats? Collect eggs? Feed pigs? He frowns at the thought of wearing tall rubber boots and tramping through the mud to slop an animal that spends the day lying around in its own filth.

After an hour of driving through the great green nil, Kurt startles at the sight of a rustic wooden sign supported by a single post stuck into the dirt that reads “The Busy Bee – 5 miles”. He’s even more surprised when they start to turn off the road.
“Uh…The Busy Bee?” Kurt cranes his neck to peer past the sign, hoping there is something else hiding in plain sight that is their actual destination; some other sign of civilization. He would even settle for outlet shopping (but then again, when is choosing outlet shopping really settling).

“Yup,” Sebastian says, and that single syllable effectively squashes Kurt’s hopes.

“As in…bees?” Kurt’s mouth hangs agape. “Small, stripy, winged insects that sting?”

Sebastian gives Kurt a sidelong look and snickers.

“Yes, Kurt. Bees.” Sebastian has a smug look on his face that Kurt can’t quite identify. He seems particularly proud of himself, and for the life of him Kurt can’t imagine why.

“So, we drove over an hour…in the near Mercury-level heat…to look at bees?” Kurt glowers, but despite it all he has to admit that it’s cute and completely out-of-character, though he’s still not entirely certain what must have been going through Sebastian’s mind when he chose this as their first vacation excursion. “What if I get stung?” Kurt whines, trying more to tease than provoke Sebastian. “What if I’m allergic?”

“Then I’ll perform mouth-to-mouth,” Sebastian counters smoothly with a suggestive eyebrow wiggle.

“Yeah, like that’s going to help when my throat’s swelling shut.” Kurt throws his arms across his chest for added emphasis.

“Look,” Sebastian says, his voice sounding tight as he tries not to rise to Kurt’s ribbing. “I know you’re not allergic to Goddamned bees!”

Sebastian’s conviction at this statement strikes Kurt as odd. Kurt’s not allergic, but he didn’t find out until just a few months before graduation. The only other person who knows this little tidbit of information is Blaine, who happened to be there with Kurt when he got stung, on the butt of all places, during a nearly failed attempt at crossing off #26 on his bucket list – ‘Go skinny dipping’.

Which means that Blaine told Sebastian that he got stung…on the butt.

Kurt is torn between wanting to race out to California immediately to strangle a certain ex-Warbler, and dying of complete and utter mortification.

Kurt feels the Mustang pull to the side of the road as Sebastian starts to slow down and bring the car to a stop on the shoulder. Kurt’s already thinking of an appropriate way to express his objections to Sebastian’s knowledge of Kurt’s humiliating prior injury just to see what kind of dig Sebastian will come up with, but the way Sebastian’s jaw locks, his eyes going a little hard, and a slight red tinge coloring his tan cheeks, gives Kurt a moment of pause. An unexpected look of dejection and disappointment cloud Sebastian’s piercing green eyes, but it’s there for only a second. And it isn’t just an, “Oh well, this was a bust. Better luck next time,” sort of disappointment. It was more of an, “I majorly screwed the pooch this time,” expression of complete failure. It reminds Kurt of the look on Sebastian’s face that night at the sushi restaurant in Columbus, when Sebastian accidentally doused his shirt in soy sauce and spilled a glass of water in his lap. All of a sudden Kurt finds himself feeling like he should ask for forgiveness for his thoughtless response.

Sebastian takes a deep, calming breath, eyes scanning the land around them – the peaceful, raw, natural, and otherwise deserted stretch of road that lay for mile and miles ahead. Kurt can tell by the way Sebastian’s eyes shift left to right that he’s thinking, calculating something.
“Thoughts? Ideas?” Sebastian says at last.

“About what?” Kurt replies innocently, hoping to root out the source of Sebastian’s inexplicable disappointment.

“About where we should go now,” Sebastian huffs, throwing his hands in the air and letting them land in his lap, gripping at his thighs out of aggravation.

“I want to go there,” Kurt says, pointing out the window and affecting the tone of a petulant child in an attempt to soothe Sebastian’s mood. Sebastian turns wide, incredulous eyes on him.

“But, I thought…” he sputters, which makes Kurt’s lips curl into a smile that tries so hard to look guileless and fails. “What about you bitching about getting stung and being allergic?”

“That doesn’t mean I don’t want to go.” Kurt shrugs. He can’t stop the grin that continues to grow, but he fights like mad to contain the laugh that’s itching to bubble out of his throat.

Sebastian scowls, but Kurt can see the smile in his eyes.

“Kurt Hummel,” Sebastian says, turning the key in the ignition and bringing the waiting Mustang back to life, “I hope you get stung on the ass.”

“It wouldn’t be the first time.” Kurt keeps his eyes on Sebastian as he pulls the car back onto the road, cherishing the grin that returns, the genuine smile that makes Kurt melt; the one he knows Sebastian saves just for him. That grin makes him bold, makes him ache for the full power of it, the way it never fails to light up Sebastian’s face. He leans over slightly, batting long, walnut-colored lashes.

“If I do, would you kiss it and make it better?”

Sebastian’s answer is a low, broken noise, somewhere between a moan and a growl that washes over Kurt, making his skin tingle.

“Whatever you want, babe,” Sebastian says finally, tossing a wink Kurt’s way.

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Sebastian takes the exit when they come across a much larger version of the first road sign they saw; rickety and faded, campy with its carving of a cartoonish bee pointing them in the right direction, but welcoming in a down-home country sort of way. The road changes from black-top to dirt, forcing Sebastian to roll up the windows to avoid the car filling up with the dust and gravel the tires kick up. He switches on the air-conditioner and the flood of cool air that fills the car offers immediate relief from the scorching, dry wind outside. Kurt slides down in his seat, letting the air hit him full in the face, the sigh of relief that escapes his lips bordering on pornographic.

“If I do, would you kiss it and make it better?”

Sebastian asks, but the question is mainly rhetorical. That sigh of Kurt’s definitely did not slip by Sebastian unnoticed. His whole body responds to it, and suddenly Sebastian feels like an imbecile, dragging them out in the heat when Kurt’s suggestion of ‘staying in bed back at the beach house’ was, by far, the superior suggestion. He scrubs his sweaty face with his hand; threading his fingers through stiff, dusty locks; and then wipes his hand on his jeans. Kurt’s eyes follow the movement and cringes at the trail of brown muck Sebastian’s hand leaves on the light-colored denim.

“You’re really not the outdoors type, are you, Hummel?” Sebastian jokes over Kurt’s tut of disgust.
“Really perceptive, Smythe,” Kurt drones, turning his attention back out the car window at the now changing scenery. “What was your first fucking clue?”

Kurt’s eyes scan the quaint atmosphere of the estate ahead of them, noticing that this is definitely a working farm – not trussed up or decorated for visitors in any way, with the exception of the signs on the road. Several small, white-washed, barn-style buildings stand in a square formation ahead of them, and off to one corner, constructed to resemble an old-tyme trading post but looking more like an afterthought, stands a tiny roadside stall selling jars of honey along with some seasonal produce and flowers.

It boggles Kurt’s mind; so Little House on the Prairie-esque, and not like Sebastian Smythe at all.

“How in the world did you even find this place?” Kurt asks, trying his best to picture Sebastian Smythe on his phone, feverishly Googling ‘bee farms’.

“I’ve driven by here a couple of times with my family, but we’ve never stopped to look around.” Sebastian pulls the car to a stop in a makeshift parking lot that’s little more than a square plot of dirt cleared of weeds and grass with chalk lines drawn to indicate spaces. He kills the engine and pulls the key from the ignition while a dubious Kurt looks on in staunch disbelief.

“We’re really going here?” Kurt questions.

“We’re really going here,” Sebastian responds with a nod.

“This isn’t a joke?”

Sebastian drops his head back onto the seat.

“This isn’t a joke, Kurt,” Sebastian groans. “Now get out of the car.”

Kurt waits just a moment longer, to see if he can call Sebastian’s bluff, but one look at his determined green eyes tells Kurt this is no joke, but on the other hand, Sebastian is making no move to exit the vehicle either. Instead, his eyes dart from the glove box back to Kurt until Sebastian seems to make a decision about something. He reaches past Kurt and opens the compartment, sticks a hand in, fishes around, and pulls it back out quickly, his fist wrapped tightly around an object that he stuffs into the pocket of his jeans without letting Kurt have a peek. From the outline it leaves, it looks like a pen, but why Sebastian would be so secretive about a pen Kurt has no idea. Sebastian shuts the glove box and motions to Kurt’s door.

“Move it, Kurt. I’m not going to carry you.”

Kurt pushes open the car door and rolls out onto his feet dramatically, grumbling under his breath, but Sebastian makes an even bigger show of pretending not to hear. They start down the dirt road in silence, Kurt moping a bit in his confusion, stealing glances at Sebastian’s face and its completely unreadable expression, but if Kurt had to narrow it down he would call it a mixture of nervousness, excitement, and anticipation. Kurt is overwhelmed by his curiosity, dying to know what exactly it was about him that screamed ‘bee farm’, but his questions are shoved to the backburner by the appearance of a petite, rotund woman in ill-fitting jeans and a flannel button-down shirt jogging their way, her beet red face beaming at them as if she hasn’t seen anyone in decades.

“Welcome to the Busy Bee,” she pants, waving emphatically, adding extra emphasis to the word ‘bee’ when she speaks. “I’m Beatrice, and I will be your guide today.”

“Hello, Beatrice,” the two boys answer back in a slightly muddled unison, but Beatrice claps in utter delight. As soon as the plucky woman turns away to lead them down the road, Kurt wheels
around to Sebastian with a pained look on his pleading face. Sebastian responds with a not-too-subtle smack on the ass to shoo Kurt along.

“Are you gentlemen here for the tour?” Beatrice calls over her shoulder, peeking back to make sure her two guests are still following her.

“Why, yes,” Sebastian coos past Kurt’s objecting head shaking. He grabs Kurt’s elbow, forcing him to keep up, his own shoulders trembling with quiet laughter.

“I hate you,” Kurt whispers under his breath as he stumbles unwillingly along, aiming a kick at Sebastian’s shin and cursing when he misses.

They stop at the first of the white barn houses. Beatrice disappears inside for a moment and returns with a pile of clothes draped over her arms. Sebastian smirks at the face Kurt makes when she hands him a pair of extra-large coveralls.

“Where’s your bedazzler when you need it, huh, babe?”

Kurt wanted to balk at wearing second-hand clothes, but he holds his tongue, quelling the urge to poke fun at the drab pair of coveralls. Something about them, the heavy sepia-colored cloth, worn with age and a multitude of hands pulling at the fabric, faded from the hot summer sun, triggers a memory. It’s barely a whisper at first, something he mulls over while he pulls the suit on over his clothes, cringing momentarily at the thought of how many unwashed people must have perspired in this outfit. He pulls the sleeves over his arms, waiting for Sebastian to break the silence with a well-timed mock about how long it’s taking him to get ready, but when he catches a glimpse of Sebastian, standing a few feet in front of him, already completely dressed and holding his bonnet beneath his arm, the look in Sebastian’s eyes is one of interest…or maybe expectation? Like he’s waiting for the answer to a question of his own.

Kurt adjusts the collar of the suit. He flips his hair away from his face and slips the bonnet over his head.

“Well, well, well,” Beatrice comments, as she fastens the Velcro collar of her suit and slips her bonnet over her frizzy salt and pepper hair. “Aren’t you two the handsomest pair of men who ever came to see a bee vomit.”

There it is.

That’s the comment that opens the flood gates, and a torrent of suppressed memories come flooding back with a vengeance.

“Kurt! Sweetheart! Be careful how much powdered sugar you put on those beignets!”

Kurt sighs, but shows no sign of stopping.

“But, mom! It tastes better that way.”

Elizabeth rescues the sifter from the hands of her precocious little boy.

“Portion control is key,” she stresses. “Here, why don’t we put the sifter away and get started with the honey glaze?”

“Mom…” Kurt stares down at his fingers, watching as the dust of powdery white turns into a sweet paste as he rolls it around between his fingers. “What is honey made from?”
Kurt looks back at his mother, her patient smile turning into something more mischievous.

“Do you really want to know?” she asks, leaning in close as if what she is about to say is a carefully guarded secret.

Kurt nods his head enthusiastically, blue eyes shining with excitement.

“Do you really, really want to know?”

“Yes, mommy,” Kurt giggles, scooting closer to hang on her every word.

His mom’s eyes twinkle as she gets as close to his ear as possible and whispers, “It’s bee vomit!”

Kurt pulls away, and the look of horror and disbelief in his eyes makes his mom double over in a fit of laughter.

“You’re lying!” Kurt gasps; upset that his mom would not only tease him, but that she would make fun of him, too.

Elizabeth can read all of this in the way Kurt’s face falls, and his lower lip juts out in a tiny pout.

“Oh, sweetheart,” she coos, pulling her son into her lap and wrapping her arms around him. “I’m serious. It’s true.”

Kurt looks at his mom, trying to catch her lie in the crinkle of skin around her eyes, or the crooked smile on her lips. But it isn’t there, because his mom never lies to him.

“Do you think we can see them someday?”

Kurt’s mom pulls a ridiculous face.

“You want to see bees vomit?” she asks.

“No! Well, yeah…I just want to see how they do it. How they make the honey.”

Elizabeth cradles her son in her lap and pecks kisses in his hair.

“Yeah,” she says, warming up to the idea a bit herself. “I guess we can do that.”

The memory fades as a hand shakes Kurt’s arm gently, but potent fragments of it linger – the smell of his mother’s perfume, light and floral, cling to Kurt’s sinuses with every shuddering inhale; the way her arms felt safe and warm embracing him; the soft caress of her shoulder-length hair as it danced around her shoulders and stroked his cheek. That day spent baking with his mom, the whole kitchen covered in a fine dusting of powdered sugar, is one of the last vivid memories Kurt has of his mom. After she died, he relived it over and over until every second imprinted itself in his brain. It was his safe-haven, a place he could get lost in during those times when he needed her most. But as he grew older, that memory got shoved away with all of the others, not because he wanted to forget his mother, but as a way to keep him sane.

They resurfaced only once a year or so ago when his father had his heart attack and collapsed at work. Kurt sat by his father’s bedside, watching helplessly while he lay in a coma. He held his father’s hand, trying to bring him back, and when all seemed lost, he took those memories of his mom out from their hiding place and revisited them again. They helped him through just as much as they broke his heart.

After he got his father back, he realized the time they had left together was precious, and that it
could be taken away without any warning. He devoted a small section of his bucket list to things his dad had always mentioned wanting to do together. If he remembered correctly, in a moment of sentimentality, he might have even added the bee thing. He’d have to check his phone when they got back to the beach house to make sure.

“Come on now, Hummel. You’re not going to get emotional over wearing a second-hand jumpsuit for a couple of hours, are you?” Sebastian’s voice is soft, asking so much more. Kurt knows it’s a cover. It’s his way of making sure that Kurt’s okay.

“No,” Kurt says weakly, letting what’s left of the memory of his mom - her beautiful blue eyes - go back away in safe-keeping for now.

Beatrice takes them on the tour, and Kurt opens himself up to the experience, paying genuine attention as she leads them through the fields, pointing out the numerous types of flowers growing and explaining how they change the flavor of the honey – mellow from the bees that sip from the wildflowers, stronger from the ones that travel miles away to the orchards along the coast. She pulls apart one of the wooden hives and shows them the individual pieces, pointing out where the queen is kept and where the bees hide and protect their brood. Kurt gains a new respect for the animated older woman, marveling at her fearlessness as she dislodges a frame full of alarmed bees, sending them buzzing around her head in warning. Kurt knows he’s not allergic, but he isn’t looking forward to being stung either.

“Be careful as we walk between the hive boxes,” Beatrice warns, pointing to the stacks of white squares nestled in among the gardens and a small outcropping of trees as they make their way back to the entrance. The air is heavy with the intense sound of buzzing as the noon sun, beating down above their heads, calls the bees out of their hives in droves. Kurt turns to Sebastian to see if he’s fairing the extreme heat better than Kurt (who has all but turned to a human puddle inside his jumpsuit), but the look on Sebastian’s face as they make their way through the thickening swarm stuns him. Sebastian’s body is rigid as he shuffles his way through the tall grass, his eyes wide and unblinking, breaths coming fast and shallow. If Kurt didn’t know better he would say Sebastian looks scared to death.

Kurt takes Sebastian’s hand and squeezes it reassuringly. Sebastian’s eyes dart down to meet Kurt’s soothing gaze, and Kurt sees him relax, relief flowing through him from that single touch. Kurt’s heart slams in his chest as he begins to realize just how far the power of his touch extends, the many facets in which he has a definite effect on Sebastian – physically and emotionally. Sebastian doesn’t just need a chance to find love. He also needs to find someone he can trust implicitly.

Kurt knows that sometimes love is the easy part. People fall in and out of it every single day. But trust takes time. It needs to be earned.

Hands locked together, they make their way back to the small white house. Once inside they disrobe quickly, shaking away a few of the stragglers from their clothes, and as the layers come off, Sebastian seems to uncover himself again. Sebastian smirks when he notices Kurt watch him undress.

“There you go again,” he remarks slyly, hanging his coveralls on a hook and starting out the barn door. Kurt blinks and shakes his head, not understanding.

“Go again what?” Kurt asks, hanging his coveralls on a separate hook and following Sebastian out the door.

“You still can’t keep your eyes off me.”
Kurt chuckles and Sebastian laughs once, letting the sound turn into a groan, bellyaching loudly.

“Seriously, if I ever have another idea like this one, I give you full permission to punch me in the face.”

Kurt smiles at the invitation.

“Well, then can I go ahead and punch you now? You know, in case you have another stupid idea and I forget.”

“Nope,” Sebastian says sternly, destroying the effect of seriousness with his crooked grin. “In that case you’ll just miss out.”

Kurt walks beside Sebastian back to the car, kicking at pebbles and loose rocks along the way, watching them tumble ahead of them in the dirt, leaving a little trail of dust in their wake.

“You know…this might sound weird, but thank you for taking me here.” Kurt sighs, recalling his moment of nostalgia and the forgotten feelings of baking in the kitchen with his mom. He wishes he still had her to talk to – about Sebastian, about Blaine, about NYADA. “Believe it or not, this was actually something I have always wanted to do…something me and my mom had planned to do together. I guess I just forgot.”

“Yeah, that is weird, Hummel,” Sebastian says, eyes fixed on a point in the distance, a self-satisfied smile on his face. He kicks a rock that crosses Kurt’s path, and Kurt kicks it back.

“I’m sorry…” Sebastian kicks the rock again and smiles when Kurt stops it with his foot instead of just letting it roll to halt, “if coming here brought up bad memories of your mom. That wasn’t my intention.”

“I know.” Kurt passes the rock back to Sebastian, who gives it one final hard kick and sends it flying into the grass. “And it didn’t. I promise.”

Sebastian nods and unlocks the passenger door of the Mustang. Kurt reaches for the door handle, but Sebastian opens it instead, rolling his eyes when Kurt shoots him a quizzical look.

“Don’t read too much into it.” Sebastian watches Kurt lower himself into the seat. “You look dead on your feet, and I don’t need you passing out on me now.”

“Yeah, well, that’s what happens when I put on a twenty pound canvas jumpsuit and traipse around a field in 9,000 degree heat for an hour,” Kurt gripes. Kurt fastens his seatbelt while Sebastian snakes into the car over him to return the mysterious, grey, pen-looking object back to the glove box. From this new angle, Kurt manages to get a good look at it this time, recognition making his eyes go wide. He has seen it before. Coach Tanaka used to carry that same type of epi-pen out on the field during football practices.

“Wait! You’re allergic to bees?” Kurt asks, dumbfounded.

“Lots of people are allergic to bees,” Sebastian informs him. “Maybe not you, babe, but lots of people.”

“Yeah, a lot of people are, but if you need to carry emergency lifesaving medication then it goes from being a tiny allergy to something fairly fatal!” Kurt finds himself yelling in the face of Sebastian’s nonchalance. “Are you a fucking masochist or something?”

“Babe,” Sebastian says, leaning in to peck a kiss on Kurt’s nose, “I’m dating you. I would think the
answer is kind of obvious.”
Chapter 23C
Chapter by fhartz91

Chapter Summary

So here we have the last third of chapter 23, which finishes out their first full day at the beach house :) Now for those of you who feel that my AU is a little light on the angst, worry not. I’m giving our boys a bit of a honeymoon period to figure out how they’re going to fit together and form a relationship, but it’ll get angsty soon enough ;)

Kurt watches Sebastian walk around the back of the Mustang on his way to the driver’s side door, and the second he opens it, Kurt starts in on him again.

“Did you ever stop to think what would happen if you got stung?” Kurt asks, his voice rising with concern. He knows he should dial down the crazy. After all, for whatever reason Sebastian may have had for bringing Kurt here, he tried to plan a perfect day for them, and Kurt doesn’t want this one revelation to ruin the rest of it, but Kurt can’t help feeling that it was irresponsible of Sebastian to put his life at risk like this.

“Yeah,” Sebastian mutters, sounding slightly irritated. “It’s not like I haven’t been allergic to bees my whole life. Whatever would we have done?”

Sebastian sinks down into the car seat and slams the door shut. He wraps his fingers around the steering and squeezes it tight, though Kurt thinks it looks more like he’s throttling the poor thing.

“Where to now, Evil Knievel?” Kurt scoffs. “Cliff diving? Bungee jumping? I mean, since we’re obviously showing no regard for life and limb today.”

Sebastian’s stomach answers for him, growling loudly and catching Kurt off-guard in the middle of his rant. Kurt laughs, not really meaning to, until his own stomach joins in the conversation.

Sebastian relaxes his death-grip on the steering wheel and smiles.

“Well, if you’re done with the atomic bitch-fest, I take it that’s two votes for lunch,” Sebastian says. “Unless there are any other objections.”

“Not…at…all.” Kurt sighs in relief. “I had a great time, but right now, I would like to be anywhere else.” Sebastian groans at the well-worn pun and Kurt grins, turning his head in all directions to get a good look around. “But, currently we’re in the middle of not-so-scenic nowhere.”

Sebastian turns the key in the ignition and revs the engine.

“If I remember correctly, there’s a place not too far from here actually.”

“Thank God!” Kurt blows a kiss to the small roadside stand and the hive spattered gardens of the Busy Bee. “Be gone!” he crows. “Be seeing you! We won’t be back!”

“Okay, Kurt,” Sebastian deadpans, concentrating on doing a U-turn without spinning out in the loose dirt. “You can stop any time.” Sebastian lets the tires burn on the gravel road for a second
before they peel out onto the asphalt and leave the bee farm far behind.

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Sebastian’s memory is infallible. The tiny outdoor café he finds is only a hop, skip and a jump away. They literally could have walked the distance. Kurt’s eyes go wide when he sees it, letting the reality of it sink in fully before he breaks down, laughing uncontrollably at the look on Sebastian’s face as they pull into the parking lot of The Busy Bee Café – the same cartoonish bee adorning the overhanging awning, the same rustic-looking wood signs along the main road, each one cheerily adorned with the dread-inducing statement, “Last food stop for fifty miles”.

“So, can I punch you now?” Kurt asks. Sebastian stays dangerously silent, responding by shoving Kurt on the shoulder.

“If I drive at a hundred the whole way, we might be able to find something else in less than half an hour,” Sebastian reasons out loud, putting the car in reverse.

“No,” Kurt whines, tugging on Sebastian’s arm, “I’m starving! And I don’t remember us passing anything along the way, so please…”

“Alright, alright.” Sebastian relents, putting the Mustang back into park. “Just…stop making that obnoxious noise with your mouth.”

To Kurt’s surprise, the purveyors of The Busy Bee Café put quite a bit of thought into their overall curb appeal. The whimsical eatery has all of the same unsophisticated charm that the adjoining farm did. A simple, uncomplicated barn-themed structure houses the kitchen and a spacious indoor eating area. Even hailing from rural Ohio, Kurt considers himself a man of upscale, sophisticated design tastes, but Kurt has to admire the choice of black iron Bistro-style tables complimented with unpretentious, clear globe vases, each filled with a handful of fresh wildflowers bound with raffia. The picnic tables outside are their own unique works of art, but they still manage to tie together a unified theme. Each one had been washed in a coat of yellow or white paint, meticulously decorated with vines of colorful flowers traveling in swirl patterns up the legs and scrolling over the seats and table tops. The flowers and vines serve as frames for quotes, a different one for each table, and eclectic in their selection – some from the Bible, some from literature, some lyrics from songs.

The food on the menu is a perfect match to the overall atmosphere; traditional Americana with a Southern flair, and everything served with a generous side of biscuits and honey.

Even with the adorable shabby chic décor of the indoor café, Kurt convinces Sebastian to eat their meal outdoors. Luckily, there is no shortage of tress and the temperature is a good twenty degrees cooler in the shade.

“You know, all in all, I think we’re two for two as far as restaurants go,” Kurt says, picking through the various leaves of his indulgent peach, chicken, and pecan salad; lining up each ingredient on the tines of his fork in order to insure the perfect bite. Sebastian watches Kurt’s ritual with an amused smirk as he devours his own BLT with much less ceremony. “But if we keep this up, I think I’m going to go up a size.”

“I’m sure we can figure out a way to work it off,” Sebastian drawls suggestively. Kurt stares at Sebastian, condescension written on the smooth planes of his face.

“That wasn’t very original,” Kurt remarks, returning to his salad. “Are you tired, or are you losing your touch?”
“Fine,” Sebastian says, any trace of lurid suggestion gone from his voice. “I promise we’ll be eating nothing but boiled leek soup from here on out.”

Kurt’s smile blooms slowly, but he doesn’t look up from his salad to meet Sebastian’s playful green eyes. Instead he has become captivated by the quote that embellishes the table top where they sit. Painted in brown, each letter given depth with a slight shadow of beige, flowing effortlessly back and forth between the wooden slats of the table top are the words: “Every little thing wants to be loved.”

Kurt can’t imagine a more appropriate quote, considering the circumstances. So often Kurt had assumed that Sebastian knew nothing about being in love; too hard-hearted and too much of a cynic for paltry things like love to be of any importance to him, but never once did he consider that maybe Sebastian wanted to learn. At times, especially when Sebastian saw Blaine’s text messages on Kurt’s phone, when he tore Blaine apart for leaving Kurt behind and using the enormity of his love as an excuse, what Sebastian knew or wanted seemed irrelevant. In the end, what did Kurt really know about love? How could he claim to have some intrinsic knowledge on the subject when he couldn’t see Blaine’s plan for what it was – idiotic?

Wasn’t it Sebastian who pointed that out to him; calling Blaine out for his stupidity?

Maybe Sebastian knows more about being in love than Kurt gives him credit for; an aspect of his own that Sebastian can teach Kurt if given the chance. An undercurrent of warmth at the thought of learning how to love Sebastian wraps around Kurt’s spine as he recalls all the kisses, all the touches, all the moments of jealousy and the significant looks they’ve shared, each one carrying with it a thread of deeper meaning, unexpressed and woefully undervalued, that Kurt longs to unearth and experience fully.

An errant car speeding by on the otherwise deserted road draws Kurt back from the silence. He eases out of his thoughts, gaze lifting to see Sebastian looking pensively at the quote on the table top, too; his eyes following along the words, tracing over them one at a time. Sebastian’s look of intense concentration intrigues Kurt, but just when Kurt expects Sebastian to make some sort of erudite observation, instead he huffs a short, annoyed laugh.

“What is it?” Kurt asks, feeling offended on behalf of the quote that has found a special place in his heart.

“That quote is from the book *The Secret Life of Bees,*” Sebastian clarifies, shaking his head and finishing off the last of his sandwich. “We’re not going to get away from those little motherfuckers, are we?”

Kurt rolls his eyes even though he’s inclined to agree, tucking into the rest of his salad while Sebastian starts tearing apart chunks of one biscuit and dipping it in the thick amber pool of wildflower honey.

“Well, do you think we ran into the guys that made this batch?” Sebastian ponders, and Kurt snickers at the ridiculous statement. Sebastian pops the saturated portion in his mouth, but not quick enough to catch a few drops that miss his mouth and land on the contour of his lip, threatening to drip down his chin. Kurt stops and stares as the lingering drop goes unnoticed and another piece of biscuit follows the first. After the third bite, Sebastian catches Kurt staring. His eyes shift left to right and an absurd smile lifts his lips.

“What?” Sebastian asks, his voice muffled around a mouthful of half-chewed biscuit, but at least he’s decent enough to put a hand up over his mouth to lessen the gross factor of talking with his mouth full.
“N-nothing,” Kurt stutters, the edges of his lips lifting to form the hint of a smile, eyes twinkling in the subdued sunlight, and a single thought swirling through his mind like a Tilt-A-Whirl. The thought of how much he wants to lick that drop of honey off Sebastian’s skin. Kurt’s rational mind weighs his options carefully, second-guessing every step he wants to take. He’s eager to shift gears, be bold, jump in and take the first step. He needs to find a way to show Sebastian that he wants to move forward. They have already crossed so many different lines during the course of their ‘fake’ relationship, others blurring to the point that they’ve dissolved entirely. He doesn’t want to cycle all the way back to the beginning, ironically, as they try to take things to the next level.

As this inner debate continues to run its course, Kurt starts to move, climbing catlike across the table, thoughts flipping back to their lunch in Virginia, thumbing through the memory till it lands on the image of Sebastian wiping the mustard from Kurt’s face; the light brush of his thumb grazing the corner of Kurt’s mouth, the way it lingered, tracing down his cheek, and that look on Sebastian’s face after, the one that told Kurt that Sebastian is as uncertain about stepping into this new territory as he is.

Kurt doesn’t want to be stuck in the mire of uncertainty anymore. So much of his life seems up in the air, balancing precariously like plates spinning on sticks with him at the bottom frantically trying to keep them aloft, but bracing for the inevitable fall. Sebastian is the one thing right now that Kurt wants to be absolutely sure of.

Taking a cue from the memory replaying in his head, he reaches out his hand and with a finger he’s fighting to keep steady, collects the drip of honey from off Sebastian’s lip. Sebastian swallows hard at the first touch of Kurt’s fingertip against his skin, his tongue sweeping over his lip slowly, as if chasing Kurt’s finger.

Time suspends them in this discreet patch of dappled shade with Kurt poised in front of Sebastian, his finger hovering in the air. Without thinking, Kurt sticks the finger in his mouth and sucks off the drop of honey, eliciting a moan from Sebastian that definitely doesn’t sound uncertain or unsure. Sebastian’s green eyes go dark, glued to Kurt’s mouth, mesmerized by the way his lips surround his finger, the subtle movement of his jaw, the way his cheeks hollow.

“Do you think you got it all?” Sebastian asks, his voice rough and shuddering ever so slightly.

Kurt slips his finger from his mouth and appraises Sebastian’s face thoughtfully, biting his lip and tilting his head, preparing for his next move.

“You know, I think I’d better make sure.”

It takes less than a second to decide; after all of Kurt’s hedging, kissing Sebastian turns out to be easy; easy as breathing and bending and meeting each other half way. They don’t simply touch when they kiss; they connect, but it’s different from this morning’s kiss on the beach. The fire between them doesn’t ignite during this kiss. It’s unhurried, relaxed; it simmers, content to flow and carry them along wherever it goes. Even when Kurt’s tongue licks along the seam of Sebastian’s mouth, wiping the rest of the honey away, and Sebastian leans forward, resting a hand at the base of Kurt’s neck, rubbing at the knot in his spine with his thumb, Kurt decides not to take the kiss further. He leaves this kiss to worm its way inside Sebastian’s brain and take root so that he wants more…so that he has to think about what exactly ‘more’ might mean.

Kurt pulls away, pecking one last, chaste kiss over Sebastian’s chin before retreating back to his side of the table.

Sebastian’s eyes are still closed when Kurt sits on the bench, and right before he opens them, he
runs his tongue over his lower lip, revisiting the spot where Kurt’s tongue had been.

“What was that?” Sebastian asks, inhaling suddenly as if he forgot how to breathe and only remembered again now.

Kurt has an idea in his head, that maybe Sebastian can consider it an invitation, but he doesn’t have enough courage to voice it out loud.

Where is a bottle of tequila when you need it?

“It’s whatever you want it to be,” Kurt replies with a shrug, busying himself with piling his plastic fork and knife into the plastic deli container that had contained his salad. Sebastian watches him through narrow eyelids, chewing around a thought, his lips curling into his patented, devious smirk.

“I think I’ll take it as our cue to leave,” Sebastian says, hopping off his bench and gathering up the trash from the table. Kurt eyes him as he tosses their garbage away and then immediately heads off in the direction of the Mustang, spinning around in a half-circle once to make sure Kurt follows. Kurt smiles and stands up from the bench to join him. He takes once last look at the quote on the table, running the flat of his hand over the painted words, setting them to memory.

“Every little thing wants to be loved.”

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Kurt doesn’t know when it happens. One minute he’s sitting in the Mustang, staring out the window as they speed back to the coast, singing along with Sebastian to the Scissor Sisters ‘I Don’t Feel Like Dancin’, occasionally cut off by a persistent yawn that refuses to be squashed. He blinks to banish the dust and lubricate his dry eyes. He blinks once, twice, but the next time he blinks they are back at the beach house, pulling into the carport. An hour flew by completely unnoticed, and even though he recognizes that he must have really needed the sleep if he fell out so completely, he regrets not spending that time talking and singing; he regrets missing the opportunity to find out more about Sebastian in those covert ways in which he discloses his secrets. If their hapless adventure this afternoon has proven anything to Kurt, it’s that he knows practically nothing about this boy he’s fallen so hard for.

All this time they have spent in each other’s company and Kurt never knew Sebastian had a life-threatening allergy? That seems like the kind of information a friend – not to mention a “boyfriend” – would know.

Kurt considers the things that time and familiarity usually reveal during the course of a relationship.

Out of the impressive collection of tomes he surrounds himself with, which one is Sebastian’s favorite?

Fuck…how about his favorite color? Favorite food? Favorite movie? Favorite subject in school?

What about his plans for the future; a future that is barreling toward them full-speed ahead?

But Kurt doesn’t want to dwell on the heavy right now, not when Sebastian’s looking over at him with a grin that says he’s thinking of a million ways to tease one seriously bedraggled Kurt Hummel.

“Wh-what the hell happened?” Kurt groans, his throat parched, his voice gravelly.
“You fell asleep,” Sebastian says smoothly, killing the engine and pocketing the keys. “Incidentally, you snore like a tractor.”

Kurt sits up quickly, jaw dropping to his knees.

“Take that back!” Kurt gasps.

“Can’t.” Sebastian opens the car door, turning his head to look over his shoulder at Kurt. “It’s truth time.”

Kurt opens his door and follows suit, chasing after Sebastian, bent on vengeance, but he’s derailed mid-jab by another matter of the utmost importance – the potential of another morning without his obligatory first cup of coffee.

“Fuck!” Kurt exclaims, throwing an exasperated hand to his face and rubbing his tired eyes with the heel of his palm.

“Here?” Sebastian quips back quickly, raising an interested eyebrow. Kurt doesn’t comment back, deciding to let Sebastian have this win. Even he has to admit he walked into that one, but Sebastian’s roguish expression has him seriously considering rising to the challenge. What exactly would Sebastian do if Kurt sashayed over to him, eyes brimming with unrestrained desire, tore off his clothes and leapt into his arms? But Kurt reconsiders. The floor of the carport looks hard and uncomfortable.

“No,” Kurt grouses. “We forgot to stop at the supermarket, and I’m not exactly looking forward to oyster cracker and easy cheese soufflé for dinner.”

“Well, actually, I have an idea.” Sebastian’s voice drops, taking on a low, silky quality; the easy twist from playful to something akin to seduction sends chills over Kurt, spiraling around him, burying deep into his stomach, pooling with heat. Sebastian advances on Kurt, trapping him in the allure of whatever promise lies hidden behind his grass-green eyes.

Maybe Kurt’s invitation in that kiss earlier came through louder than he thought.

Would Sebastian really take him up on it?

“Yeah?” Kurt asks lamely, but when Sebastian looks at him with that mysterious dark gaze, Kurt’s mind goes blank. Kurt’s body yearns for him, and he is dying to know how long Sebastian intends on making him wait.

The cold cement wall hits Kurt’s shoulders as he backs into it, and he swears he hears his heated skin hiss with the contact.

“What’s your idea?”

Kurt wants to cringe at his sudden inability to come up with any witty or even slightly provocative banter, but he doesn’t care, because Sebastian is standing so close, crowding in against him, every blessed square inch of their bodies pressed together, and his lips are hovering so near. A lean, a slight incline is all it would take…

“I want you, Kurt Hummel,” Sebastian whispers, and Kurt, his eyes fluttering closed, waiting for this kiss that promises to burn, misses how Sebastian’s lips begin to curl, “to dig for clams.”

A thin, cold, and metal object drops into Kurt’s hand, dangling off his fingertips. His eyes snap open, his fingers folding reflexively around something that feels suspiciously like a wire, and he’s
torn between an urge to throttle Sebastian for goading him so cruelly, or hanging himself for falling for it so damned hard.

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“So, what exactly are we doing?” Kurt calls as he trails after Sebastian, metal bucket in hand, hopping over jutting stones and cursing every time the soft underside of his foot comes in contact with a sharp and pitted rock, saving himself from falling on his ass several times when his heel hits random patches of slimy lichens. He stops on a fairly stable plateau overlooking the oncoming white-caps of the splashing surf to roll up the cuffs of his pants. These might not be the most stylish clothes, but he’s going to do his best not to completely ruin them. Kurt hurries to catch up when he sees how far ahead Sebastian has gotten, frowning that he didn’t stop to wait and trying hard not to be impressed at how comfortable he is leaping from one dicey-looking rock to the other.

“We’re going to find some mud flats,” Sebastian calls over his shoulder, unwilling to break his stride, “and dig the clams up. It’s pretty self-explanatory.” Sebastian only stops when he hears Kurt’s squeal of distress, racing back in time to rescue him as he slips, teetering on the edge of a narrow ledge that’s being pounded mercilessly by the surf, and almost falling headlong into the ocean.

“Fuck, Kurt!” Sebastian yells at first, taking a long breath in as he steadies himself with Kurt bracing against him for dear life. Kurt waits, sure some angry insult is going to follow, some comment about how clumsy he is, but Sebastian sighs through clenched teeth, and Kurt knows he’s trying.

“Careful there, babe,” Sebastian says instead with barely the ghost of his original frustration evident in his voice. “I don’t need you washing away with the tide.” Sebastian sets Kurt upright on the rock beside him, holding Kurt’s hips securely until he is sure that Kurt can stand on his own. “That happens to be our one and only bucket.” Kurt sneers as Sebastian starts again on his rampant pace, but doesn’t miss how Sebastian keeps their hands locked.

After close to thirty minutes of leaping from rock to rock and dodging waves, Kurt considers asking if they’re going to walk the entire length of the Atlantic coast. They’re a good distance from the beach house. Kurt looks back over his shoulder and can barely see it on the dune where it sits overlooking the ocean. Sebastian stops suddenly and it’s all Kurt can do to keep from slamming into him and tipping them both into the water. Sebastian looks down from the shelf of rock where they stand and nods to himself.

“Here.” Sebastian reaches into the pockets of the board shorts he had changed into before they left on this shellfish scavenger hunt, pulls out two balled-up pairs of white tube socks, hands one pair to Kurt and keeps the second pair for himself. “Put those on.”

“So, that’s what you had in there?” Kurt asks, unrolling the socks and looking them over quizzically. “And I thought you were just excited to see me.”

“When I’m excited to see you, Hummel, you’ll know,” Sebastian says with a quick, lust-filled glance down Kurt’s body that makes Kurt’s face flame red. Sebastian balances on one foot as he pulls on a sock, glancing up at Kurt when he notices his reluctance to move.

“Babe, you’re really going to want to put those on,” Sebastian urges, finishing with his second sock.

“But, they’re going to get all soaked and mucky,” Kurt grumbles, starting to slip the first sock over
his sandy foot with a grimace.

“Better than getting the bottom of your feet torn to shreds.” Sebastian dusts his hands off on his shorts. “Some of those clam shells are razor sharp.”

Kurt has a hard time visualizing the bottoms of his feet getting any more torn up than they already are, but he eventually gives in. Sebastian undeniably knows what he’s doing, and it would suck if Kurt couldn’t walk for the rest of their vacation. He can’t picture Sebastian catering to a wounded Kurt, especially if he obtained his injuries due to his own stubbornness.

“Ugh,” Kurt mewls when he puts his sock-clad foot down into a puddle of glop. “Couldn’t we have just gone to the store?”

“Stop complaining, princess,” Sebastian chides, but this time the nickname that Kurt has always detested sounds endearing. “It’s not all that bad. Clams taste a lot better when you pull them out of the sand with you own hands. Besides…” Sebastian jumps down into the mud below with a wet slap as his feet hit the surface of the thick brown goop, “I have a feeling I’m going to really enjoy watching you do this.”

Sebastian eyeballs Kurt with a mischievous grin, but Kurt, dubious at the prospect of tromping knee-deep in something that looks like toxic sludge, makes no move to join him.

“So, are you coming, Kurt? These clams aren’t going to leap into our bucket on their own.”

“I don’t want to,” Kurt says quietly, taking a step back, holding tight to the bucket handle with both hands.

“Kurt,” Sebastian runs a sandy hand through his hair, apparently beyond caring what kind of wreck he looks like, (though he still manages, to Kurt’s despair, to look like an exquisitely handsome mess regardless). “The stuff down here is the same stuff you’re standing in up there.”

“Yeah, but it’s shallow up here,” Kurt gripes. “Look! You’re sinking up to your knees!”

Sebastian shakes his head, sparing a glance down at the mud that he is currently sinking into. He bends down and grabs a handful of mud, moving through the dense substance to get to where an obstinate Kurt stays attached to the safety of his ledge. He brings the handful of mud down on Kurt’s legs, smoothing the gritty gunk over his skin.

“No! Sebastian!” Kurt yelps. He steps back quickly to get out of arm’s reach and slips again, this time falling backwards, feet flying out from under him, and landing on his tailbone in a puddle, splashing his clothes and his skin. Sebastian’s accompanying laugh only adds insult to injury as Kurt looks down his body with disgust.

“See,” Sebastian chokes out, “now you don’t have an excuse.”

Kurt tosses the bucket blindly in Sebastian’s direction and growls in aggravation when he hears it bypass Sebastian’s head and land in the mud.

“Thanks, babe!” Sebastian chortles. “But I’m not starting till you get your ass down here.”

Kurt feels his hackles start to rise. He wants to fume, the pull himself out of the mud and stomp back the way they came, not that he could figure out the route without Sebastian’s help, unfortunately, but he can’t, because even though Sebastian is laughing at him, it’s that genuine, disarming laugh that Kurt is finding harder and harder to resist. And when he takes a moment to think about it, his predicament is kind of funny. If Sebastian were sitting in a puddle with his ass
soaking up mud, Kurt would have a field day. Kurt hears a sickening sound like a spoon being
dragged through old, coagulated oatmeal. He looks between his legs and sees Sebastian hoisting
his body up onto the rock, an unexpected expression of concern on his face.

“Jesus, Kurt, are you okay? Did you hurt yourself? Can’t you get up?” The barrage of questions
catches Kurt unaware so he passes up on a golden opportunity to ham his injury up for all its
worth.

“I’m fine,” Kurt says, pushing off his elbows and letting Sebastian help him to his feet. “You don’t
have to be such a mother hen. I’m not a child, you know.”

“Yeah, well, you wouldn’t know it by the way you’re acting,” Sebastian bites. “It’s just a little
mud, Kurt. I’m trying to have some fun here. You remember what fun is?”

“Well, mud may be fun for you, pigs, and toddlers, but it’s not exactly my cup of tea.” Kurt runs
his hands over his body in a fruitless attempt to sweep the drying crud off his clothes.

“Don’t bother.” Sebastian grabs Kurt’s hand and drags him back to the edge. “If we’re going to eat
at all tonight, you’re going to have to get a lot dirtier than that.” This time, Sebastian holds on to
Kurt’s hand when he makes the leap off the ledge, bringing a protesting and cursing Kurt along
with him for the ride. Sebastian lands flawlessly on his feet, but Kurt lands on his knees, sending
generous huge droplets soaring all over, dousing his face, his hair, and his clothes, which he has
long since lost hope of saving. With any luck, *Fall-Out Boy* will perform in a venue Kurt can get to
soon so he can replace Puck’s shirt.

“Now feel around with your feet and find us some clams,” Sebastian says, reclaiming the bucket
from where he left it and shuffling away. Kurt struggles to stand upright with his legs stuck in slop.

“You have got to be kidding,” Kurt mumbles, but he decides to buck up and suffer through since
the sooner he finds these stupid clams the sooner they’ll climb out of this repugnant morass and
head back to the house. He skates around trying to find mollusks with his feet – a situation Kurt
Hummel would have never dreamed in a million years he would find himself in. He feels around in
the sand and from the corner of his eye he sees Sebastian, arms outstretched for balance, a
sentimental smile on his face. Kurt tries to imagine Sebastian out here on vacation with his family
doing this exact same thing. He pictures Julian trying to wrestle Sebastian into the mud while
Olivia screams for them to stop…or more than likely cheers them on, eager to side with the winner
in making the loser’s night miserable. Kurt chuckles to himself realizing he’ll probably find out
how true to life that scenario is when everyone else gets there.

He can hardly wait.

got three already and you’ve found nada. Stop daydreaming and help!”

Kurt scowls, but pads around with his feet in the soft ground in search of something hard. He hits
one and bends down, glowering as he sinks his hands into the mud, grabbing the object and pulling
it up, fighting with the sand that’s hell bent on keeping this clam for itself. Kurt plucks it free,
crying out in victory, clearing away the mud to look at his prize.

He frowns when he realizes what he’s found instead.

“I have a rock,” Kurt grumbles, tossing it aside.

“Clam,” Sebastian calls in the meantime, sounding excessively pleased.
Kurt searches around and hits upon another hard object. He plunges ahead, grabbing and quickly yanking up the hard ovoid.

“I have a…nother rock.”

“Clam!” Another metallic clank follows.

“Rock…”

“Clam!”

_Clunk._

“Rock!”

“Clam!”

_Clunk._

“ANOTHER MOTHERFUCKING ROCK!”

“Clam!”

Sebastian can barely get the word out as he walks over to the bucket, and snickering, drops his eighth clam in.

“What the hell!” Kurt turns, seeing Sebastian’s smug face and tosses a handful of mud his way, which Sebastian doesn’t dodge nearly quick enough. “When did I become Charlie Brown! I’m getting all the gall-darned rocks.”

“Gall-darned?” Sebastian chuckles. “Really?”

“Just…help me with this! Please! So I don’t go back to the house thinking I got covered in filth for nothing.”

Sebastian sighs, his eyes still shimmering with tears from laughing so hard, but he takes pity on Kurt and decides to show him the finer points of digging for clams. Kurt watches Sebastian move around the mud, feeling with his feet in the dense muck. He stops in a spot and his eyebrows shoot up.

“Okay,” Sebastian says, holding out his arms and beckoning for Kurt to join him. “Come here and feel this.”

Kurt rolls his eyes and trudges over to join Sebastian, pressing the ground with his foot till he finds Sebastian’s foot, and then feels for the hard object he is standing on.

“Do you feel that?” Sebastian asks.

Kurt nods.

“Can you feel the ridges and the ribs? How it’s not completely smooth?”

Kurt nods again.

“Go ahead and dig that up.”
Kurt bends over, his hip rubbing against Sebastian’s legs as he reaches into the mud to find the hard lump they’ve been standing on. He misses the way Sebastian shifts, the way he groans softly, caring only about the first clam he has ever dug up. Kurt pulls the creature out and raises it triumphantly in the air, spattering them both with a spray of dirt.

“Is that the best you can do?” he asks.

“Your turn!” Sebastian says, his voice sounding tight as he moves to a different area of the mud flat to continue digging clams. “Now, get about twenty more of those, and we’ll be ready to go.”

“I got one!” Kurt greets.

“That…that’s great, Kurt,” Sebastian says, his voice sounding tight as he moves to a different area of the mud flat to continue digging clams. “Now, get about twenty more of those, and we’ll be ready to go.”

“Twenty!” Kurt groans. “Ugh!”

“Yup,” Sebastian says with a strange, eerie cheerfulness. “And I forgot to mention…the person who finds the least carries the bucket back to the house.”

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Kurt groans, complaining loudly as he lugs the bucket along the rocks, grasping the handle in both hands and hoisting it in front of him, using his body for support and leverage. He has to stop every half a minute or so to put it down, his hands stinging and red after only ten minutes.

Kurt never quite makes it to twenty. The tide comes in hard and fast, flushing the boys back up onto the rocks, but Kurt is proud of the ten or so he did manage to find, his competitive diva side trying not to acknowledge that Sebastian found nearly three times as many, if not more.

But the proof is in the pudding as Sebastian bounds ahead and Kurt flails behind, burdened by their dinner.

“What do we do with these guys now?” Kurt says, trying to distract himself from the weight and the pain with light-hearted conversation, flinching when the metal cuts into his skin. Sebastian turns around when he hears Kurt’s question, and comes to a full stop when he sees him limping along. He sighs, walking back along the trail to reach him, putting a hand on his arm to stop him, and sets the bucket down. Sebastian takes off his socks, ringing out as much of the mud and water as he can. He takes Kurt’s hand and wraps one sock around it, then does the same to his own hand.

“You get one side,” Sebastian instructs, “I’ll get the other. And try not to fall on your ass again and drop the bucket, please. I don’t relish the idea of going back and digging for clams in the dark at high tide.”

“So, you don’t mind losing me at sea,” Kurt says, finding it hard to be too upset when Sebastian is helping him without being asked, “but the clams…the clams we have to keep safe!!?”

“Priorities, babe,” Sebastian says with a wink, picking up his side of the bucket and pulling Kurt along in tow as he holds onto the other. “Right now I’m so hungry I’m pretty sure I can polish off this whole bucket by myself. Besides…you’d float.”

“You still didn’t answer my question,” Kurt says, stumbling to keep up, focusing on shadowing Sebastian’s footsteps on the rocks and not on the way the muscles of his arm bulges and shifts under the weight of the bucket. Kurt is amazed to see Sebastian like this; a hunter-gatherer, getting his hands dirty and doing this kind of manual labor, such a bizarre juxtaposition to the Sebastian Smythe who lives on a million dollar estate, who spent time abroad and attended an expensive private school. Kurt is finding this rough and rugged side a tremendous turn on, and not just because of the emphasis on Sebastian’s physical beauty. There’s something to be said about a man...
with money who doesn’t just snap his fingers and make things appear.

There’s no doubt in Kurt’s mind that Sebastian could have called any number of stores or restaurants within a twenty mile radius and had something delivered, but digging for clams is about more than just dinner. It’s about spending time together, about sharing a part of himself with Kurt…and to a degree, probably about getting Kurt filthy and making him look like an ass.

“When I was changing into my board shorts I took another look around…” Sebastian stops and readjusts, and Kurt takes the opportunity to do the same. “I found a box of pasta and a bottle of white wine, so I’m thinking we steam them, and serve them over spaghetti.”

Kurt cannot help but be skeptical about Sebastian’s ability to cook competently after the great French toast fiasco of just a few days ago, but it doesn’t sound too complicated. His mouth salivates to the point of drooling at the sound of clams steamed in white wine, and he tries his best to walk faster.

They make it back to the beach house as the sun dips down below the horizon, lighting up the sky in a brilliant array of champagne pink and pale gold, the blue ocean darkening to nearly a solid indigo when Kurt turns to look at it again from one of the stalls of the outdoor showers. They wash off quickly to avoid trailing mud in the house, trying to ignore the way their shoulders bump together under the lukewarm water while they rinse the clams, though Kurt’s eyes might linger a bit on the way Sebastian’s tan skin contrasts against his own alabaster complexion beneath the spray. Maybe his breathing speeds up with the thought of Sebastian’s hands running along his wet skin, his heart thrumming with the image of them sharing lazy kisses; gentle, leisurely, unrushed, spending all the time in the world lavishing attention on each other.

Kurt wishes he knew what it would take to convince Sebastian to join him in a shower. (Tomorrow, Kurt might learn to be careful what he wishes for.)

Kurt feels the night breeze prickle over his skin and only then becomes aware that the shower of water has stopped. His eyes drift up and he sees Sebastian staring down at him, his eyes hooded, bordering in the neighborhood of something breathless and raw, but now is not the time to explore it.

By the time they make it to the kitchen, Kurt doesn’t feel like he’s carrying a bucket filled with just clams, but the beach, the ocean, the sunset, an entire hive of bees pregnant with honey, and Sebastian – the smile that touches his eyes, his genuine laugh, and his kisses…so many awe-inspiring kisses.

“Geez, princess,” Sebastian grunts the final few steps. “You must have gotten way too much sun. You look positively loopy.” Sebastian pulls the bucket out of Kurt’s hands and sets it on the kitchen island, and Kurt realizes he has a huge, goofy smile on his face. “Why don’t you hop in a shower and I’ll get this started.”

“Are you sure?” Kurt asks, already heading for the bathroom. Sebastian shakes his head as he watches Kurt disappear down the hall.

“Don’t…stop…come back…” Sebastian murmurs, smiling as he pulls down a large pot from the cabinet and fills it with water.

***

Kurt strips off the grimy clothes and sets them carefully over the tub, at this point wondering why he even bothers since they are positively ruined. He looks at his naked body in the mirror,
scrunching his nose at the layer of gunge that still clings to him despite their quick rinse. His eyes fall on the various bottles of his skin care regimen lined up neatly on the sink beside bottles of product he assumes are Sebastian’s. He smiles, walking his fingertips from bottle to bottle. It all seems so startling domestic that for a moment Kurt freezes, stupefied by the notion that so much of who they are can blend so seamlessly. Kurt intersperses the bottles, creating a pattern of his-mine-his-mine-his-mine until the perfectly sized row of Clinique-Neutrogena-Dior represent what Kurt is aiming for – us.

Kurt sets the temperature level to scalding in an effort to melt away the scum, kind of like dry cleaning without the Martinizing. He leans against the cool, powder blue tile and watches the remains of the day slide off his skin – dust, sand, and sweat pool in the water around his feet before spiraling down the drain. He scrubs his skin twice to get rid of the mud and glares at the presence of a few new freckles he’s seemed to inherit along the way, hoping that his precious miracle serum from the Dior Snow line will take care of them for him.

Kurt stays in the shower longer than he plans, inspecting every inch of his skin obsessively for residual mud, sand, and God knows whatever else might have been lurking in the quagmire they trekked knee deep in. When he finally gets out and dries off, he notices that a couple of the bottles on the sink have gone missing and his knees go weak at the thought of Sebastian stepping into the bathroom while he was showering to retrieve them.

He returns to the kitchen, half-expecting to see every pot, pan, and plate stacked in the sink, with the addition of some food item scorched beyond repair, pasta hanging from the ceiling, and the poor clams trying their best at making a break for freedom. Instead, Sebastian is adeptly plating their food, his hair wet, skin attractively flushed, wearing a similar white t-shirt and cotton sleep pants as they both wore the night before. Sebastian doesn’t look up when Kurt enters the room, but smirks as he goes about his work.

“I hijacked another bathroom,” Sebastian explains. “You took so long I was afraid you might have drowned, so I thought I’d give you another ten minutes.”

Kurt shakes his head and laughs.

“Thanks for your concern.”

Kurt hops up onto a bar stool and watches Sebastian pour a thin sauce from a pan over a plate of pasta piled high with opened clams.

“I have to admit I’m impressed,” Kurt concedes. “After your disastrous attempt at making breakfast, I thought for sure this might be out of your depth.”

“I’ve never had to make anyone breakfast before,” Sebastian says, and Kurt’s not sure why, but the comment grips a hold of his heart and twists. He knows he’s going to have to put any jealousy over Sebastian’s past conquests behind him if they’re going to forage ahead, but he didn’t expect any jokes about that now, not when they were here alone together.

“So, does that mean you’ve made dinner for somebody then?” Kurt asks. He means it as an answering taunt, but it comes out bitter and defensive.

Sebastian’s eyes are soft when they lift from the plate to look at him.

“Never,” he says, and it sounds reassuring and unerringly honest, so Kurt shelves his jealousy, reaching out to take the plate that Sebastian offers him.
“Come on.” Sebastian hands Kurt a bottle of water that he brought in from the trunk of the Mustang and a set of silverware, and carrying his own dinner plate and bottle of water, leads them into the living room. There’s a flat screen t.v. mounted to the wall, but the boys opt instead to sit in front of the picture windows with the lights turned low, watching the tide crash into the shore while they eat their dinner cross-legged on the floor, a selection from Rachmaninoff playing on a compact Bose stereo sitting in the corner, the music filling the room from tiny speakers stationed in different areas so that the sound comes at them from all around.

Kurt twirls his spaghetti delicately, conscious that even though Sebastian is making an effort to look disinterested and nonplussed that he’s watching Kurt, waiting to see his reaction. The first bite touches Kurt’s tongue and the flavors that fill his mouth are intense, fresh and sublime, somehow seeming to form a single taste that sums up their entire day. The dry white wine manages to hold on to its subtle sweetness beneath the salty tang of the clams that remind him heart and soul of his morning at the beach. It’s not just something for his taste buds to savor; it’s an honest to God emotion. Kurt decides then and there that he is going to hold on to Sebastian with both hands for as long as humanly possible since he has no intention of eating anything but this one dish for the rest of his life, even if it requires hours of combing through a bog every day at sunrise and sunset.

The sacrifice to Puck’s wardrobe might just be worth it.

Kurt closes his eyes to relish every bite, every slide of the pasta around his mouth, the last traces of alcohol firing along his tongue, the satisfying combination of flavors unveiled when the flesh of the clams explodes between his teeth. He sighs, opening his eyes, and sees Sebastian staring at him, his lips parted, his expression hungry, but possibly, Kurt would like to believe, for a much different reason than want of food.

“This actually borders on something close to romantic,” Kurt says, daintily twirling more spaghetti around his fork.

“Hey, now,” Sebastian says, mimicking offense. “You don’t know me, Kurt, alright. I’m romantic as fuck.”

Kurt laughs, bringing the pasta and seafood to his lips and taking a bite, chewing deliberately to give himself time to think. Kurt swallows and takes a sip of his water before he continues.

“You’re kind of right, though,” Kurt says, moving what’s left of his food in a path around his plate. “I don’t really know much about you, do I?”

Sebastian’s expression drops a bit, shifting to melancholy, and he shrugs.

“If that’s important to you…”

“It is,” Kurt interrupts, matching Sebastian’s look with one of his own, full of questions he wants to ask and misgivings that he wants to clear up, but mostly a confirmation that without a shadow of a doubt he is right where he wants to be.

“Okay.” Sebastian nods, looking conflicted, but he pushes it aside, standing and extending a hand to Kurt to help him up.

“Leave the plates,” he says. “We’ll get to them in the morning.”

Kurt is sure Charlotte wouldn’t approve of them leaving dirty plates on the living room floor to get dried out and crusty, but he decides not to mention it, seeing as they are headed to bed, and Sebastian is leading the way.
They separate to brush their teeth because no matter what Kurt will most likely never feel comfortable doing that in front of anyone. Preparing for bed in what he has affectionately labeled ‘the blue room’, Kurt’s sense of déjà vu switches into overdrive, except this time he’s even more nervous than he had been the night before. He doesn’t know why but he is starting to get the feeling that in this arena, where Sebastian should conceivably be able to take the lead, he seems more content to follow – for now at least, which puts Kurt in the position to lay out the boundaries.

Sebastian wants to take things slow, which gets harder now that all Kurt seems to want to do is speed things along.

They’re going to need to agree on a middle-ground.

Kissing? Yes.

Touching? Uh…somewhat…

Rutting? Still up in the air.

Kurt runs his hands through his hair and looks at himself in the mirror.

‘Just relax,’ he tells himself, ‘and let whatever happens happen.’

About eighteen more self-help slogans later, Kurt walks to the bedroom and finds Sebastian standing right where he was last night, in front of the windows looking out at the ocean, body still rigid, expression still unsure, and more than anything Kurt wants to find the key to breaking through that tension. This time when he shuts the door and Sebastian turns to look at him, Kurt runs headlong and leaps into the bed, sinking into the mattress and letting it bounce him back, the comforter wrapping around him end over end like a burrito.

“So, mud is for toddlers, but bouncing on the bed is perfectly acceptable adult behavior?” Sebastian’s voice has an edge of uneasiness, but Kurt’s stunt has the desired effect. He’s laughing and climbing into bed, grappling to get Kurt unwound from the blanket.

“Yup,” Kurt confirms, “because unlike mud, jumping on the bed won’t ruin my clothes.”

“Believe what you want to, babe,” and there he is. The suave, over-confident king of innuendo is back, and the atmosphere loosens up around them. Kurt rolls the comforter flat and climbs underneath on his side, while Sebastian crawls in on the other.

Sebastian lies on his back and stares at the ceiling, and Kurt lies on his side and watches him. In the silvery light of the waxing moon bathing the room, Kurt can see contemplation flicking through his thoughtful green eyes.

“What are you thinking?” Kurt asks.

Sebastian turns his head to face Kurt, looking almost surprised by the question.

“I was thinking…I don’t remember the last time…” Sebastian sighs with frustration, as if nothing he can think of to say is good enough. “I’ve never spent a day like that with someone before. I liked it.”

Kurt bites his lip and nods, a strange sensation of pride flourishing within him that he doesn’t feel right to owning up to out loud.
“What are *you* thinking?” Sebastian reciprocates with a sly smile, and Kurt decides that this moment, this peaceful, laid back, light-hearted moment is as good as any to make his move.

“I was thinking that I’d like to touch you,” Kurt says, and Sebastian’s smile morphs from his usually smug façade to sincerely dumbstruck. “Actually, I’ve been kind of thinking about it all day.”

Kurt doesn’t give Sebastian time to object or himself a reason to second-guess. He reaches across the invisible boundary that seems to divide them, grabs a handful of Sebastian’s shirt below the collar, and tugs towards him lightly. Sebastian follows, rolling onto his side and then getting up on his hands and knees. Kurt shifts to move beneath him, putting Sebastian in a better position to hover over his body.

Kurt watches all the conflicting emotions play over Sebastian’s face as their eyes meet, and it seems logical that every step from here on out should be natural.

“Do you want to kiss me?” Kurt asks, curious where all this confidence is coming from all of a sudden; excessively glad that it doesn’t have to come from a bottle.

Sebastian tilts his head, eyes focusing on Kurt’s mouth more than his eyes.

“Pretty much all the time,” he whispers.

“Then why don’t you do it more?”

Kurt means it as a friendly jab, not even a serious question. He doesn’t really want an answer; it’s simply a way to let Sebastian know that he has permission, blanket permission, to lay claim to Kurt’s lips whenever and wherever he wants. But it stops Sebastian in his tracks, and he pulls away a bit.

Kurt watches Sebastian fluster, stumble over ideas and thoughts, trying to pinpoint just the right one, and suddenly Kurt is charmed all over again. This brilliant boy who loves books, who reads and digests and savors each one, can borrow any number of words, select from a bevy of quotes and expressions to fit his current emotion, and if he did, Kurt knows he would most definitely swoon. He considers telling Sebastian that, but he can’t, because Kurt can tell from the slightly pained look on Sebastian’s face that the words he’s struggling over are his own; he has ownership of the ideas he longs to express. Kurt can’t take that away from him. He’ll sit patiently and wait.

“I like that I get to touch you,” Kurt confesses, intervening, relieving Sebastian of the burden to come up with an answer to his rhetorical question.

“I like you touching me,” Sebastian says through a shy smile.

Kurt slips his hands beneath Sebastian’s shirt, running them up his back, fingers dancing along his spine, and Sebastian starts to uncoil. Kurt can feel it; tendrils of apprehension siphoning away beneath his fingertips. Sebastian’s eyelids close as he absorbs Kurt’s touch, sinking down slowly to get closer to Kurt’s body, until he’s supporting his weight on his elbows, resting his forehead against Kurt’s, rubbing his nose gently against Kurt’s, lips barely brushing.

Kurt’s hands follow Sebastian’s spine back down to his hips and in a fluid motion that begs no permission, slips beneath the waistband of his pants to palm boldly over the smooth skin of his ass.

“Oh, Kurt,” he sighs in a single, broken breath that fills Kurt with an overwhelming desire to hear more of it. He reaches further, fingertips brushing the backs of Sebastian’s thighs. Sebastian drops his head down the short distance and kisses him, and the hunger from earlier, from all the times
Kurt caught Sebastian watching him, resurfaces. It’s possessive, unrestrained, spurred on by the brazen journey of Kurt’s hands as they close in around Sebastian’s hips and pull his body down further so that Sebastian can feel him, feel the way he reacts to Sebastian’s body. Kurt’s hands fit into the sway of Sebastian’s back, in that curve where his hips join the swell of his ass, and he pins Sebastian against him, rolling his hips up to meet him.

Kurt shoves Sebastian’s shirt up as his hands continue to move, leaving it to pool around his shoulders, but Sebastian reaches a hand up and tugs it off swiftly, tossing it blindly to the side, letting it land somewhere on the floor. Kurt’s eyes are ravenous as they sweep over Sebastian’s exposed chest, so close that he can kiss him, taste him at his leisure, and he does, leaning up to trace patterns around his nipple with his tongue, kissing across his clavicle, nipping along it with his teeth.

“Is this okay?” Kurt whispers against his skin, knowing he’s already taken this farther than he thought he would tonight.

“More than okay,” Sebastian whimpers.

Sebastian nuzzles against Kurt’s neck, pushing him lightly back onto the bed, and latches onto a spot at the juncture between Kurt’s shoulder and his neck, sucking with gentle brushes of his tongue throughout. Kurt moans, wrapping his arms around Sebastian’s waist and this time Sebastian collapses against him.

“Oh, Bas.” Kurt’s voice trembles beyond his ability to control it, and Sebastian sucks harder in response.

Kurt releases Sebastian to fight with his own t-shirt, hating that Sebastian’s decadent skin is pressed against him but he can’t feel it. He tugs up sharply, and Sebastian lifts off him to help, pulling it over his head and tossing it in the same direction as his own.

Sebastian’s body pressing him into the mattress, feeling him skin to skin, hips rolling down to meet his, gives a whole new definition to the word ‘hot’. Kurt is engulfed by Sebastian’s heat. It radiates off him in waves, everywhere they touch, every place his lips caress, every murmur against Kurt’s neck. It’s a scorch; a brand. It leaves Kurt with one crystal-clear message that he repeats over and over until he has no choice but to follow the rhythm of it with his whole body.

*I call him mine.*

Sebastian’s fingers toy with the waistband of his pants, fingertips running along the elastic on the inside, sending shivers shooting over his skin, sparking across every nerve ending. Kurt puts his hand over Sebastian’s, ready to take the lead, guiding him beneath the soft fabric. Kurt holds his breath, waiting to see what Sebastian will do with this new freedom. In an instant, a tremendous surge of blood abandons his head in favor of southern locales, and that’s when it hits him; an equally immense rush of exhaustion slamming into him, impossible to ignore.

Kurt grinds his teeth beneath Sebastian’s kisses, wrestling to keep the yawning at bay. His eyelids stay closed longer every time they flutter shut, getting heavier and heavier as the weight of the long day pushes down on him, forcing his mind to meander away.

“Kurt?” He hears Sebastian’s voice through the cloak of sleep, weaving through the gaps and holes that close up tight as soon as they appear, and with his mind he grabs for the sound, desperate to let it lead him back to the beach house and the bedroom where Sebastian’s lips, his caresses, his whole body waits for him.
Kurt feels his lips move; a voice he scarcely recognizes mumbles nonsense words, unintelligible, and Sebastian laughs. Warm lips press against his forehead, and the tremendous heat that had him trapped to the bed lifts like a mist and floats away.

In his head, with what little stream of consciousness he has hanging on with both hands, Kurt screams in an effort to wake himself up.

‘No, Kurt! Not now! Don’t you dar...’
“If I never get around to saying it, thank you for coming here with me…”

A whisper. Barely a sound. Kurt doesn’t even know if it’s real, but he holds onto it, lets it play over and over again in his mind. It tickles his ear, dances around his head, and he wants to follow it, but he is quite literally dead to the world. Kurt’s eyelids refuse to open. His body won’t move. He tries and tries to command his limbs to do anything, but only succeeds in giving himself one whopping bruiser of a headache. All around him he senses the world opening up slowly and trying its hardest to lead him along with it. First, that soft voice in his ears. Then, a slight tingle against his cheek, spreading out from the point of touch and branching like vines over his skin, crackling as it leaps from synapse to synapse. Finally, his conscious brain comes fully alive, ready and willing to start the day. His mind is completely awake; now he needs his body to follow suit.

This is the kind of sleep Kurt hates. The kind you have to fight tooth and nail to be free of.

Luckily it doesn’t last all too long, fragmenting here and there with the wiggle of a toe or the twitch of a finger. He flares his nostrils and purses his lips; sucking cool, refreshing air into his hot, sticky mouth. He can taste his own tongue; a thick, heavy lump nestled between his teeth and his inside cheek, and he cringes with disgust.

His joints are stiff and his muscles sore as he starts to bend his knees and elbows, groaning into the oddly quiet room around him. He manages to persuade heavy eyelids to peel open, and struggles to see past goo and gunk and other less attractive remnants of sleep. His heart sinks like a stone; simply breaks free of its muscles and tendons, and jettisons itself straight into the churning acid of Kurt’s stomach when he discovers that he is the one waking up to an empty bed this time. His head darts quickly around as protesting vertebrae snap, as if the boy he’s looking for might not have gone missing. He might just be misplaced, hanging out by the windows watching the waves, or washing up in the bathroom. Kurt strains to listen beyond the room, out into the rest of the house. The only noise he can make out above the rolling of the waves on the beach below is a vague and distant mechanical hum somewhere nearby; but other than that there’s nothing.

Sebastian is gone.

Kurt runs an exasperated hand through his mangled bed hair. He has a daunting flashback of the last time Sebastian ditched him before he woke up, when Julian told him that sometimes Sebastian needs to be alone to work through his issues and figure things out. That time Kurt didn’t hear from Sebastian for days. Kurt has sort of made peace with that aspect of Sebastian’s personality. He isn’t trying to change him; but it was one thing when they were home in Ohio. Out here in North Carolina…

Where did he go? When would he be back?

“Great, Kurt,” Kurt chides himself. “Good going. You couldn’t just stay awake for…what…twenty minutes? An hour? You had to fucking fall asleep!”

Kurt could only imagine what a blow to his ego it would be if someone fell asleep on him after trying so hard to seduce him, to convince him that he wanted to move on, to go to the next level. Kurt fumbles around behind him for his pillow, needing something to scream out his frustration into. When he slams his hand down onto the bed, it comes in contact with something cool and
smooth; something that doesn’t feel like the soft cotton sheets. He lifts his hand and the foreign object flutters down onto the mattress.

It’s a folded piece of white, lined, legal paper with his name written on it. He unfolds it and scans it over once, his nose scrunching.

How did he not notice that Sebastian has the handwriting of a serial killer?

‘See, this is how you do it, Hummel. If you’re going to leave the house before someone else wakes up, you find a piece of paper (this one is from a pad in the kitchen, btw) and a pen (in the kitchen, too) and you write a note. This way people don’t think you’ve run off. Please remember for next time.

Sebastian

P. S. I went to the store. Be back soon.’

Kurt rolls his eyes at the irony.

“Hypocrite,” Kurt murmurs with a goofy smile on his lips, his entire aching body awash with relief. Kurt reads through the letter again, and then puts it underneath his pillow. (He’ll need to explain that one to himself later, but now is not the time.)

Kurt stretches out on the bed, much more at ease with the state of his relationship, wincing as he hears joints pop and unidentified bones crack. He rolls over onto Sebastian’s side and hugs the boy’s pillow, breathing in deep to catch the faintest hint of shampoo that lingers there. When he realizes what he’s doing, he groans. He’s gone from teenage boy to thirteen-year-old girl in the space of about twenty-four hours.

But now he’s stuck with the task of what to do until Sebastian returns since there’s no way he’s going back to sleep. That swing out on the porch is forever calling to him, and his romantic sensibilities are dying to answer that siren call, but the moment would be absolument parfait with a steaming hot mug of fresh coffee, and Kurt knows there isn’t a single bean in the house. He stares at the swing, inches his body towards it a hair, but after some silent debating he decides to put that daydream on hold just a bit longer.

A random blast of water manages to reach the windows from the churning waves below, striking the glass and leaving a grainy residue of dark brown sand. Kurt stares at the clods with a tiny wrinkle of his brow. The view from the huge windows is intensely gorgeous. He’s never been in the presence of something so life-affirming (except, perhaps, Patti LuPone’s memoir, of which he recently concluded his fifth read), but it would drive him completely bonkers to live in a place 24/7 where cleaning the windows did absolutely no good. No matter what, they would always be streaked with salt crust and grime.

Suddenly, he is struck by the memory of the deplorable mess of ruined clothes that he left in the bathroom last night. He launches himself off the bed, grumbling as he goes to retrieve them.

“Great. Just great. You fall asleep while making-out, you leave filthy clothes lying around. What an amazing houseguest-slash-sort-of-kind boyfriend you’re turning out to be.”

Though tidying up around the house isn’t really a bad idea. If he remembers correctly, there is still the matter of some grungy dishes on the living room floor, waiting to be chiseled clean. He reaches the bathroom, pushing the shower curtain aside to grab at what must be by now stiff, wrecked clothes, but they’re suspiciously absent. Then the mechanical hum starts to make sense. All along
he’s been hearing a washing machine running. It didn’t dawn on him right away because the gentle
murmur of this particular machine sounds much different that the hulking Kenmore washing
machine Carole bought for their house when they all moved in together.

Kurt follows the sound of the machine to the mud room to check on its progress. Kurt has to give
Sebastian an A+ for effort, but Kurt is pretty sure that nothing short of an exorcism is going to be
able to revive Puck’s ruined clothes. Kurt stops short when he sees the matching ruby colored GE
frontload washer and dryer (probably considered the Cadillac of laundry machines) lined up neatly
side by side against the mudroom wall. He’s pretty sure this model has a steam clean setting. He
leans forward just to be sure. Yup, they have a steam clean setting. Of course they do.

Well, there’s that then.

Kurt stares at the machines as the clothes percolate on their individual racks, and a warm spot
blooms in his chest. Sebastian Smythe, Lothario extraordinaire, did Kurt’s laundry. Not because he
had to. Not because Kurt asked him to. But he did it anyway. Of course, maybe Sebastian didn’t
want to leave his inconsiderate houseguest’s messy clothes lying around the bathroom all day long,
but Kurt would much prefer to leave that option out of the equation.

With that out of the way, Kurt moves on to the matter of the dishes, but when he reaches the living
room they’re gone as well, and Kurt can’t help but wonder when exactly did Sebastian wake up
since he definitely walked more and did way more digging than Kurt did last night, and Kurt felt
like he had been run over by an eighteen-wheeler this morning. On top of that, the clock on the
wall reads barely 8:30. Kurt has no idea when Sebastian left or what time he can expect him back,
but he’s eager for him to return, even though he knows Sebastian probably has one hell of a ribbing
in store for him. Kurt can imagine Sebastian mentally gearing up his forces and gathering
ammunition as he picks through produce. Kurt doesn’t care. He doesn’t quite feel right being in
this big beautiful house without Sebastian in it.

The house is beyond incredible with a view to die for…but Sebastian is the reason Kurt enjoys
staying there.

Kurt heads back to the bedroom to send Sebastian a text message, and then take advantage of this
time alone to indulge in a little frivolous social media. He fishes out his laptop from the pyramid of
luggage and fires it up, grabbing at the same time for his phone. The moment he unlocks his screen
he is assaulted by forty new text messages – thirty-nine from Rachel and one from his dad:

To Kurt (Monday 1:15 p.m.)

Still haven’t heard from you yet that you’re safe. Please let me know when you can. Love ya,
kiddo.

This message he answers immediately.

To Dad (8:39 a.m.)

Sorry I missed your text and sorry I didn’t call to let you know I was safe. I’m having a fabulous
time! Thanks for understanding how much I needed this. Love you, too.
He re-reads his message once more before hitting send, smiling at how easily he can admit that despite all the bumps and strange twists they had encountered on their first day in North Carolina, he could without a doubt chalk it up as one of the best days he has had in a long time.

He looks at the remaining mountain of messages and sighs, but he can’t say he’s necessarily surprised. Finn probably called Rachel the second he woke up on Sunday, which pretty much corresponded with the time of the first incoming message.

To Kurt (Sunday 11:16 a.m.)

Didn’t we talk about this?

To Kurt (Sunday 11:18 a.m.)

A fling over the summer is one thing, but the two of you alone on vacation!? 

To Kurt (Sunday 11:22 a.m.)

Remember your soulmate?

To Kurt (Sunday 11:25 a.m.)

I think we need to stage an intervention. Skype me ASAP!!!

Kurt swallows hard, eyes stuck on that word ‘we’, wondering who ‘we’ might actually mean. ‘We’ as in he and Rachel (otherwise known as ‘the royal we’); or ‘we’ as in he, Rachel, and a couple of other Glee clubbers she finagled getting a hold of? If she did succeed in tracking people down, what would his Facebook wall look like?

Suddenly the thought of ‘frivolous social media’ doesn’t seem quite so relaxing.

Kurt continues to scroll down, and from then on the messages get progressively more demanding, some of them surprisingly insulting, and he’s half tempted to erase them altogether, completely unread, except that hidden amongst this pulp might be the rare Rachel Berry apology, an elusive creature long sought but not often seen. Deep down he knows Rachel loves him; he knows that her sometimes unintentionally offensive comments come from a place of caring. Hadn’t they worked so hard to get to the friendship they have now? Didn’t they have similar drives and ambitions that at first drove them apart, but in the end pulled them together? He knew from the get-go that being friends with Rachel meant dealing with ‘Rachel Berry – Diva’ as well as ‘Rachel Berry – Mother Hen’. But lately he is getting sick of tolerating her personal agenda and her lofty ideals. Blaine fit those ideals because he seemed so fucking shiny, like a bright new penny, unspoiled and unspent. (Yeah…look at how well that turned out.) In fact, some days Kurt could honestly believe that those two were actually twins, separated at birth.

Which would probably explain why it is so easy to be angry with her right now.

So maybe Sebastian didn’t fit her perfect idea of a boyfriend, or the future…or whatever. Maybe
his armor isn’t quite as shiny; maybe it’s a little dented. That didn’t make him any less worthy of respect or consideration than Blaine.

Rachel Berry would have to get over herself, but seeing as that isn’t going to happen today, Kurt moves to a different screen and composes a message.

To Sebastian (8:57 a.m.)

Thank you for the note. Message well received. Any idea on an ETA? BTW, you could have just texted me, you know.

It astounds Kurt that he managed to miss this sheer number of invasions into his privacy until he gets a return text from Sebastian that sheds some light as to how he did.

To Kurt (8:59 a.m.)

I didn’t want to risk it. I didn’t see you with your phone all day yesterday. ETA – I’ll be there when I fucking get there…maybe sooner. Keep your panties on.

After reading Sebastian’s text, Kurt’s first instinct is to bitch back, “Shows what you know. I never go anywhere without my phone”; but then he realizes that Sebastian is right. He didn’t have his phone on him yesterday; not at the bee farm, and he definitely didn’t take it on their little mollusk hunt. No, yesterday his sole focus was sun and fun and Sebastian, and damn it, that’s what this vacation is going to be.

Kurt Hummel – unplugged.

He shuts his laptop down and puts it back in its case, shoving it as defiantly as he can while still being really gentle with it beneath the rest of the luggage, determined not to lay eyes on it again for the rest of his stay at the beach house. A yawn sneaks up on him, and he stretches his arms out while it rolls through his body, listening to his knees and elbows pop and crack all over again. He massages his shoulders with achy, uncooperative fingers, but then finally gives up, wondering if he would be able to conjure up a way to bribe Sebastian into giving him a massage if he was there.

‘Probably not after last night.’

It’s an evil voice in his head that sounds viciously like Sebastian, and it makes him want to sob; roll around on the floor like a two-year-old throwing a tantrum and weep absurdly until all the humiliation and torment purge from his system. He stares at the floor and considers it, rolling his shoulders around in their sockets. The relentless surf pounds outside, much more softly now that the tide has gone out, and he gets a more mature, more feasible, much more inspired idea. He sheds only his pajama pants and changes quickly into a pair of sweats (this time his own castoffs from his short-lived career on the McKinley High football team as placekicker), and throws on the hoodie he has permanently purloined. He returns to the bathroom to grab a towel and stops for a moment to sort out the issue of his dangerously disgusting morning mouth with a huge dollop of toothpaste and several quick swipes of his toothbrush, chasing that with a capful of Sebastian’s nightmare-inducing mouthwash. Without bothering to slip on a pair of shoes (which makes him
feel like such a local) he heads down to the beach, making sure to stop by the kitchen for a bottle of water as well as the fabled pad of paper and pen from Sebastian’s note. He finds it sitting on the counter where it had escaped his notice before, pen by its side, with another message scribbled on the top sheet –

Kurt,

This is it.

Sebastian

Kurt rips off the note, folding it in half and sticking it in his pocket, then jots down a brief note of his own.

Sebastian

At the beach.

Kurt

***

Kurt lays out the towel on the sand, and with painstaking care smooths out the wrinkles, breathing in deep lungfuls of salty ocean air, trying to focus his mindset and clear his head. He can certainly appreciate the rejuvenating powers of a seaside vacation. It’s all so Austen-esque, harkening back to a simpler time when a holiday by the sea was the preferred method of treatment for everything from depression to dysentery.

Of course Kurt can also appreciate the benefits of soap and penicillin, but the odes written about those things aren’t quite as poetic.

He faces the water in the mountain pose, inhaling until every atom of his being is comfortably full of clean, fresh, new oxygen; and he begins sun salutations, sliding effortlessly from one yoga position into the next with the ebb and flow of the water as his guide. He extends the pathways of his mind in search of his place of peace, reaching out beyond the confines of what is merely his physical body to divine his own personal rode to serenity and tranquility; which the calm, soothing ocean should be able to provide, but leaving his earthly tethers behind proves harder than it should be.

He should have thought of doing yoga before he checked his text messages.

He takes another cleansing breath, and holds it, balancing in plank position, trying to not let his mind wander back to some of the more unfair and, frankly, unladylike things Rachel texted.

‘Kurt, don’t you think you’re being a little selfish and immature?’

‘Kurt, I thought I explained to you how the revenge thing doesn’t actually work.’

‘Kurt, I’ve never seen someone run so quickly in the direction of inevitable heartbreak.’

‘Kurt, JBI says he saw Sebastian selling weed to Stoner Brett. Are you dating a drug dealer??’

He almost loses his footing as he crawls backward and creeps forward into cobra pose, nearly forgetting to breathe altogether.

Maybe he needs a better guide than the ocean.
As he shifts into his second dog pose, a familiar voice, one he can’t believe how much he’s missed all morning, hums appreciatively from across the sand.

“When you texted me, I didn’t know you were planning to put on a show.”

Kurt’s first instinct is to bolt up from his blanket and into Sebastian’s arms, but regardless of the burden he carries on his shoulders, he shows some restraint. He pointedly tsks Sebastian, stretching his tailbone farther up into the downward facing dog position to better show off his…assets.

“Seriously,” Sebastian says, and Kurt latches on to how Sebastian stutters on the first ‘s’, “you should have given me a schedule. I would have been back sooner.”

Kurt contemplates continuing the rest of the cycle, but as he transitions into a lunge and Sebastian wolf-whistles, Kurt abandons his yoga for the day, knowing there will be no finding nirvana with Sebastian there to distract him. At least, no finding it out on the beach.

Then again, it is a private beach.

Kurt stands, reaching for his water bottle, cracking the lid and taking a sip.

“No, no, no! You’re not done,” Sebastian says with a teasing tone of mock panic. “Please say you’re not done.”

Kurt takes a few more sips from his bottle, preening at the thought that Sebastian would want to spend the rest of the morning watching Kurt bend over and stretch out in the sand. Maybe he can convince Sebastian to join him.

“Ugh, you are such a teenaged boy,” Kurt says, capping his half-full bottle and dropping it back on his towel in the sand.

“Thank goodness,” Sebastian says with a dramatic roll of his head on his shoulders. “I was beginning to think I was a pariah.”

And so swiftly, without a proper hello, Sebastian goes for the jugular.

Kurt had almost been able to forget. He drops his head into his hands and groans, loud and long and wounded.

“Am I going to find you out here every morning?” Sebastian says, putting off the inevitable round of teasing for just a while longer.

“Yup,” Kurt replies, uncovering his reddening face slowly, dragging the pads of his fingers down his temples to his cheeks. “My time out here is a gift. I’m determined not to take it for granted.”

Kurt turns as if prompted by some invisible cue in time to see two curiously strong waves collide at the point of a nearby rock, threatening to drench him. Sebastian grabs Kurt indignantly by the waistband of his sweats and tugs him back away from the rush of water, which barely touches the edge of the towel, darkening a strip of the fabric.

“Never turn your back on the ocean,” Sebastian chuckles. He wraps his arms around Kurt’s body in a way that tells Kurt that Sebastian may have actually missed him, too. Kurt feels it in the strength of his embrace, the stroke of Sebastian’s hands up and down Kurt’s arms as if despite the thick hoodie Kurt might still be cold. Kurt relaxes into it, absorbs it, even through the thick fibers of the clothes he’s wearing. Sebastian’s warmth seeps into Kurt’s body and Kurt finds the peace he was searching so hard for.
“Well, next summer…”

Sebastian’s words cut off abruptly, and Kurt doesn’t need to turn and look to know the expression on Sebastian’s face. It’s the same as his own, of someone who has so quickly become accustomed to something that might not last till next summer.

“If I never get around to saying it, thank you for coming here with me…”

Kurt pauses to think about those words he has been holding onto so tightly.

“Have I thanked you yet?” Kurt says, not turning his head to make sure Sebastian hears him. He just knows that he does.

“You mean, between yelling about the bees and bitching about crawling through the mud?” Sebastian says, squeezing Kurt tighter. “Then, no.”

“Well, then I wanted to officially thank you…” Kurt takes Sebastian’s hand from where it’s running a path up and down his arm, cradling it in both of his own, and then bending to kiss the back of it gently. There’s something in the way that Sebastian goes still behind him that Kurt does not expect, like he’s waiting to see what Kurt will do next. What Kurt does is turn in his arms, because for the next thing he plans to say, he wants Sebastian to see the sincerity in his eyes.

“I also want to apologize.”

Sebastian doesn’t respond right away, but then sways back comically, pulling Kurt with him.

“Wow.” Sebastian laughs and looks up to the sky, as if an explanation waits there for him among the dissipating wisps of stringy white clouds. “A thank you and an apology all in one day? And it’s not even noon. I should circle this day in red on my calendar.”

Kurt tugs Sebastian closer, uncomfortable at being mocked when he’s trying so hard to be serious.

“Please, don’t…can you just…”

“And what huge grievance are you apologizing for? Hmm?” Sebastian kids. “I haven’t been gone that long.”

Sebastian catches Kurt’s chin between his thumb and his index finger, tipping it up so that he can peer directly into Kurt’s clear blue eyes.

If there was ever a time where Kurt feels put on the spot, now would definitely be that time.

“About last night…” Kurt starts, but Sebastian leans in quickly and kisses him. The speed and the ferocity of the kiss knock Kurt back, and if Sebastian hadn’t been holding him, he might have stumbled off into the sand.

The kiss doesn’t last long unfortunately, but it is positively potent. Kurt knows his cheeks are so hot they are close to bursting into flames.

If there’s one thing that Sebastian Smythe knows (out of the apparent ton of things that Sebastian Smythe knows) it’s how to deliver a kiss.

“I’m sorry,” Sebastian says smugly, having the gall to not even look affected by that kiss, “was there something you wanted to say?”

Kurt glares at Sebastian with the spark of a glowing ember in his eyes and a perplexed smile on his
lips. He opens his mouth but then closes it again when he sees Sebastian’s gaze focus on the
movement.

“I wanted to apologize for mmrph…”

Sebastian’s lips claim his again, swallowing Kurt’s rushed second attempt at an apology. His hand
moves from Kurt’s arm to his neck, massaging and kneading in the way Kurt loves so much,
Sebastian’s fingers alleviating Kurt’s stress with the warmth of his caress.

Sebastian pulls away from a muddled Kurt, who wastes no time springing into another apology.

“Iwantedtoapologizeforlastmmph…”

Kurt laughs into Sebastian’s mouth when he kisses him, this time threading his fingers into Kurt’s
hair to keep their mouths locked together, his tongue sweeping smoothly along the contours of
Kurt’s lips, stopping his laughter dead in his throat. Kurt gives up – gives up apologizing and gives
up resisting. Gives up being sorry for things he can’t control or avoid or change. When Sebastian
breaks their kiss for this third and final time, he looks deep into Kurt’s eyes in a poignant and
serious way that makes Kurt’s heart stutter strangely in his chest, like the erratic fluttering of a
wounded bird.

“Are you trying to apologize to me for not staying awake long enough for me to feel you up?”

It sounds kind of crass and gross, but also brutally to-the-point, and Kurt finds that even though
that was exactly what he was doing, he doesn’t have an answer for Sebastian.

“I g-guess...I kind of was…”

Sebastian’s usual smirk turns into a slight frown.

“Who in the fucking hell ever told you that was something you needed to apologize for?”

Kurt thinks…really, really thinks about an answer. Who did tell him he should feel sorry for not
always being ready, willing, and available? Movies, commercials, magazine ads, some of his
favorite romance novels… Once he starts the list, he almost can’t stop. The funny part is he didn’t
even realize it was happening; that some small part of his subconscious was being programmed
with this message, and even though the message wasn’t his to begin with, he feels ashamed for
carrying it.

Sebastian sighs and holds him tight, kissing him one last time but on the forehead.

“Come on,” Sebastian says, dipping Kurt low with one arm and reaching out with the other to pick
up the towel and shake out the sand. Kurt holds tight to Sebastian’s arm and laughs at the gesture,
flattered by the idea that Sebastian would rather dip him like in the dreaded waltz than to let him
go. Maybe that dance class should have been held on the beach instead of in a stuffy community
center, Kurt muses, though Kurt is confident that a change of heart and not a change in locales is
the catalyst that improved the way they move together.

“Teach me how to make French toast,” Sebastian commands as his way of asking, dragging Kurt
back up to the house. “I like the idea of learning how to make you breakfast.”

How to make you breakfast.

Not ‘how to make breakfast’. Not ‘how to make someone breakfast’.
How to make you breakfast.

Kurt feels light. He feels giddy. He feels so light and giddy that he lets himself be dragged along now that he has a little something more to hold on to.
An enigma. That’s the only way Kurt can think to describe this particular phenomenon; a riddle for future philosophers to decipher. How is it that a brilliant, athletic, cultured teenaged boy, with the fishing skills of Finnick Odair and the minimalist cooking potential of an aspiring Mark Bittman, becomes thoroughly flummoxed when faced with eggs, sugar, and bread?

“I just don’t get it,” Kurt says, slowly shaking his head in astonishment at the mounting horror laid out before his eyes.

“I…breakfast just isn’t my thing, alright?” Sebastian grumbles, lunging to turn off the stove top before the contents of the frying pan light on fire…again.

When Sebastian said he had wanted to learn to make French toast, Kurt took the opportunity to teach him to heart, starting out by asking Sebastian to recreate for him the dish that nearly destroyed his own kitchen on Saturday. Kurt originally figured it was the combination of adrenaline, nerves, and Julian that had caused Sebastian to rifle through the entire contents of their drain board and cupboard in the valiant effort of creating a simple meal.

But no. Kurt can see from the mess before his eyes that Sebastian is quite capable of demolishing a perfectly good kitchen entirely on his own.

“Okay, okay,” Kurt says, putting his hands up in defeat of his methods. “I think we got off to a bad start here.” He leaps down from the bar stool he has been sitting on and circles the kitchen, surveying the damage. “Yeah, I think we took a definite step back.”

“Yeah, you definitely did.” Kurt doesn’t want to laugh, especially when he saw how hard Sebastian tried, when he can see in his eyes, brimming with frustration and anger, how badly he wanted to succeed.

“Let’s start from the beginning,” Kurt decides, even with his stomach growling like a famished tiger.

“Wouldn’t you rather pop some bagels in the toaster and be done with it?” Sebastian asks, leaning back against the counter, shoulders hunched in defeat.

Kurt rounds on him with narrowed eyes, brimming with ferocity, and flips his hair out of his face.

“Excuse me, sir,” Kurt sneers, performing an exaggerated z-snap in the air, “but somebody mentioned wanting to learn how to make French Toast.” Kurt crouches to get into Sebastian’s line of sight. “And besides, I like the idea of you making me breakfast.”

Sebastian’s smirk returns, a little at the corners at first as if he’s trying to resist Kurt’s charm, but he can’t. He lowers his guard and falls in line behind Kurt.

“Now, this is best done with stale bread, so let’s lay out a couple of slices to dry out while we clean up this mess.”
Sebastian tackles the dishes while Kurt lays out the bread on a paper towel by the stove. He then grabs a bowl from the drain board and gathers the ingredients to start the batter. Sebastian rinses and dries the plates and silverware, the whole while watching Kurt with curious eyes. Kurt cracks the eggs with one hand, tossing the broken shells into the trash, and Sebastian whistles in appreciation of his dexterity.

“How did you learn to do that?” he asks, putting the last dish in the cabinet and turning his full attention back on Kurt.

“My mom,” Kurt says with a proud but wistful smile. “She loved to cook. We used to bake together every weekend, and then we’d have tea parties out on the front lawn.” Kurt measures out some milk, keeping his eyes glued to his task, worried that any expression of sympathy from Sebastian might move him to tears. “She used to say that baking is a skill that requires equal parts science and art,” Kurt continues, folding the sugar and eggs together. “We were going to open a bakery together. We were going to grow our own ingredients, grind our own wheat, raise our own bees for honey...”

Kurt ventures a glance in Sebastian’s direction and warms all over at the look of sincere interest in his grass-green eyes, the way his body relaxes against the kitchen island, waiting patiently for Kurt to continue.

“I was kind of an overly ambitious child,” Kurt explains.

“You?” Sebastian says with wide-eyed mock surprise. “Overly ambitious? Nope. I don’t see it.”

Kurt rolls his eyes and reaches for the vanilla. Sebastian sees Kurt’s hand heading for the small amber bottle and grabs it instead; unscrewing the lid and joining Kurt at the mixing bowl. Kurt hands Sebastian a teaspoon.

“A teaspoon should be plenty,” Kurt advises. Sebastian nods, holding the spoon up to eye level and pouring the liquid out with a series of stops and starts, determined to be exact. Kurt bites his lip to hide his smile, watching the look of deep concentration on Sebastian’s face as he carefully measures out a teaspoon of vanilla and tips it into the batter.

Kurt finishes mixing and starts dipping slices of bread.

“So, where did you learn to cook?” Kurt asks, expecting a similar story.

“In France,” Sebastian says, picking up a few slices of bread and helping Kurt dip. “It was an elective at the school I attended and I decided to give it a shot. It was more attractive than some of the other options, and I figured where better to learn how to cook than France.”

Kurt thought back for a moment on that amazing clam dish from the night before. What did Sebastian say he put in it? Clams, white wine, pasta, probably some garlic from somewhere in the kitchen...less than five ingredients; that sounded about right for provincial cooking.

The way Sebastian puts emphasis on the word ‘attractive’ makes Kurt wonder if maybe it was a someone that inspired Sebastian to take that class, but the subject of Sebastian’s time in France seems to be a touchy one, and Kurt decides to avoid it for now.

“Well, I think we’re ready for a pan,” Kurt says.

“I don’t think so,” Sebastian says, stopping Kurt in his tracks with the sudden seriousness of his tone.
“Why not?” Kurt asks, tilting his head, his eyebrows knitting together.

“Because we’ve only used one bowl so far,” Sebastian points out. “Don’t we need to dirty at least seven more bowls and a couple of plates before we even start cooking?”

Sebastian grins and Kurt chuckles, shaking his head and putting a pan on the stove to heat.

“You would think so,” Kurt says, spraying the hot pan down with non-stick cooking spray, “but surprisingly no.”

They cook the battered slices in concert; Sebastian laying out the pieces on the pan and Kurt flipping them at the right time. Sebastian marvels at how Kurt seems to simply know when the side facing the heat is perfectly browned. Kurt can’t help noticing how working together like this in the kitchen feels so familiar. It reminds him of the days when he and Blaine would do this – mostly at Blaine’s house when his folks were gone because the Hummel-Hudson household was rarely ever truly empty, and having Finn and Puck interrupt them all the time broke the illusion. Playing house, which is a term Kurt always hated, but here it seemed to fit. Spending time together, sleeping in the same bed together, waking up side by side. Kurt and Sebastian have been playing all along, and Kurt is both excited and terrified to see how things will change once they stop playing and things start getting a bit more real.

The boys are so starved they start eating their breakfast in the kitchen; frantically blowing on the toast as they take it right off the stove, and then breaking the slices into pieces, dancing them between their fingertips to keep from burning themselves. They pop the still scalding pieces in their mouths, dodging them with their tongues so they can attempt to chew. Kurt nearly loses it when Sebastian accidentally bites his own tongue and screeches loudly, but then gets his when he snorts while he laughs and nearly inhales his food.

They go through this routine with about four slices of French Toast before they are sated enough to eat properly. Kurt and Sebastian take the last slices of their breakfast to the living room to eat like they did the night before, on the floor in front of the windows with their view of the ocean which Kurt knows will never get old for him.

“So, what is the plan for endangering our lives today?” Kurt teases.

“Nothing dangerous,” Sebastian says, rolling his eyes. “In fact, we’re going to lie out on the beach for most of the afternoon.”

“Sounds exciting,” Kurt deadpans. He puts a bite of French Toast in his mouth and sighs, enjoying his breakfast more now that he can take the time to taste it.

“Oh, but it is,” Sebastian says. “We’re conserving energy for the real main event which starts later on tonight.”

Kurt coughs and almost chokes on his breakfast.

***

They throw on their swim suits right after the last crumb of French Toast is eaten and head off down to the beach. Kurt slides his sunglasses down the bridge of his nose so his eyes can sweep the shoreline out over the water to the horizon. The sky is an impossible periwinkle blue, and the wispy clouds from earlier in the morning have burned completely away. The calmer tide rolls onto the shore with gentle swells swaying to and fro. Everything about the beach is clear and untroubled.
They set their beach towels side by side in the sand, on a crest overlooking the water. Sebastian slathers on the bare minimum of sunscreen, obviously not too concerned with the prospect of getting tanner before the summer ends. He reclines on his towel, propped up on his elbows and watches Kurt painstakingly cover every inch of exposed skin in thick, white lotion.

“Are you sure you put enough on?” Sebastian jeers. “Because we’ve got a whole other bottle up at the house if you think you’ll need it.”

“Ha, ha,” Kurt responds with a dry, unamused laugh. Having finished off his legs, Kurt squeezes another generous dollop into his palm and starts on his arms and chest. “I don’t worship the sun the way you do. I’m not interested in freckling any more than I already have. Besides, I actually care about insignificant things like basal cell carcinoma and melanoma.”

Sebastian shakes his head and turns his face up to the sky, shutting his eyes and soaking in the sun.

“It’s a scary world you live in, princess.”

Sebastian hears Kurt grunt with strain, and opens his eyes, catching Kurt bend his arm awkwardly trying to reach a spot on his back.

“You sure do like to make things harder than they need to be,” Sebastian comments. He wipes the remaining sunscreen off Kurt’s hand and climbs onto his towel, sliding over behind him. With slow, overlapping circles, Sebastian rubs the lotion down Kurt’s back and massages it into his skin. Kurt bends forward at the touch of Sebastian’s hands firmly kneading at the muscles in his back. Kurt brings his knees up and crosses his arms over them, dropping his head and closing his eyes, absorbing every stroke of Sebastian’s fingertips, pinching his lower lip hard between his teeth to silence a moan. Sebastian stops for a moment and Kurt is about to complain, but he hears a rather obscene sputtering noise from the nearly empty bottle and smiles knowing Sebastian isn’t done yet.

When Sebastian touches Kurt again, it is much more gentle, more soothing, exploring down his spine, traveling back up along his ribs, mapping out the cut of his muscles, finally settling on his shoulders and working at the knots there. It feels so intimate, sitting nestled together on the beach with Sebastian massaging his back, relishing the calm and the quiet, and Kurt comes to the conclusion that maybe waiting on sex won’t be so bad if they can enjoy more of this middle ground; cooking and talking and touching and getting to know each other.

Sebastian pats Kurt on the shoulder, placing a single kiss on the spot where they meet, little more than a brush of his lips against Kurt’s skin but it nearly sets his whole body on fire.

What was that Kurt was thinking about waiting on sex?

“I’m going to go for a swim and cool off,” Sebastian says, and confident that Kurt wouldn’t join him even if he outright invited him, Sebastian stands in one fluid movement and races off down the sand into the water.

Kurt watches Sebastian run, watches his muscular legs as they propel him along, and Kurt curses at himself in retrospect for never catching a single Dalton Lacrosse game. Sebastian hits the water, raising his knees high to make it past the swells, then dives beneath the breakers, his whole body swallowed by the white caps. Kurt holds his breath until Sebastian emerges again, farther out than Kurt expected, the defined lines of his back glistening with droplets of water which reflect the sunlight and wink back at Kurt, tempting him to get off his ass and follow.

“Damn,” Kurt sighs with a single thought in mind.
Sebastian emerges several more times, each time swimming further and further out into the distance and Kurt wonders how far Sebastian can realistically go. He remembers seeing a few sandbars jutting out of the water when the tide was right. Maybe Sebastian is heading out to one of those. Kurt squints against the starbursts of twinkling light playing across the water’s surface and sees what Sebastian is heading for – a bright yellow kayak bobbing on the water in the distance, its sole occupant waving at Sebastian, summoning him over. Kurt watches Sebastian head straight for it. Kurt squints harder and tilts his head, sliding his sunglasses as far up his nose as he can to get a better look at the man holding the oar. Even from this distance Kurt can tell that he’s a bit older, blond, tan, cut – a pseudo-boyfriend’s basic nightmare. He watches the two of them talk animatedly, discussion punctuated by genial laughter. Kurt wraps his arms tight around his knees, and for lack of anything better to do than seethe he improvises their conversation, the same way he and Rachel used to do during Spanish Telenovelas…before the main character inevitably got shoved down the stairs.

“Hi,” Kurt mocks in a high, whiny voice when the man steering the kayak starts speaking, “I’m extremely tan and hung like an ox. Paddle away with me back to my private island so we can have all sorts of aerobic and mind-blowing sex.”

“I can’t,” he says, in a more normal albeit lower register voice, not really wanting to make fun of Sebastian in this scenario. “I have a kind of…boyfriend…ish guy waiting for me on the sand. It’s sort of complicated.”

At that moment Sebastian turns, points his way and waves. Kurt raises an unenthusiastic hand and waves back. Sebastian and kayak guy talk a while longer, smiling and laughing some more. Then Sebastian does something that makes every hair on Kurt’s body stand on end. Kurt sits up straighter, his spine bristling as he watches Sebastian struggle up onto the back of the floating vessel.

Kurt shields his eyes with his hand and stares harder to be sure he’s seeing things correctly, that he’s not preparing to swim off and bitch slap a man in a kayak for no good reason.

Yup. Sebastian is climbing into the back of this man’s two person kayak, ready to go off God knows where.

Oh, hell to the no!

Kurt launches himself off the sand and heads straight for the water, tossing his sunglasses onto the beach towel, the light stinging his eyes and blinding him briefly, but Kurt doesn’t care. He knows basically where he’s headed. He can hear vague shouting, and picks out the mention of his name.

“Yeah, right,” Kurt mumbles as he makes his way out past the shallow swells. “Like I’m going to let you run off with long, tan and handsome.”

Kurt dives into the water with less grace and technique than Sebastian had, letting the liquid cool engulf his body, surrounding him and buffering away some of the rougher edges of his prickly temper.

Maybe he won’t exactly bitch slap kayak guy, Kurt decides, but Sebastian probably won’t be so lucky.

Kurt paddles with his feet, skimming along the ocean floor. When he finds it hard to hold his breath any longer, he kicks off the sand with his eyes shut to block out the salt water, and breaks through the surface. Kurt emerges from the breakers, running his hands through his hair and down his face, wiping away the water from his nose and eyes. He spins his head around to get his
bearings. Ahead of him he sees the kayak, Sebastian and his new friend paddling towards him but still quite a distance away. He tries to turn again to see how far he swam on one breath, finding it hard to fight against the current which has suddenly become stronger since he is farther out. He manages a quarter turn and realizes his horrible mistake. He freezes, floating in the water, his eyes wide. Heading his way at an alarming rate for a creature that doesn’t actively swim is a jellyfish. Correction. A swarm of jellyfish, moving along with the rise of the swells, tentacles trailing out behind them.

Now all the yelling makes sense.

Kurt’s never seen creatures like these up close before. In fact, the only time he’s ever seen a jellyfish was on a National Geographic video in biology class. A mere foot from his face like this, they seem tranquil, hypnotic, and utterly terrifying.

Kurt flails, trying to hurl himself backward, but the more he struggles the more he feels like he’s staying in the same spot. Buoyant gelatinous domes drift towards him, venomous threads fanning out around them, heeding none of the curses or ridiculous warnings he’s currently lofting in their direction. The only thing he succeeds in doing is swallowing about a gallon of sea water. He tries to bat them away, pushing hard against the wall of water flowing in a diagonal past him, but it only seems to attract them to his retreating body. He bounces around on one leg, the cross current beneath the surface forcing his other leg up while he attempts to walk backward, parallel to the shore.

Maybe this isn’t the best thought out plan of Kurt’s life.

Realistically he should fear for his life. (Multiple jellyfish stings can kill people, right?) But more than that he’s dreading the hours of sardonic lecturing he’s going to get if he gets stung by these animals. He hops backward a few more steps, slipping and ducking beneath the swell, coming up with his eyes squeezed shut, preparing for pain.

Kurt hobbles along one-legged in this fashion, maintaining his balance in the relatively calm water, but as the universe so often likes to do to Kurt Hummel it delivers a big heaping helping of ‘fuck you’ in the form of a pesky undercurrent that sweeps his foot out from under him, his floating leg shooting up closer to the surface and brushing something that immediately stings like a thousand spines on fire the minute it touches his skin.

The pain knocks the air out of him, erases every thought from his head. A second current sweeps his other leg out from under him, but before his head dips down below the surface, the yellow kayak slips silently between Kurt and the oncoming gelatinous horde. Strong arms grab Kurt, lifting his upper body clear of the water and bending him halfway over the kayak.

“Are you unintentionally stupid, or is this something you actually work at?”

Kurt sucks in sharply, regaining some of his stolen breath, enough to growl back, “Well, excuse me, Michael Phelps…” Kurt is so out of breath he feels like he’s yelling to be heard, “…but it escaped my notice when exactly you told me ‘Be careful if you go in the water, Kurt! There might be jellyfish migrating this way!’”

From the front seat, the man steering the kayak snickers.

The sound reminds Kurt of the plan that compelled him to leap into the ocean to begin with.

“Aren’t you going to introduce me to your friend?” Kurt sneers, knowing that he shouldn’t be bitchy, that he should be grateful to this man for helping save him from his own stupidity.
Sebastian catches the jealousy in Kurt’s voice, and Kurt can feel Sebastian shake with anger. This is definitely new. Kurt has seen Sebastian in various stages of mad, but this time Sebastian isn’t run-of-the-mill angry. He’s positively infuriated.

“Kurt,” Sebastian says in a clipped, menacing tone, “this is Mark. He’s the lifeguard from the other side of the beach. He warned me about the jellyfish and offered to bring me back to shore in his kayak so I wouldn’t get stung. Mark, this is my boyfriend Kurt, and he’s an idiot.”

It takes a moment for what Sebastian said to truly sink in, but when it does, when it worms through the folds of his brain, repeating once or twice to be sure he understands it right, Kurt gasps, his chin dropping as the kayak hits a swell and his mouth fills with ocean water. He sputters and coughs, making the least attractive noises in history, his mind still trying to deal with the fact that Sebastian called him his boyfriend.

“Okay, things are going to get choppy as we approach the breakers,” Mark warns them, “so hold tight.”

Kurt scrabbles to find a place on the slippery kayak’s skin to grab a hold, but Sebastian wraps his arms around him and keeps him locked in place against his body.

Mark maneuvers the kayak to right before the breakers so as not to ground his boat and potentially drag Kurt’s body over the gritty, hard packed sand.

“I have to go back to the main beach,” Mark says, helping to hold Kurt steady while Sebastian eases out of the kayak and back into the water. “Are you guys good from here?”

“Yeah, we’re good,” Sebastian assures him.

Kurt wants to object. He needs an ambulance, a doctor, emergency medical care. He’s sure he can feel the venom working its way through his bloodstream, trying to reach his heart and lungs. Oh, sure, he’s fine now, but in 24 hours he could be dead.

In one swift motion, Sebastian sweeps Kurt off his feet and makes a dash for the beach, racing past their towels and heading straight for the house. Kurt loops his arms automatically around Sebastian’s neck and rethinks his position on a trip to the hospital.

‘Yup,’ Kurt decides. ‘We’re good.’

The thrill of being whisked away from danger like Fay Wray in The Legion of the Condemned is clouded by Sebastian’s cursing with every step and compounded by the fact that Kurt’s skin feels like it is trying to peel away from his leg.

Sebastian makes his way to one of the outdoor showers and with one hand throws the door open. Kurt comes to his senses, the euphoria of the moment shoved aside by the memory of something he once heard about treating jellyfish stings (something he thinks he overheard when Finn and Puck were watching The Simpsons, or South Park maybe, but that doesn’t necessarily make it untrue).

“Please please please tell me you aren’t going to pee on me!” Kurt cries. “I don’t think our budding relationship will survive if you have to urinate on me.”

Sebastian’s severe mask cracks with a laugh and his patented smirk when he turns on the shower temperature to warm and holds Kurt beneath it, letting the water wash over the red and inflamed area of his leg. Kurt hisses, going rigid at the contact of the spray against his skin, but as soon as the remains of the venom start to rinse away, Kurt’s tense body relaxes. Sebastian sets Kurt down carefully and leaves without a word, returning a minute later with a glass bottle of white wine.
vinegar. Sebastian kneels and examines Kurt’s injury, pulling something off Kurt’s ankle that smarts like barbed wire dipped in acid.

“Those were sea nettles,” Sebastian says, removing the last stragglers. “The wound’s not deep so you probably just brushed it.” Sebastian looks up at Kurt through the falling water. “Thank God it didn’t get you on the ass.”

Sebastian douses the wound with vinegar and Kurt clenches his teeth against the pain, groaning loudly.

“Oh…oh holy fuck, that hurts!”

“Keep it down, will you?” Sebastian remarks, pouring most of the contents of the bottle on Kurt’s leg. “I’m sure the whole beach can hear you. I don’t want people getting the wrong idea.”

Kurt grits his teeth when Sebastian stands and lets the warm water replace the vinegar. He leans against the shower wall and rests his head back, staring blankly up at the cloudless sky.

“Why the fuck did you do that, Kurt?” Sebastian shakes his head. “I mean, I waved. I yelled. It was like you intentionally didn’t want to listen to me.”

Kurt thinks of a dozen excuses he can give to avoid fessing up to the truth, but he doesn’t want to lie to Sebastian. He doesn’t want to lose the trust that he’s been given; the trust that took this long to earn.

“Because,” Kurt starts weakly, “I saw you out there talking to some handsome guy, and I just…I don’t know…”

“What? Did you think that Sebastian the whore was going to run off with some random guy and leave you on the beach waiting for me?”

Kurt cringes as the bitterness in Sebastian’s voice seeps beneath his skin like a viscous oil, making him feel dirty regardless of the cleansing spray of water.

“Can you blame me? I mean, how many times…” Kurt bites his tongue. He doesn’t want to dig up old dirt. He knows it isn’t fair. Kurt shakes his head, starting over from an alternate perspective. “Of the two of us, whose supposed soulmate left for California and then cheated?”

Sebastian opens his mouth to respond, but stops short of speaking, pressing his lips together in a tight line, holding back whatever comment he is about to make. Kurt doesn’t want to fight, but he would be lying if he says he isn’t burning with curiosity.

For some reason he has a feeling that comment, whatever it was, had nothing to do with Blaine.

“Don’t lump me together with him,” he says instead.

“I’m not. Excuse me if I’m gun shy.”

Sebastian nods, but doesn’t look at Kurt, choosing to keep his eyes fixed on the sky above them.

Kurt reaches out hesitantly and takes Sebastian’s hand. Sebastian sighs and opens his fingers against Kurt’s palm, lacing their fingers together. Kurt looks between the two of them, at their linked hands and breathes out slowly.

Getting stung. This is what it took to get Sebastian in the shower with him.
If he had known that yesterday, he might have taken off his canvas jumpsuit at The Busy Bee and swatted madly at those little fuckers.

“So…do I get to call you my boyfriend now?” Kurt looks at Sebastian, batting his eyes innocently.

“What?” Sebastian looks back at him, trying to appear shocked and confused. “When did that happen?”

“Well, you told Mark I was your boyfriend…” Kurt tugs Sebastian’s arm and Sebastian gravitates towards him. He shelters Kurt from the cooling water with his body, hands braced against the wall on either side of his head. “…and you know lifeguards. Big blabbermouths. He’s going to tell everyone.”

“You think so?”

Sebastian leans into Kurt and Kurt pulls Sebastian closer, close enough till their bodies press flush together with the now cold water dripping in rivers around them, rolling off Kurt’s shoulder and running down Sebastian’s chest, dribbling over Sebastian’s thigh and trickling onto Kurt’s knee.

“Yeah,” Kurt answers quietly, his eyes drifting over Sebastian’s face, from the wet bangs clinging to Sebastian’s forehead, to his green eyes growing darker as they stare boldly back at Kurt, and finally flicking to his lips, slightly parted. They always seem to end up in this place, this place of wanting and waiting where Kurt holds his breath and Sebastian seems to search Kurt’s face for permission to continue.

Kurt is beginning to grow very fond of this place.

Sebastian breathes Kurt in, the tip of his nose running down Kurt’s cheek, and that’s all it takes. That’s the last step. Sebastian kisses him; plain and uncomplicated. The pain in Kurt’s leg is faint, fading, far away from him. Kurt feels safe and secure, hidden beneath the frame of Sebastian’s arms. Sebastian trembles around him, and in that moment Kurt would give anything to know what Sebastian is thinking.

Not one to disappoint, Sebastian whispers into Kurt’s mouth, “This water is fr-freezing.”

“Maybe we should finish our shower inside,” Kurt suggests, sure this new bravado comes straight from Sebastian’s lips on his skin.

“We could always strip down real quick and take our shower out here.”

Sebastian pecking a line of kisses down Kurt’s neck is almost enough persuasion to make Kurt say yes.

“But, wouldn’t we have to walk back to the house naked?” Kurt asks, stretching out his neck in a silent plea for Sebastian to keep going.

“A-ha. Julian and I used to do it all the time. Pissed the hell out of Liv.”

Kurt twists his head to gaze down at Sebastian, who is already looking back, waiting for Kurt’s reaction.

“Wait…” Kurt says, putting his hand on Sebastian’s chest, “…give me a minute to picture that in my mind.”

Sebastian smiles, but then almost immediately scowls.
“Are you picturing…”

“Shhh,” Kurt says, staring off into space with a dreamy look on his face.

“You know what…” Sebastian reaches for the faucet and cuts the water off with a twist of his wrist, “after two weeks out here sand in your ass crack is pretty much going to become a way of life, so you might as well get used to it now.”

Sebastian drags him out of the shower by the hand he has yet to let go of with Kurt hopping behind to keep up.

“Aww, Seb,” Kurt whines, his entire body shuddering as he holds back a laugh. “I was just getting to the good parts.”

Sebastian turns and glares at Kurt square in the face, the laugh in Kurt’s throat dying before it reaches his lips.

“Because of your asinine stunt I have to take care of your sorry ass, so we’re going to go inside and grab a nap before dinner because no one’s getting any kind of sleep tonight…understand?”

Kurt nods once, his expression blank, not sure if what Sebastian said could be classified as a threat or a promise, but he doesn’t have time to weigh the options. Sebastian picks Kurt up over his shoulder and carries him the rest of the way, smacking him on the ass when he makes a fuss and squirms to break free. Sebastian lugs Kurt straight into his room and drops him indignantly on the bed, flopping down beside him.

“Geez, caveman, don’t I have any say in the matter?” Kurt asks, unable to suppress his laughter any longer.

“Nope,” Sebastian snaps, but at least he’s grinning now, and Kurt didn’t really mind being carried into the bedroom and dumped on his ass so much.

Actually, it was kind of hot.

They lay on their backs beside one another, and this time instead of one person crossing the breach, they meet each other halfway, like it’s becoming natural to reach across the bed and find a hand waiting to be held.

Kurt lies there awake, his mind racing as he stares blankly at the ceiling. He can’t remember the last time he took a nap in the afternoon, and even though he’s tired from swimming and crashing from the adrenaline levels in his body plummeting, it’s hard to think of sleep with Sebastian’s hand in his, his warmth seeping into Kurt’s skin. It’s too difficult for his brain to not constantly return to the conundrum of Sebastian, and all the things Kurt admittedly doesn’t know about him, all the things he should know about him. Their days together are numbered; Kurt knows this. Even without the original deadline of Blaine’s return to split them inevitably apart, the summer will come to an end and college will start, and even if they decide to see this through, it will be at separate schools, most likely in separate states, maybe even different countries.

Suddenly, Kurt’s chest tightens, and impulsively he blurts out the first thing that comes to mind.

“What’s your favorite color?”

Sebastian turns his head on his pillow and considers Kurt for a moment, then he bursts out laughing.
“What?” Kurt says affronted. “You said I get to learn stuff about you.”

“And that’s the first question you ask?” Sebastian asks, still laughing. “My favorite color?”

“Well, I don’t know it.”

Sebastian continues laughing and Kurt couldn’t feel more like an idiot if he tried; considering he got stung by a jellyfish while attempting to chase down a lifeguard he thought was flirting with his boyfriend that’s saying a lot.

“You know what? If you’re going to be an asshole, just forget it,” Kurt says, deciding sleep sounds like an excellent idea.

Sebastian turns his eyes back up to the ceiling and sighs.

“It’s green.”

Kurt rolls his eyes and snickers.

“Ahh…”

“What?” Sebastian shifts on to his side and glowers at Kurt.

“Ever the narcissist,” Kurt says dramatically. “Let me guess, green like your eyes are green?”

“No, princess,” Sebastian says, reaching over to pinch Kurt on the side, grinning cruelly when Kurt yelps, “green like the grass, or leaves.” Kurt raises a skeptical eyebrow at Sebastian’s answer, waiting for an explanation. “When we were kids, my mom had a chore for each of us that we would get to do with her. You know, a little parental one-on-one time with a dash of forced labor mixed in. I got gardening. It made me partial to the color green.”

Kurt makes a face and nods, filing this tidbit of information away, feeling a sense of personal triumph for learning it.

“So, what’s your favorite color then? Blue?” Sebastian kids.

“No,” Kurt says sheepishly. “It’s gold.”

“Ooo, like Oscar Award gold or Tony Award gold?”

“No,” Kurt says, defensive of his color choice. “Like pale champagne gold, or sunset gold. When the light of the sun barely peeks over the horizon and the first rays cut through the dark. That gold.”

“Mmm, okay,” Sebastian says. “I’ll buy that.”

Kurt watches Sebastian’s eyes drift shut, and Kurt knows he should let the conversation drop, close his eyes and take a nap in preparation for whatever Sebastian has planned later than night, but one more important question is niggling in his head, and he knows he won’t be able to rest with it playing in his brain.

“What college are you going to?”

Sebastian doesn’t open his eyes, but his lips curl up at the corners.

“Hmm, I’m not ready to answer that yet.”
“Why?” Kurt asks with the tiniest hint of a whine. “You said your parents already paid your tuition.”

“No, they have my tuition money set aside,” Sebastian clarifies. “I have a few options, but the appeal of certain ones keeps changing. I’m not ready to discuss it right now.”

“Okay,” Kurt relents, feeling no more relieved or comforted about their future as a couple than he did when the question first occurred to him.

“Go to sleep, Kurt,” Sebastian murmurs.

“Sebastian,” Kurt says quickly, wanting to catch Sebastian before he falls asleep, “would you do something kind of silly for me?”

Sebastian sighs.

“Kurt, I just got comfortable. I’m not giving you a lap dance right now.”

“No,” Kurt giggles. “Would you sing to me?”

Sebastian doesn’t answer Kurt, and he figures he asked him a second too late, but Sebastian opens his eyes slowly, examining the blue depths of Kurt’s eyes before he speaks.

“Yeah…uh…yeah, okay.”

Sebastian flips onto his back, and Kurt moves closer to him, draping an arm over his waist and resting his head on Sebastian’s chest above his heart. If it’s uncomfortable and not at all suited for singing, Sebastian doesn’t mention it.

“This is a song my mom used to sing to us when we were little.”

Kurt waits patiently, holding as still as humanly possible, not wanting to do anything that might make Sebastian reconsider. Sebastian clears his throat a few times, and after a long pause he starts singing softly, only loud enough for Kurt to hear.

'We have been gay
Going our way
Life has been beautiful
We have been young
After you've gone
Life will go on
Like an old song we have sung

When I grow too old to dream
I'll have you to remember
When I grow too old to dream
Your love will live in my heart

So kiss me my sweet
And so let us part
And when I grow too old to dream
That kiss will live in my heart

And when I grow too old to dream
Your love will live in my heart  
Oh your love will live in my heart’

Kurt listens to Sebastian sing, hanging on every word, his soothing tenor voice lulling Kurt to a place near sleep, but the growing tight sensation in his chest keeps him awake long enough to listen to Sebastian finish.

“That’s a pretty song…” Kurt mumbles through lips beginning to grow numb with exhaustion, “but it’s so sad.”

“Yeah,” Sebastian agrees, “My grandma used to sing it to my mom when she was little, I think. A tradition of depressing kids throughout the generations. I’ll probably continue it with my kids. You know, keep it in the family.”

Kurt wants to look up at Sebastian, to look in his eyes and see if he’s teasing, but his head is becoming too heavy to lift.

“You think about having kids?” Kurt asks, his voice muffled against Sebastian’s chest.

“Sometimes. Why? Is that weird?”

Kurt thinks about the question. Kurt has seen Sebastian in a dozen new ways since their arrangement began, ways that changed Kurt’s perception about as many times, but envisioning him as a father…and a husband. It was hard for Kurt to picture, but not altogether impossible. Seeing Sebastian with his family, the way they laughed and joked and supported one another made it easier.

“No,” Kurt says after a thoughtful silence. “It’s just so…optimistic of you.”

Sebastian chuckles, the movement shifting Kurt where his head lay and Kurt re-adjusted, pulling closer and wrapping the arm that snaked around Sebastian’s waist tighter.

“Optimistic. I guess that’s as good a way to put it as any.”

Kurt’s silence between his sentences grows, and Sebastian is sure he’s fallen asleep, but he shifts again.

“‘Bastian?’”

“Yeah, Kurt?”

“You have a beautiful voice.”

“Thank you,” Sebastian says softly, and Kurt can hear his smile.

Sebastian starts to hum the song over again, running his fingers lightly over Kurt’s shoulders and down his back, and with the sound of Sebastian’s voice filling his ears, he finds a way to fall asleep.
Chapter 24C

Chapter by fhartz91

Chapter Summary

Dear faithful readers;

Thank you all for your messages of support. I am so sorry this is so late, but when you read it I hope you’ll understand why. I am trying to move the story along with these characters at the speed I imagine they are going to in this relationship. At often times it is stressful, knowing how much everyone loves this story, and trying so hard to create something that’s both believable and in the spirit of the original, while simultaneously sticking to my own version. Either way, I hope you enjoy this installment. I will post to drop boxes and Live Journal in a few hours, but I wanted to make sure this went out to the members of the fandom who have waited so patiently for it.

Love;

Frankie

Kurt and Sebastian wake from their nap at roughly the same time, limbs lacing tighter together before their eyes blink open, bleary with sleep. The light in the room has gotten dimmer from when they first laid down, and the walls, the bed, and their bodies are bathed in a warm, golden glow. Neither of them thought to set an alarm before they drifted off to sleep, allowing their own circadian rhythm, synchronized now it seems by the rising and falling of the tides, to take control. Sebastian has plans for them but nothing is urgent, rushed or hurried – not with the day or the night, and nothing between them.

Kurt yawns, shifting to raise his arms above his head and stretch out fully on the bed, but he finds them twined with Sebastian’s. Kurt tugs gently but Sebastian holds them tight against his chest. He looks at Kurt with a blank, unreadable expression, and Kurt stares right back, for some reason feeling the need to let Sebastian know in the simplest way possible, with no words expressed – I’m here.

There’s a pause, a space between heartbeats more before Sebastian smiles, slow burning but happy; sweetly and sincerely happy. In one swift move that Kurt doesn’t expect, Sebastian climbs over him, stealing another moment to let his eyes linger on Kurt’s face before leaning in further and kissing him.

Kurt feels Sebastian breathe him in as their lips touch, and anticipation wells up within him, bubbling beneath his skin like a geyser constantly on the verge of erupting. He’s allowing Sebastian to set their pace for the most part, which leaves him aching to know when? When will it happen? When will Sebastian decide the time is right; that the stars have aligned and perfect is now? Does he have a plan in mind, or is he playing it by ear? As much as Kurt wants to scream into Sebastian’s mouth with the raw need that builds in his stomach every time Sebastian touches him, Kurt has to admit, the torture of not knowing is actually rather sublime.

Sebastian’s tongue slips between the seam of Kurt’s lips and touches his gently; tender, lazy
strokes, tastes and promises of things to come, all the things Kurt can’t help but look forward to. Kurt’s mind starts reeling. The play of Sebastian’s fingers across his skin, the warmth of his mouth, the way their lips move against each other unlocks a maelstrom of thoughts and memories that swirl and overlap until one distinct image pops unbidden to the forefront of his mind.

Kurt’s first time with Blaine.

Losing his virginity had been everything he had hoped and dreamed about for so long – beautiful, special, romantic. Even with the status of his relationship with Blaine the way it was, on this one account he had no regrets, but in many ways losing their virginities when they did was in some small measurement about staking a claim…a claim that might not have been necessary, ironically enough, if not for Sebastian Smythe. Before Sebastian had made a play for Blaine, whatever his reasons, Kurt felt he and Blaine had all the time in the world for firsts, sex being among them.

Back then, Sebastian was the enemy, dropping in from out of the blue to destroy everything that Kurt thought he wanted; but the Sebastian that Kurt knows now, the one who cooks magnificent dinners but burns breakfast, the one with an overwhelming and infectious love of books and music, the one who kisses like sin but sings like an angel, who wants a chance at love, a chance at love with Kurt, is so far removed from that cocky, meerkat-faced ass with the CW hair that sometimes it’s hard for Kurt to resolve that they are the same person. What would have happened if Kurt had met this Sebastian that day at the Lima Bean? What if Sebastian had made a move on him and not Blaine? Where would they be right now?

Sebastian pulls away slowly, watching Kurt chase his lips until he moves too far out of reach and smiling when Kurt collapses back onto the pillow with a whimper. Sebastian looks into Kurt’s eyes with a question building in the furrow of his brow and the crinkle of his forehead.

“Where did you go right then?” Sebastian asks, leaning low again, his lips teasing at the corners of Kurt’s mouth but his eyes clouded with worry.

Kurt teases back, planting nips to Sebastian’s kiss-swollen lower lip.

“Nowhere,” Kurt covers, not willing to bring up the subject of past rivalries during this crucial moment.

“Bullshit,” Sebastian responds, almost automatically, the corner of his mouth twisting into a sly, knowing grin.

Kurt doesn’t want to lie; he promised himself he wouldn’t, but he’ll be damned if he ruins any beautiful moment he gets with Sebastian, especially ones that involve getting lost in each other’s touches and kisses, the soft sound of Sebastian’s breathless pants as his tongue traces patterns over the contours of Kurt’s mouth, and the sunset lighting their skin.

“You’re right,” Kurt agrees. “That is bullshit. But I don’t want to talk about it right now. It’s not important.”

Sebastian scoffs. His smile slips and Kurt fears that it might not come back.

“Somehow I don’t entirely buy that.”

“Okay, how about this…” Kurt loops his arms around Sebastian’s neck and pulls him closer. “This is more important.”

Sebastian’s smile returns, brightening his whole face from his lips to his eyes, so spectacular that Kurt is almost sorry when Sebastian kisses him again and he can no longer see it, but he feels it
against his mouth, against his skin. Another kiss follows that one, and another, and another. Sebastian lays his lean, muscular body over Kurt’s, fitting them together, and the more that Sebastian does, the more Kurt begins to see how well they really do fit. Maybe they always did. Kurt just didn’t give himself the chance to notice it.

Sebastian sighs into the next and final kiss. His eyes flutter open, noticing the stretching shadows creeping across the floor toward them.

“Come on,” he says with as much enthusiasm as defeat. “Let’s grab a bite and get our asses going.”

“We…we could always stay here,” Kurt stammers, sheer force of will keeping him from attacking Sebastian’s lips as they retreat farther away.

Sebastian’s eyes widen and Kurt can see him sincerely consider his offer for a second before shaking his head with another strained, shuddering sigh.

“No,” he says, untangling himself from Kurt’s arms. “We have plans, and I have a feeling you don’t want to miss this.”

Sebastian’s eyes don’t leave Kurt’s face when he backs off the bed. He stands and stops mid-step to gaze at Kurt, letting his eyes travel down Kurt’s body with an appreciative grin, then turning and walking from the room.

Kurt sinks back into the pillow, letting the sting of frustration bleed away into the sheets around him before he even thinks of following Sebastian into the kitchen. As sublime a torture as Sebastian can inflict, Kurt isn’t sure how much more he can take before it starts doing some real damage to his psyche.

Kurt scrabbles down the length of the bed and hops off, wincing at the dull ache of the healing sea nettle sting, and follows Sebastian to the kitchen with heavy footsteps, trying not to limp too obviously.

“So, what’s on the menu?” Kurt calls out, watching Sebastian put a pot on the stove, and then rush to collect various bottles of dried herbs out of the cabinet.

“Leek soup.” Sebastian winks at Kurt. “Didn’t we agree to leek soup from here on out because our recent foray into café eating was getting too fattening for you?”

Kurt laughs, calling Sebastian’s bluff, but Sebastian raises an eyebrow, sending a significant look his way.

“Wait, you were serious about that?” Kurt asks, incredulous.

“Yup,” Sebastian says, directing his attention to the task at hand, filling the stopped sink with water and dropping a healthy bunch of leeks into it.

“But…but that sounds so…thin…” Kurt whines. He hops up onto a nearby stool to watch Sebastian’s creation come together, marveling at how he barely pays much attention to what he tosses into the voluminous silver pot; such a contrast from this morning when he painstakingly measured ingredients down to the nearest teaspoon. If Kurt didn’t know better he would think Sebastian is making things up as he goes along.

“It’s super thin,” Sebastian admits, reaching into the fridge and taking out a narrow, red carton; holding it up and presenting it to Kurt for his inspection. “That’s why you’ve got to put a ton of cream and butter in it to thicken it up.”
“Doesn’t that kind of defeat the purpose?”

Sebastian shrugs, pouring the entire contents of the carton into the waiting pot, holding it upside down after it’s empty to get every last drop.

“Come on, Hummel. Live a little.”

“Says the man who was flirting with the lifeguard while his boyfriend was swimming with killer jellyfish,” Kurt says with mock offense, putting extra emphasis on the word boyfriend, digging in a bit to get a rise out of Sebastian.

Sebastian stops cooking, slamming the empty carton onto the kitchen counter and taking a deep breath with his back turned. Without a word, he spins around and advances on Kurt so swiftly that for a brief, flickering moment Kurt doesn’t have any idea what he plans on doing. A wicked ember burns in his determined glare, but whether it’s fueled by anger or some other emotion Kurt doesn’t know. He can’t yet interpret Sebastian’s moods which sometimes change like the weather, but Kurt is pretty sure that whatever Sebastian plans on doing, it’s meant to put him in his place.

Sebastian puts his hands on Kurt’s knees and spreads his legs open wide so that he can fit between them. He wraps an arm around Kurt’s waist and pulls him close, crushing their bodies together hard so that it knocks the air out of his lungs, another hand securely holding the curve of his skull. Then Sebastian kisses him, God does he kiss him, and every single cliché Kurt has ever heard about the power of a single kiss makes perfect sense – toe curling, blood boiling, awe-inspiring – they are all there and more.

Sebastian kisses Kurt breathless, sucking his tongue into his mouth before he starts to speak.

“So, what is it you think I was doing again?”

Kurt can hear Sebastian speaking. He’s asking Kurt a question, but there’s no way that Kurt can come up with an answer. He would be completely surprised if there’s even a drop of blood left in his head that hasn’t already migrated to southern climes.

“Wait…what?” Kurt murmurs, inching closer, shamelessly trying to get Sebastian to kiss him again, but the smug boy simply steps away from his wobbly boyfriend, who suddenly finds himself struggling to learn how to use his bones and muscles again.

“That’s what I thought,” Sebastian says, going back to the large pot and its simmering contents.

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“So, you’re not going to tell me where we’re going?”

Kurt sits with his legs crossed, staring inquisitively at Sebastian from his seat in the Mustang, radio turned off specifically so Kurt can assault Sebastian with questions.

“Nope,” Sebastian says with a superior shake of his head. “It’s a surprise.”

“Well, the last surprise you planned could have gotten you killed.” Kurt crosses his arms across his chest with a huff.

“Stop being such a drama queen,” Sebastian drawls with an exaggerated roll of his eyes, “and enjoy yourself.”

Kurt rolls his eyes, a childish take on mimicking Sebastian’s gesture, and stares up at the cloudless
night sky.

Dinner was delicious. Kurt had had no idea that such a blasé vegetable could taste so exquisite, decadent and rich, but it seems like par for the course lately; Sebastian’s ability to astound him and change his perceptions in unexpected ways. Sebastian still wouldn’t give Kurt any inkling as to where he intended on taking him, but as curious as Kurt was about what Sebastian had planned, he almost couldn’t convince himself to leave the beach house with the promise of ‘more’ hanging in the air. That was until Sebastian kissed him, softly but possessively, and instructed him to wear the sexiest thing he brought with him. That one command definitely cemented in Kurt’s mind that they were going out, hell or high water.

The fact remains that Kurt wants Sebastian. He’s becoming desperate with wanting him. Sebastian knows it; he has to by now. Sebastian made matters worse while they were getting ready for the evening. After Kurt took his shower Sebastian led him to the bed, sat him down gently, knelt in front of him, and proceeded to wrap the jellyfish stings on his leg.

“You’re going to be completely useless after half an hour if you don’t keep this bandaged,” Sebastian said, applying a sterile pad to the wound and rolling gauze over it to keep it in place. Kurt simply stared in awe while Sebastian took care of him, the thought that Sebastian would want to take care of him still foreign and to a point confusing. After he secured the bandage and tied off the ends with the skill of a seasoned Boy Scout, Sebastian placed a small kiss on the knot. He looked up at Kurt with a devilish smirk and added, “There’s no way I’m carrying your ass around all night.”

Kurt shifts in his seat as the memory fades, turning his gaze back to Sebastian right as Sebastian reaches out a hand to switch on the radio. Kurt intercepts him and slaps the hand away.

“I’m not done with my interrogation, Mr. Smythe.”

“If you’re going to be a bitch all night, I’ll pull over and you can walk,” Sebastian groans.

“It’s a nice night,” Kurt mutters. “Maybe I wouldn’t mind walking.”

“Uh, yeah, I think you would.” Sebastian points out the windshield and off to his right in the direction of the water, indicating the longest stretch of bridge Kurt has ever seen. It spits out from the coast and into the water, going on for miles and miles, cutting through the black ocean on both sides.

“What the…”

Kurt spins his head around, trying to catch sight of the bridge from every angle. He leans against his window, peering past the traffic that has started to build up at the far end, only the red glow of brake lights visible in the distance.

“There’s usually not this much activity on the bridge,” Sebastian hints with a grin. “We might be here for a while.”

“Are they all going where we’re going?” Kurt asks, his mouth dropping at the sheer number of vehicles he can see stopped ahead of them, and now coming to a halt behind them.

“Probably,” Sebastian replies vaguely. “If you open your window a crack, you’ll most likely hear it before you see it.”

Kurt rolls down his window a touch so that the evening breeze rushing by doesn’t completely decimate his hair, and as if on cue he can hear a bass beat bumping…several bass beats, a
multitude of different songs blending together with different rhythms and tempos, punctuating the air, tearing through the night, growing louder and louder as they move along, touch and go behind the parade of cars.

They hedge along for about an hour, crawling at a snail’s pace, led by the diverse pounding music - from what Kurt can hear so far, mixed strains of rock, hip-hop, and house. Kurt peeks into the windows of the cars around them and sees some drivers with their heads thrown back on their headrests in frustration at the never ending cavalcade, but more people than that dancing enthusiastically to the music flooding the crowded bridge. Cars bottle neck as several take the exit into the city and the rest continue on to where search lights fan out and cut across the sky. The cars crest a ridge en masse and Sebastian’s Mustang pulls into view of a vast swath of sand, a bar of beach miles long, literally teeming with people, cars, and makeshift stages. Bands play while people dance, jump and gyrate together; giving life to a single undulating organism, moving as one even when the music changes and a new band starts a set. A few tents cluster in places outside of the dance circle where some people have stopped to eat and drink. Amidst the mayhem a number of carefree couples have sex on the sand, not minding an inch who’s around to watch, one couple going at it right beside a campfire where their friends (or whoever) are gathered, roasting marshmallows over the flames and talking animatedly.

Kurt leans over Sebastian, gawking with wide, unblinking eyes, fighting to get a better look. Sebastian sees the flush on Kurt’s cheeks and chuckles.

“Still such a noob, princess.”

“Is …is that a circuit party?” Kurt asks, ignoring Sebastian’s remark.

“Kind of.” Sebastian cranes his neck to see past the arm barring his view, maneuvering his car behind the throng heading toward the party.

“I’ve always wanted to go to one!” Kurt exclaims (and why is that starting to sound so familiar?) in a naïve tone that kind of proves Sebastian’s point.

“You don’t say.” Sebastian’s grin is calculating but not cruel, his eyes shining with all sorts of untold secrets. “Then you’re lucky. This is one of the biggest on the east coast.”

Kurt scans the beach at the cars and people packed together like sheep.

“How are we ever going to find a place to park?” Kurt asks, watching the cars circle around, drivers searching in vain for a spot, some opting to pull over and park dangerously close to the surf.

“I kind of have…connections,” Sebastian says, choosing his words carefully, leaving it at that. Kurt turns to him, scrutinizing his perplexing expression.

Sebastian drives down the beach, past people who have already given up on finding a spot and are heading back toward the beginning to make other arrangements. He drives straight for a roped-off area where a handful of muscular, shirtless men in tight jeans, thin glow sticks wrapped around their necks and wrists, wave some cars in and others away. One man standing right out front, caramel-colored skin slick like it’s been slathered with baby oil, spots Sebastian right away and waves him over, a huge smile of white teeth aimed in his direction.

Kurt notices that smile dim considerably when the man sees him sitting at Sebastian’s side.

“Hey, Carlos,” Sebastian calls out over the music as the Mustang comes to a stop by the man’s side.
“Hey,” Carlos says, leaning a hip against the car door, his brown eyes bouncing from Sebastian to Kurt and then back to Sebastian again, “it’s nice to see you back, man!”

He extends his hand for Sebastian to take and Sebastian slaps his palm quickly, but not fast enough for Kurt to miss the handoff of money that takes place.

“Nice to be back,” Sebastian says, thrumming his fingers impatiently against the steering wheel when Carlos doesn’t step away from the car and let Sebastian drive by.

Carlos can’t seem to stop looking between Sebastian and Kurt, narrowing his eyes at Kurt when he does, sizing him up and down.

“So, will you be stopping by later?” Carlos asks, coming to the conclusion that Kurt is not much of a threat and deciding to completely ignore him. He leans down over the car window and looks at Sebastian with hopeful eyes.

“Nah,” Sebastian says with a shake of his head, snaking an arm around Kurt’s shoulders and pulling him close, uncomfortably so. “We’re going to stick to the beach.”

Kurt isn’t entirely sure what’s going on between Sebastian and Carlos, but from the way Carlos’s smile fades Kurt is certain this man didn’t expect to see Sebastian arrive with a date.

“Your loss,” Carlos shrugs him off, his tone unconvincing. He moves away from the car and points to an area with parking spots available. Sebastian drives off and the man’s eyes drift to Kurt’s face, glaring daggers of disappointment and hate.

“Uh…is that something I should worry about?” Kurt asks, pointing back to the man waving away more cars before stooping over a black Lexus. Sebastian parks the car and kills the engine.

“Nope,” Sebastian replies, tugging Kurt closer and kissing him. Sebastian’s lips are so inviting that Kurt forgets all about surly car attendants and fixates on thoughts of how he can get Sebastian to stay and make-out with him in the front seat of the car.

“You know, I can get used to this,” he whispers against Sebastian’s mouth.

“Used to what?” Sebastian murmurs.

“Kissing you,” Kurt says with a slip of his tongue over Sebastian’s lips. “Anytime I want.”

A flash of bright light pulls Kurt’s focus and his eyes flick over Sebastian’s shoulder. The black Lexus rolls past and Kurt finds Carlos’s eyes locked on them. Sebastian sees the knit of Kurt’s eyebrows and follows the path of his eyes in the reflection of the rearview mirror. He sighs, hooking a finger beneath Kurt’s chin and turning his gaze back towards him.

“You know you’re the only one who can, right?”

“Can what?” Kurt asks, letting himself relax and be lulled back into the seduction of Sebastian’s velvety voice.

“Kiss me.”

“Yes,” Kurt says with a veiled sigh of relief, “I do. But it’s nice to hear.”

Sebastian’s lips find Kurt’s again; a brief pause to steel themselves for the adventure ahead.

“To…be…continued,” Sebastian whispers, reaching past Kurt and opening his door.
Kurt stumbles out on the sand, which slips and slides loosely, crunching beneath the thick soles of his Doc Martens (not his favorite pair, scuffed and worn enough that ruining them wouldn’t be a tremendous tragedy), and he is immediately swept up in the atmosphere of the activity around him.

“Okay, here are the rules,” Sebastian says, draping an arm over Kurt’s shoulders, keeping him locked to his side while they head out of the parking lot and down the stretch of beach.

“There are rules?” Kurt asks, dodging a glow-in-the-dark football that whizzes by his head a little too close for comfort.

“Yes,” Sebastian says sternly, elbowing through a group of half-naked girls that stumble like a giggling, amorphous entity into their path. “Stick close to me.”

“Okay,” Kurt says with a short bob of his head and an amused smile.

That’s definitely a rule I can follow, he thinks.

“I’m serious,” Sebastian says. “I can’t have you wandering off like at the club. There’s no way we’re getting off this island tonight. I brought everything we’re going to need. There’s port-a-johns, but don’t even think about going to use them alone. A lot of middle-aged men come to these parties, and they’re only here for one thing…”

“The same thing the Amish girls were looking for?” Kurt quips back sarcastically, batting his eyelashes with feigned innocence. Fleetingly he wonders if those Amish girls might actually make an appearance, barely recognizable in micro mini-skirts and sheer tops, brightly dyed Crayola-colored hair in edgy, asymmetrical razor cuts.

“I mean it, Kurt.” Sebastian stops and steps in front of him to make Kurt see the warning in his eyes. “People have legitimately disappeared from these parties.”

“Bas…” Kurt tilts his head, resting his forehead against Sebastian’s, “are you worried?”

“Yeah,” Sebastian admits, “about me. Your dad’s got a shotgun, remember? If I lose you tonight, I might as well drive straight to Mexico, change my name to Rodrigo, and live in a hut on the beach.”

Kurt punches Sebastian on the arm, laughing when he zigs to avoid the hit only to bump into the start of a drunken threesome. It takes a minute for Sebastian to convince the enamored trio that no, he isn’t interested in making their group a foursome. Kurt is no help whatsoever, smirking behind his hand at Sebastian’s attempts to get away. Sebastian finally makes a break for it, grabbing Kurt’s hand and tearing down the beach at a half-run, half-walk.

The further down the beach they get, the more lurid and stimulating everything becomes. The lights spattering the crowd sporadically throw every curve and edge into sharp relief, visuals flashing before his eyes, playing with his mind – a glimpse of skin here, a hidden kiss there, two men grinding together - shirtless, sweating, pants pulled down below the curve of their ass, thrusting to the music, lost to the world in favor of their own.

If Kurt believed a word written in the Bible, he could well imagine that this must have been what Sodom and Gomorrah looked like before a wrathful God swept in and destroyed all the fun.

Sebastian pulls up short and Kurt barely stops himself before he barrels into his boyfriend’s back and knocks himself on his ass in the sand.

“Are you two gentlemen in the market for any herbal refreshments or party pharmaceuticals?” Kurt
hears a gravelly voice from somewhere in the vicinity of Sebastian’s left where another small village of tents and a few vehicles is set up in a circle on the harder packed sand.

“Not tonight, thank you,” Sebastian says, dismissing the voice and continuing on. Kurt sees an opportunity. He screws up his courage and steps out from behind Sebastian into the ambient firelight.

“Now wait a second, Bas,” Kurt says. He approaches the man, taking one step before Sebastian grabs Kurt’s arm and stops him. “Let’s hear what he has for sale.”

Kurt gives Sebastian a side-long look, and sees his boyfriend staring at him with dark eyes; eyes that look at him as if Sebastian is seeing him for the first time – surprised and startled, concerned but brimming with unchecked desire. Kurt doesn’t want to pull himself away from that look, which touches him all over like hundreds of fingers of fire, but the man in front of them is clearing his throat, anxious to make a sale. Kurt turns back to the man who’s rolling on the balls of his bare feet, tugging at denim shorts pulled down low to reveal more than a sliver of diamond patterned boxers. Thick, brown dreads brush his naked, more-burned-than-tanned shoulders, and when he smiles Kurt sees his bottom row of front teeth capped with faux gold.

“We’ve got some twomp sacks of chronic,” the man says with a strange look of pride. “The really good stuff, because if you haven’t noticed it’s smelling a little brown out here.”

The man waves a hand in front of his nose and Sebastian smirks. Kurt, on the other hand, is completely lost seven words into the conversation. Twomp? Brown? It sounded like English; it should make sense, but…

“We’ve also got some Adderall, some ecstasy, and over at my 4Runner we be steeping some jimson tea.”

“Jimson?” Sebastian frowns. “Isn’t that risky with the strobe lights this close to the water?”

“Don’t be buggin’, friend,” the man says, waving his hands in a ‘calm down’ gesture, “we got plenty of guys keeping an eye on the surf and I’m sure a big, strong man like you can keep your boyfriend from wandering off into the water.”

Kurt snaps his head back to completely face Sebastian, recalling the mention of people disappearing at these parties. Sebastian observes Kurt’s distress with a tiny, fond smile, and comes to his rescue.

“Not tonight, man,” Sebastian says, coming up behind Kurt, wrapping his arms around his torso and holding him close, “but thanks.”

The man reaches out a hand in their direction, Kurt assumes for a shake. Then Sebastian reaches out his hand and they exchange some kind of fist bump handshake that looks so intricately choreographed that Kurt wonders where exactly they would have learned such a thing, let alone know that this is the time to use it.

“Hey, that’s cool,” the man says, backing away toward his camp. “But if you lovely young men change your minds, hit me up. I’m right back here in…” the man strikes a dramatic pose, pointing with both index fingers to the ring of tents surrounding a growing orange fire behind him, “Xanadu!”

“So I guess that makes you Kubla Khan,” Kurt says, stepping back with the momentum of Sebastian’s body as he leads him away.
“Right on!” the man crows, bounding off the way he came. Kurt shakes his head, not convinced the man understood the reference.

They walk off a ways in silence, Sebastian sticking close to Kurt’s back, heading to an area where the bandstands thin out, the dancers aren’t quite as rowdy or X-rated, and the air smells cooler and fresher.

“Would you actually…” Sebastian starts, pausing to give Kurt a chance to fill in the rest.

“I was thinking about it at that pool party you guys had, and…well, I can’t say that I’m eager to start a drug habit or anything,” Kurt admits, “but I did have a thought about possibly trying something…with you.” Kurt peeks at Sebastian over his shoulder, preparing to be judged. “I trust you to keep me safe.”

Sebastian nods, contemplative, stopping between two groups of dancers in a spot where the spinning, multicolored lights aren’t quite as harsh, and the music starts out low and mellow, more tribal than pop, with a persistent, almost animalistic beat that Kurt can feel resonating in his chest.

“This is not the time or place for experimenting,” Sebastian says, “but we can discuss it…if you really want.” Sebastian drops a kiss onto the crown of Kurt’s head; simple, uncomplicated.

“Besides, I’m pretty sure you’re going to get some kind of contact high with the amount of smoke around here. At least until the ocean breeze kicks in.”

Kurt takes in a deep breath of air, inhaling through his nose until he can feel the chill in his sinuses right behind his eyes, and his head spins. Only then does he realize that what he had been breathing as they walked through the crowd probably couldn’t be considered actual oxygen. He looks back down the beach at the haze of questionable smoke hanging in the air and compares it to where they have stopped, his body subconsciously swaying to the beat of the rumbling drums, the undercurrent of sound vibrating along the sand. Sebastian wasn’t dragging Kurt down the beach for his own enjoyment; he sought out this spot specifically. Not as many people chose to hang out here; there was less oppressive, overlapping noise, and the breeze coming in off the water was clearer, not quite as mind-altering.

Sebastian was taking care of Kurt again, and damn it if that didn’t make Kurt want Sebastian more.

Kurt layers his arms over Sebastian’s as they move, neither of them fighting to lead, letting the pulsations beneath their feet carry them along. Maybe their slow back and forth shuffling doesn’t match the mood of the song playing, but it suits them and their need to be close, connected.

“I was thinking about the last time we went out dancing…” Kurt rolls his head on Sebastian’s shoulder to get a better look at his boyfriend’s face. “You got into that fight with Maxwell in the bathroom…”

Sebastian tenses at the mention of the man’s name.

“Yeah.” His voice tightens around the short, clipped word.

“He asked me what you call me and you said, ‘I call him mine’,” Kurt finishes. “Do you remember?”

“Yeah.”

“Well,” Kurt says with a reassuring smile, “now I am yours.”

Sebastian ducks his head, hiding flushed cheeks and a bashful smile.
“Are you?” Sebastian asks, and Kurt knows that he needs to hear the words out loud.

“Yes,” Kurt says. “I think, without knowing it, I’ve been yours for a while.”

Kurt turns in Sebastian’s arms and melts further into his embrace. Sebastian’s hands stroke Kurt’s spine, starting from his neck, trailing lightly over curves and ridges, massaging circles into Kurt’s tense muscles along the way. Kurt’s inhibitions dissolve with every caress. He takes his cue from Sebastian and lets his hands explore up the expanse of Sebastian’s muscular back, kneading over his shoulders and making the return trip to his waist, but he doesn’t stop there. He sneaks his fingers boldly beneath the waistband of Sebastian’s jeans, brushing the curve of his hips, traveling further and further each time. Sebastian hums against Kurt’s temple as long fingers pass over smooth skin.

Kurt’s mouth goes dry as he longs to act more daring, giving over to the notions that surge and swell within him, the idea that perfect will come in time, but now can be a different kind of perfect.

They don’t have to go all the way, but maybe Sebastian would agree to something in between.

He slides his hands completely into Sebastian’s jeans, beneath his briefs, grabbing hold of his ass and drawing him close, letting Sebastian feel how much this collision of their multi-faceted affections turns him on.

Sebastian’s whole body shudders, a bitten-off moan slipping past his lips. He steps back, and Kurt’s hands slip out of his jeans.


“Sebastian,” Kurt interrupts, holding on to what’s left of his daring to say what he needs to say. “I feel like we’re coming together inch by inch, but I still have fifty more feet to go.” Kurt looks into Sebastian’s eyes, dark with want of his own but harboring so much despair; a broken past, Kurt suspects, that was never truly repaired. “I know you want perfect, and I absolutely agree. I want perfect, too, but I also want to know that you… want me.”

“Kurt, who wouldn’t want you?” Sebastian asks.

Through the swirl and sputter of chaotic lights, Kurt’s icy eyes glare pointedly at him.

“Let me rephrase that,” Sebastian back tracks. “What sane, rational, mentally competent human being wouldn’t want you?”

“So, then maybe…”

“Well, what did you want?” Sebastian’s voice shakes, so adorably, painfully anxious that Kurt contemplates taking it back. He can wait. He can more than wait.

Then Sebastian cradles Kurt’s body in his arms, nuzzling his neck as he lays him down on his back on the sand, and all thoughts of waiting fly to greener pastures.

“I guess that depends on what you’re willing to give,” Kurt murmurs, swallowing hard when Sebastian runs the back of his hand down his face, smoothing over his cheek.

“Oh, Kurt,” Sebastian mutters, “you have no idea.”

Sebastian closes in on him with the lightest kiss, feather soft, a whisper grazing over Kurt’s lips and down his chin. Kurt reaches trembling hands around Sebastian’s back, but Sebastian captures
his wrists, pushing his arms back and trapping them to the ground. A thrill courses through Kurt’s body when Sebastian’s lips suck tenderly down to the hollow of his neck. Kurt’s eyelids close when the sucks turn into laps of his tongue against Kurt’s skin, and Kurt sinks into himself, absorbing, surrendering when Sebastian undoes the first few buttons of his shirt, pushing the material aside and kissing the flesh underneath.

The world continues to spin around them – lights slicing the night sky, music pounding in discordant rhythms, faceless strangers laughing and screaming and singing drunkenly, as if in praise of the night; but for Kurt time stops. They could be lying on the cool sand of the beach, or on the comfortable bed back at the house. It doesn’t matter as long as Sebastian is there with him, touching and kissing, lips pushing and pulling at his skin, tongue outlining the cut of his muscles from his pecs to his abs, revealed in sections, one button at a time.

As much as Kurt enjoys this, finally getting a taste of the intimacy he so intensely craves, he recognizes that another change has taken place, having gone virtually unnoticed till this moment. Sebastian has gotten under Kurt’s skin, inside his blood, and that’s where he wants Sebastian to stay - every sigh, every kiss, every conversation, every revelation bringing Sebastian dangerously close to Kurt’s mending heart.

The night wears on, one touch blurring into the next, one more kiss, one more breath against Kurt’s skin. Sebastian rests over him, his hard length brushing against Kurt’s, both boys gasping and moaning at the scintillating sensation. Sebastian’s body begins to move, not demanding, not expecting anything in return, bending to the way Kurt’s body bows; the way he arches his back up, seeking friction, seeking Sebastian’s body to keep him grounded.

Sebastian’s mouth finds Kurt’s again, and he murmurs between kisses, a constant, unrelenting stream of casual and indecipherable confessions, drawn out curses, but mostly his name, tumbling from Sebastian’s lips, cascading like a waterfall.

Kurt writhes in the sand, the energy flowing between them crackling and popping like fireworks, the sound echoing in his ears from that last fourth of July when he succeeded in convincing himself that a kiss was simply a kiss.

He feels himself cumming, his body exploding with white heat, piercing through him, pinpoints of starlight bursting behind his eyelids. It’s not tame or unyielding. It ignites every piece of him and leaves him to smolder.

Who knew that heaven could be found on a strip of sand on the Atlantic Coast?

He hears Sebastian groan, his body rigid and trembling, Kurt’s name the last coherent word that crosses his lips before he collapses, bracing himself with his elbows in the sand to keep from crushing Kurt beneath him.

“Was that anything…like you had in mind?” Sebastian pants, chuckling under his breath and shaking his head.

Time starts again, kicked into action by the sound of Sebastian’s voice, but Kurt doesn’t react right away. He’s stunned and silent, only vaguely aware when Sebastian rolls off his body and curls up beside him, folding him in his arms, battling the quaking of his limbs, cold and fatigue sending tremors through them.

“No.” Kurt rolls his head back and forth, staring at the sky while the last point of light extinguishes itself and dissolves away so he can see Sebastian with his vision unmuddied. “It was better. Much, much better.”
Spent. It’s such a lame, overused, dime-store romance novel term but it fits. He’s finished; elated but he has nothing left to give, not right away. So he’ll lie on the beach in Sebastian’s embrace and recharge. Kurt had spent most of the summer treading through this abyss, keeping himself buoyed safely at the surface, playing at the idea of there being something more when he was rationally sure that more didn’t exist.

But there it is; Kurt can feel the magnitude of it crashing in on him, filling up the empty spaces, dragging him under to a place where he’s sure that he’s never been more vulnerable, and now that he’s here he has nothing and everything to fear.

He won’t say it out loud.

In fact, he may not admit it to himself again after this; not for a while.

This, apparently, is what it means to fall in love with Sebastian Smythe.
Chapter 25A

Chapter Summary

Okay, this chapter is becoming tremendously long. There’s a lot to it. This is the first part, and the second part is right on its heels (tonight or tomorrow). Drop me a line and let me know how you think it’s going so far.

At first, Kurt doesn’t know exactly what wakes him: the chill air coming in off the ocean, the low murmur of the party dying down, or the way Sebastian pulls him closer and holds him tight, not necessarily needing his warmth, though that very well may be, but needing him, needing Kurt and the security of Kurt’s body pressed against his so that he knows, even in sleep, that Kurt is there. Kurt blinks his eyes open, dry from the sand and the salty sea air, grit irritating his corneas until they burn and start to water. He lifts his head slightly and sweeps his eyes down the beach. The bandstands are vacant, some of them even packed up and lying in folded pieces on the sand, but there’s still music in the air, and Kurt raises his head a little higher in search of it. Near to where they are lying in the sand, a small tent city has been erected. A group of men sit around the comforting glow of a campfire, arms and blankets wrapped around one another, swaying and singing while one man among them strums a guitar. Kurt only catches the occasional lyric rising from the congregation, but he can tell that it’s not a pop song they’re singing, but a hymn - one in particular that he knows. He’s heard Mercedes sing it before; he just can’t quite recall the name of it.

The music wafts over them, soft and soothingly familiar, but those strains aren’t the lure that’s pulling him prematurely from his sleep.

It’s Sebastian, lying snuggled up behind him.

Complex, amazing, unexpectedly wonderful Sebastian.

Sebastian and his cynical attitude.

Sebastian and his infinite surprises.

Sebastian and the selfless way he has started to show Kurt how much he actually cares.

Sebastian and his gorgeous body that has a way of making Kurt feel things he never has before. Not with Blaine. Not with anybody. And not simply in a shallow aesthetic way, but with his warmth when he holds Kurt in his arms, with his hands that always seem to find Kurt’s hands without having to look for them, in the way their bodies nest against each other when they sleep, or the way they line up together almost perfectly. It’s a connection, another aspect that Kurt has begun to rely on. If he reaches out a hand, Sebastian will take it. If Kurt wraps his arms around Sebastian’s waist, Sebastian will reciprocate. It’s like every moment they’re together, they’re dancing, except this time neither of them is fighting to take the lead.

Kurt knows that his hair must be full of sand, that his clothes are probably ruined, and somewhere in his pants cum has dried on his skin, but he doesn’t care. For once he doesn’t give a damn
because Sebastian is there, and Kurt wants him. He wants to feel and touch and kiss and be felt and touched and kissed. Last night, Sebastian opened a door, and now Kurt wants to push it open farther.

Kurt turns in Sebastian’s arms, and using his own body wrapped within his boyfriend’s embrace as leverage he rolls a still sleeping Sebastian onto his back; then climbs on top of him, straddling his hips. He looks down at Sebastian’s face, calm and peaceful, young and careless, no lines of worry, no walls erected. Kurt frowns slightly at Sebastian’s perfectly mussed bed head, roguishly handsome even when matted and clumped with sand, and shakes his head in mock disgust. Everything about Sebastian’s appearance is so effortless. It had taken Sebastian only thirty minutes to get ready for the evening, whereas Kurt had taken more than an hour, and now look at the two of them. Equally disheveled and sleeping on the beach. The only difference is Sebastian still manages to look like a Versace model. How can one boy be so lucky? A grin slowly spreads on Sebastian’s lips, even in sleep. It starts with a slight curl on the left-hand side of his mouth, which is mirrored a second later on the right. The resulting smile is lopsided and adorable, and Kurt can’t help himself. He leans over and kisses him.

Kurt feels Sebastian stirring, dry lips moving against his mouth, trying to form words. Sebastian’s eyelids flutter open, stopping the kiss only a second to get his bearings and erase his confusion, and then Sebastian is kissing him back, threading fingers through Kurt’s sand-dusted hair, a hand finding the small of his back and pulling him down close.

“Thank goodness,” Sebastian murmurs against Kurt’s lips, not breaking away for even a moment to speak. “I thought last night might have been a dream.”

“It wasn’t,” Kurt says, rubbing the tip of his nose against Sebastian’s nose, smiling when Sebastian’s mouth chases his for another kiss. “It’s me. I’m here.”

Sebastian stops the chase, his lips twisting into a fond smile.

“So you keep telling me,” he says.

“That’s because it’s true,” Kurt says, quietly but emphatically, “and maybe if I say it enough you won’t have a reason to worry.”

“I’m not worried,” Sebastian replies, and though his smile remains, Kurt can hear a twinge of uncertainty in his voice – not much, barely a touch, but it’s there nonetheless. Kurt wants to remove it - wants to scratch it out of Sebastian’s mind. He wants to be more for Sebastian, the way Sebastian has become more for him.

Kurt closes the space between them, kissing Sebastian gently, slowly exploring with his lips and the tip of his tongue around the contours of Sebastian’s mouth. He feels Sebastian relax beneath him, open up for him. Sebastian moans into Kurt’s mouth, and the sound, vibrating against his tongue and slipping down his throat, is intoxicating. One more moan and Kurt feels himself becoming drunk off of it. Sebastian wraps strong arms around him, and in his own subtle way he tries to take control. He tilts to the side, preparing to roll them over and switch their positions.

Kurt presses the flat of his palms against Sebastian’s shoulders and pushes him back down onto the sand, pulling away to enjoy the full effect of the startled expression on Sebastian’s face. Sebastian stares back, his eyes darkening from every kiss, his lips pursed, quietly asking for more. He shakes his head and those beckoning lips curl into the sly grin Kurt loves.

“What’s gotten into you, Hummel?” Sebastian asks, running his hands up and down Kurt’s back, bringing them boldly down over the swell of Kurt’s ass before returning up the length of Kurt’s
spine. Well, Kurt would have considered it bold a month or so ago, but not now that they’re together. Not now when Kurt is so ready to give himself over to everything that is Sebastian Smythe.

Not now when he thinks he might be…

Kurt stops himself.

He’s not ready to admit that again.

“I think it’s the food,” Kurt teases, coming up with a lame joke as opposed to surrendering to an awkward and far too revealing silence. Sebastian rolls his eyes.

“What can I say?” Kurt jumps to his own defense. “I’m a sucker for a man that cooks.”

“Well, you know…” Sebastian runs his hands down Kurt’s thighs, massaging the muscles with firm fingers, “they say that clams and leeks are aphrodisiacs.”

Kurt’s face goes blank for a second, and then a simmer of indignation ignites in his eyes. He sits up straight, putting his hands on his hips, and for a moment Sebastian can’t tell if Kurt’s being overly dramatic or if he’s truly offended.

“So, is that why you dragged me out to those Godforsaken mud flats and got me filthy? Because you need an aphrodisiac to be with me?”

Sebastian sighs heavily. He reaches for Kurt’s arms, to tug Kurt back down on top of him, but Kurt sits up straight and stolid, leaning away from Sebastian’s hands and refusing to be moved. Sebastian gives in and sits up, groaning with the effort of forcing his stiff muscles to move and grabs Kurt around the waist before he can object. Sebastian holds his boyfriend tight in his lap as Kurt struggles to put some distance between them. They sit nose to nose, with Sebastian’s hand at the back of Kurt’s head, keeping their gazes locked together.

“No,” Sebastian says softly, “I dragged you out there and got you filthy because I thought it would be hilarious...and I was right.”

Kurt, obviously anticipating a wholly different answer, gasps and turns away, but Sebastian laughs, trailing kisses down his neck, trying to find that one secret spot that will make Kurt stop struggling and simply melt.

“Besides, I’m pretty sure you’re an aphrodisiac,” Sebastian confesses, trailing open-mouthed kisses up the column of Kurt’s neck back up to his chin. “I don’t need anything to make me want to be with you. Dammit, I get hot just being around you. I’ve wanted this for so lo--…”

Sebastian freezes, stopping mid-speech, holding Kurt in his arms but otherwise not moving. Kurt feels the words absorb through his skin where Sebastian’s lips stay hovered against his pulse. His heart takes off beating like a gunshot in his chest, threatening to break free and ricochet around his ribcage any second. He snaps his head to look at Sebastian, but Sebastian pinches his lips together tight, snuffing out yet another confession.

Kurt is frozen, too, but deep inside he’s dying, burning with curiosity, another piece of the puzzle snatched away when it was so close, and this one could have been the key to unlocking the mysterious Sebastian Smythe and all his hidden motives.

The longer they sit petrified in the sand, the farther away the moment slips, and Kurt recognizes the point when it becomes completely irretrievable.
Kurt lets it go, heartbroken at the loss but willing to concede defeat for now.

He decides to try a different tactic.

Eyes still locked on Sebastian’s gaze, he gently pushes his boyfriend back down onto the sand, noting the way Sebastian’s mouth twitches in the corners when Kurt takes control, the way he fights the urge to kiss him and instead waits to see what Kurt is going to do. Kurt appreciates that Sebastian is willing to wait for him. That moment of submission bred from self-control really turns Kurt on.

Kurt lays his body over Sebastian’s in the same way Sebastian did hours before and starts to move, giving himself a moment to absorb the look of abandon and anguish coloring Sebastian’s face before he starts to kiss him again.

Kurt is trying his hand at seduction, at being sexy, so that these concepts will become synonymous with him every time Sebastian lays eyes on him. Kurt would do anything, pay almost any price to see himself through Sebastian’s eyes, but since he can’t, he decides to craft that image for himself. Mind over matter. If he sees himself as an erotic and enticing creature, he’ll become erotic and enticing.

Sebastian opens his legs wide for Kurt, bending them up at the knees to cage him in. Kurt’s movements over Sebastian’s body are slow and taunting, a taste of what he has in store when Sebastian finally decides to take things further.

From the desperate whimpers Kurt can hear escaping the back of Sebastian’s throat, the low moans every move elicits, Kurt becomes more confident that his plan is working. Sebastian’s body follows his, his erection growing as Kurt brushes against it, filling Kurt with a feeling of tremendous power.

There’s only one problem, a problem that becomes more imminent as his own erection starts to become harder and press against his jeans.

The sand. It’s everywhere. It’s crept into his pants and adhered to his skin, making every undulation feel like he’s rutting against sand paper. He tries not to care. He pushes it as far out of his mind as he can, but the stinging sensation against his sensitive skin tells him that he’s rubbing himself raw. He stifles every wince, gritting his teeth between kisses. He masks his pained whimpers with moans. Sebastian tightens his grip on Kurt’s hips, and Kurt can feel how close he is by the way he rises up to meet every thrust. He whispers Kurt’s name after every brush, and Kurt, begging the fates above for Sebastian to cum, to come undone the way he did before with Kurt’s name tumbling from his lips, goes for broke. He rolls his hips down harder, but it’s too much for his irritated skin, and without meaning to, he hisses.

Sebastian’s body goes still beneath him, and Kurt’s entire ego deflates.

“Let me guess,” Sebastian says, breathless and with a hint of sarcasm (and possibly a shadow of what might be disappointment), “sand in your crotch?”

Kurt drops his head to Sebastian’s shoulder, unable to look into his lust-blown green eyes while he admits to his failure. He nods.

“I told you that sand would become a way of life.”

“Yeah,” Kurt mumbles into Sebastian’s shoulder. “Yeah, I remember.”

Kurt braces himself, preparing for whatever jeer Sebastian is about to make. Kurt would rather he
didn’t, not about this, but he doesn’t mind, either. He reminds himself that he wants Sebastian the way he is, snarky remarks and all. Besides, Kurt can see the humor in this situation as much as the next guy. Hell, if their positions had been reversed, he would probably have the time of his life ribbing Sebastian for being caught with his dick covered in sand.

Sebastian doesn’t comment right away, and Kurt is eaten away by the suspense. The ego is such a fragile thing, and Kurt’s is about to be obliterated. He figures by the measure of Sebastian’s lengthy silence that whatever he’s planning to say will completely hit it out of the ball park.

“We could go skinny dipping,” Sebastian suggests. “Rinse off this fucking sand.”

Kurt’s head pops up from Sebastian’s shoulder. He waits for the other shoe to drop, for the real jabs to begin, but when Sebastian doesn’t say anything else, Kurt eyes him warily.

“That’s it?” Kurt asks, proceeding with caution out of morbid curiosity even though he knows he should probably keep his mouth shut. “That’s all you’re going to say?”

“What would you like me to say?” Sebastian says with a knowing wink. “I can’t really make fun of you for having sand down your pants when it’s happened to me more than once.”

Sebastian sits up and deposits Kurt undignified into the sand. Kurt watches Sebastian walk off a distance towards the water, unbuttoning his shirts as he goes, and that’s when the weight of Sebastian’s suggestion drops on him.

“Skinny…dipping?” Kurt repeats, calling after him. “Wait! As in…” His words drift away with the ocean breeze, the music, the smell of smoke, and everything else ephemeral around them as he stares, lost in thought, mesmerized by the image of Sebastian peeling off his shirt, the unintentionally arousing way he lets the material slip off his shoulders and down his tan arms, but then he comes back to himself when he remembers that he should be doing the same. He hedges, biding his time to prolong the agony as long as possible. “As in, take off our clothes and swim in the ocean…naked?”

“Yeah, well that’s usually how it’s done,” Sebastian laughs, throwing his shirt over one shoulder and letting it hang there while he bends down to remove his shoes and socks. “What’s the big deal, Hummel? I’ve heard you’ve done it before.”

Yeah, Kurt has done it before, in a problematic attempt at doing something racy and spontaneous that resulted in a painful and humiliating bee sting on his ass. Kurt had originally put ‘skinny dipping’ on his bucket list because he thought it might spice up his and Blaine’s relationship to do something taboo. He wanted to show his boyfriend that he was a risk taker - that he was willing and ready to venture outside of his safe little world. As it turned out, looking was the only taboo they really indulged in that day; there was more giggling than kissing or touching going on in that secluded lake. Kurt had tried his best to impress Blaine, to be graceful and alluring, but he wasn’t quite as comfortable with his naked body in public as he wanted to be. All of his endeavors to channel his inner Esther Williams failed when he slipped on a wet patch of grass and landed on his ass on top of an unsuspecting bumble bee.

Not only did he leave the lake that day thoroughly red-faced with a bee-sized chink in his self-esteem, but he was also a murderer.

Kurt definitely gives himself credit for being a much different person than the one who got stung on the ass that day. He’s matured, become less vain, but some of his old insecurities still remain. When he looks at himself in the mirror there are a few ‘problem areas’ he’s not proud of, places that are softer than he would ultimately like, which he has learned to strategically camouflage with
Kurt admires Sebastian’s complete and utter confidence as he strips off his socks and starts on his pants. Sebastian’s eyes flick up and he notices Kurt sitting in the sand where he left him, watching him undress with what Kurt imagines to be an emotional hodgepodge of mostly horror and awe on his drawn face.

“You don’t have to worry about any of those drugged out hipsters watching us,” Sebastian reassures him, “and even if they do, I doubt if they’ll remember us by morning.”

Kurt nods his head, giving the impression that Sebastian’s words have assuaged all his fears, but it’s not the other people on the beach that Kurt’s worried about seeing him naked. It’s Sebastian. Sebastian, physically, is on a whole other level than most boys their age, far surpassing Kurt. Kurt tries to comfort himself that Sebastian has already seen him in only his underwear, and from what Kurt remembers of that experience Sebastian seemed to like what he saw. On another occasion, Sebastian made mention of Kurt being ‘all man’…despite his wardrobe, of course. But that was before - before this, before everything.

Practically glued to the sand beneath him, Kurt has to laugh at the irony of the situation. He wants Sebastian so badly, but how ready is he to move forward if he can’t even get naked in front of him?

Kurt stands up and starts unbuttoning his shirt, determined to get over this hurdle. By the time Sebastian has stripped down to his briefs, Kurt is nearly still clothed, the only change being that his button-down shirt hangs open with the tails untucked.

Sebastian’s sly grin morphs into a look of extreme confusion as he regards Kurt from head to toe.

“Why don’t we go down closer to the water and away from the firelight?” Sebastian suggests, trying to suss out the cause of Kurt’s distress, “The shadows are darker down there. You don’t have to worry about anyone peeping on you.”

“Yeah,” Kurt agrees, making his way down the sandy slope to where the light from the fire barely reaches the water. They hide among the shadows and finish disrobing by one of the dismantled bandstands.

“Be careful with that bandage on your leg,” Sebastian reminds him. “Don’t tear it off when you take off your pants.”

Sebastian wastes no time at all stripping off his underwear and adding it to the pile of his carefully folded clothes. Kurt sees the movement but he doesn’t look. He finds himself at war with his raw, unabashed desire to peek, and the social constraints of politely keeping his eyes to himself. He figures he’ll casually divert his eyes when the time comes, but for now he’s completely submerged in the task of removing his clothes and not allowing his mounting inner anxiety to cause him to burst into flames. He feels his cheeks heat up while he takes off his jeans, bending at the waist and balancing precariously on one foot, then the other, so as not to drag his jeans through the wet sand. He feels himself tilt, his equilibrium jolt and he straightens up quickly to avoid collapsing in the sand.

That’s when he gets his first view of Sebastian, his skin illuminated by the moonlight and highlighted by the dim firelight all around, every inch of his glorious body on display. He watches Kurt with eyes unburdened by embarrassment or shame. Kurt doesn’t know what to do, how to act casually in the presence of this man who, with one look, has stolen his breath completely away.

Every dream he has ever had, every mental image he has conjured of what Sebastian might look
like naked, pales drastically in comparison to the real thing. Kurt might have to force himself to believe in some kind of deity, if only temporarily, so he has someone to thank for the vision in front of him.

Kurt makes a private vow not to gawk, not to stare.

Sebastian’s eyes suddenly go dark, sparkling in the sparse light, and Kurt knows that, oh holy gay hell, regardless of his vow, he’s staring.

Sebastian smirks familiarly.

“You’re pretty jaw-dropping yourself there, princess.”

Kurt looks down the length of his body, and then at the pair of jeans dangling from his outstretched hand. He pulls his thoughts away from the stunning image of Sebastian’s naked body long enough to become aware of the fact that he’s completely naked as well, having fumbled his jeans in the panic of rescuing himself from a cringe-worthy fall.

As mortifying as being suddenly naked is, it’s the nickname that hits him like a sucker punch to the gut. He can usually ignore it, especially when it comes from Sebastian. Sometimes it even sounds endearing. On the times that it doesn’t, he’s found ways to make himself immune, but right now it’s a reminder of his faults, his insecurities laid bare.

“Can you…just not…call me ‘princess’?” Kurt stumbles through the request, the arm with the hand strangling his jeans winding subconsciously around his torso. “Not right now?”

Kurt’s eyes focus on the water, moving in shallow waves over the sand, so he doesn’t see Sebastian approach him. He doesn’t see the expression that bounces between hungry to sympathetic and back again on Sebastian’s face as he appraises his boyfriend’s body. Sebastian takes Kurt’s hand and pulls his arm down along with it, carefully unwinding the cocoon of limbs that Kurt constructed around his exposed body.

“I’m sorry,” Sebastian says. The word sounds so foreign coming from Sebastian’s mouth that Kurt is almost tempted to ask him to repeat it. “You’re right. You’re not a princess. You are a man…a gorgeous man. Every inch of you…” Sebastian pauses a moment, letting his eyes blaze a path from Kurt’s hair to his jawline, down his neck and shoulders, over his chest to his hips and legs. When Sebastian’s gaze returns to Kurt’s eyes he leans forward and presses their foreheads together, “…and don’t let anyone convince you otherwise.”

Kurt’s mouth drops slightly, and Sebastian swoops in. He gathers Kurt up in his arms and kisses his bottom lip, sucking it into his mouth. Kurt lets any hint of fear or embarrassment bleed away into that kiss. He wraps his arms around Sebastian’s body, nearly dropping his precious jeans into the water. This kiss is different, and Kurt wants to drown in the sensation of kissing Sebastian with every sinful inch of naked skin pressed hotly against his own – no barriers, no boundaries, no walls. With Sebastian bending him steadily backward to deepen the kiss, Kurt can feel everything. He feels the bulge of Sebastian’s biceps as his arms cradle Kurt securely. He feels Sebastian’s abs slide along his stomach as he leans over him. He feels the hair on Sebastian’s legs brushing against his own, mildly ticklish but sending sparks over his skin everywhere they touch.

He feels Sebastian’s length, hard and rising against his leg, meeting his own, sliding sensually beside it. Sebastian moves, pistoning in such a way that Kurt’s knees go weak. There’s no pain, no sting from the sand against his raw skin, only pure pleasure, and he breaks away from Sebastian’s kiss to cry out into the night.
“Ungh, Sebastian!” he moans, gripping hard to Sebastian’s shoulders.

“Oh, God! Kurt,” Sebastian moans in response, moving again, his lips latching on to the skin of Kurt’s neck and sucking sensually.

“Oh…” Kurt moans, squeezing his eyes shut, giving in to Sebastian and all the ways he can make him feel alive.

Unbeknownst to them, a few of the men from the nearby tent city decide to take a cue from them and start tearing off their clothes, tossing them willy-nilly into the sand, and racing for the water. The sudden onslaught of cheering voices and splashing water breaks the spell of Sebastian’s kiss, especially when a gush of salt water hits Kurt in the back.

“Holy shit, that’s cold!” Kurt screeches into Sebastian’s ear, and Sebastian groans in defeat when he feels his erection die. He laughs mirthlessly, glaring daggers at the drunken frolickers stumbling their way through the waves, kicking up more sand than water as they playfully wrestle amid the shallow swells.

Kurt turns his eyes in the direction that Sebastian’s death glare is aimed and sees another spray of water headed their way, this one threatening to decimate his jeans. He spins around, throwing Sebastian off-kilter, almost dragging them both into the water.

Sebastian eyes Kurt’s hand locked around the jeans, knuckles going white as he holds them high above his head. He rolls his eyes.

“I’m on it,” he murmurs, taking the jeans out of Kurt’s hand.

He folds Kurt’s jeans, and then takes it upon himself to wrap his own clothes around the rest of Kurt’s clothes to keep them safe. He tucks the bundle between the wooden slats of one of the more secluded bandstands to hide them.

Kurt starts off into the ocean alone, needing the frigid water swirling around his ankles to settle his body down. He felt the point when Sebastian’s hard-on died, and with his own erection long gone, he can’t handle thinking about almost cumming naked in Sebastian’s arms. It’s just too much right now.

He takes a few steps further out, until the sea foam bathes his knees, when a hand on his shoulder stops him.

“You don’t want to go too far,” Sebastian warns, taking Kurt’s hand and lacing their fingers together. “The waves here move parallel to the shore. You don’t want to get swept away.”

Kurt holds Sebastian’s hand tight, knowing it’s too late. He’s already been swept away.
I promised a second part soon, and here it is. I hope you all enjoy it. I toyed a little with hints of Sebastian’s POV. (For those of you who were confused by my teasers, this is the chapter with the D&D conversation and the Mustang make-out ;))

Step by step Sebastian draws Kurt into the water, picking his way around the soft, shifting sand, and testing the ground first before signaling for Kurt to follow. Every so often he looks back and smiles encouragingly, tempting Kurt with the lure of his eyes, green irises growing darker as the moonlight passes over them. Sebastian takes them out a distance from the shore - far enough to be free of the roaming band of imbeciles, stopping where the swells reach no higher than their waists. Reluctant to release his hold on Kurt’s hand, Sebastian keeps their fingers laced together as he crouches down and dips below the water’s surface, running the fingers of his free hand through his hair to loosen the sand. Sebastian emerges with a wicked smile on his lips and he shakes his head like a dog, drizzling Kurt with water. Kurt laughs, turning his head to avoid the spray. He escapes by ducking down below the water, rinsing the sand from his body and hair. He feels fingers that aren’t his own card through his hair, working out the knots and the mats, fingertips massaging his scalp and scrubbing away the sand.

Sebastian’s hand in Kurt’s hair is cathartic; it frees Kurt of more than simply the bothersome sand lodged in places he’d rather not mention. That’s because everything about Sebastian is safe. Kurt doesn’t always have to be the adult; he doesn’t always have to be the one in charge and in control. Kurt could relax in the water and let Sebastian touch him like that forever, but his oxygen deprived lungs disagree and he breaks through the surface of the water, sucking in a deep breath.

“I was getting nervous there for a second,” Sebastian says, releasing Kurt’s hand so he can better rub the water from his eyes. “We breathe air, you know, babe, not water.”

“I know…” Kurt coughs as he takes another breath, “but I didn’t want you to stop. You’re too good at that.”

“I’m not all good, you know.” Sebastian winds his arms back around Kurt’s body and presses against him.

“I know,” Kurt whispers, resting his head against his boyfriend’s shoulder, hugging Sebastian back, “and I wouldn’t want you any other way.”

The sea nettle sting burns beneath his bandage, but Kurt finds it easy to ignore with Sebastian’s arms wrapped protectively around him. Kurt can get addicted to being held like this, naked beneath the moonlight. He leans back and stretches his neck to accommodate Sebastian’s lips, their heat welcome against his chilled, wet skin. The water circles them, a conduit between their bodies. Here in Sebastian’s arms, Kurt feels buoyant, light. The water pulls at him but Sebastian is his anchor. The ocean is a formidable force of nature but Kurt has nothing to fear. He’s safe as long as he’s in Sebastian’s arms.

“I think that skinny dipping implies something wholly different than what we’re doing,” Kurt says offhandedly, bringing a hand up behind Sebastian’s head and playing with the hair at the nape of
“Do you want me to let you go so you can swim?” Sebastian asks, latching onto the juncture between Kurt’s neck and his shoulder, and sucking hard.

“Mmm,” Kurt moans, his eyes rolling behind his eyelids as they flutter shut, “no…uh…merely making an observation.”

Sebastian chuckles into Kurt’s skin. Another swell passes by, the cold water flowing around them and between them, and Kurt trembles in Sebastian’s arms.

“You’re shivering,” Sebastian whispers in Kurt’s ear.

“Yes,” Kurt replies, his teeth knocking together uncontrollably, “I am, but I like it.”

“Okay, you like to shiver…” Sebastian runs his tongue up Kurt’s neck slowly, stopping at his ear. He licks around the shell, holding Kurt against his body to enjoy the way he trembles at the touch. Sebastian would never let him go. He holds on because he needs to hold on. He needs this constant reminder that all of this is real. Kurt’s broken heart from months ago is now a fully functioning muscle, rapidly on the mend but already stronger than before. Sebastian straightens and looks into Kurt’s eyes, raising a hand to his pale cheek and brushing away a few water droplets sticking to his skin. “We’re still getting out before you freeze to death.”

Kurt drops his head and whimpers, hesitant to leave even if he is shivering down to his bones because the water that surrounds them is also connecting them. As long as it’s there, they’ll stand close together, sharing what’s left of the warmth on their skin.

“How about this,” Sebastian offers, crooking a finger beneath Kurt’s chin and raising his head up, bringing his blue eyes back into view, “we go back to the car and I’ll warm you up.”

Kurt’s teeth chatter so rapidly he can barely speak, so he nods. Sebastian leans in for one last kiss - a kiss that fills Kurt with more than just heat, a kiss that does much more than simply mend the gaps. Beneath the moonlight, with the push and pull of the ocean swaying around them and Sebastian holding him safe and secure against his skin, it’s a kiss that Kurt knows he’ll be thinking about long after this night is over.

The swells have gotten stronger and Sebastian helps Kurt from the water, keeping an arm locked around Kurt’s waist. Kurt shivers in earnest now, limping when the sting on his leg continues to burn despite the numbing effects of the cold water. He hisses with the pain but he’s relieved, at least, that the sand situation has greatly improved. The beach seems much calmer now than when they left it. The campfire it still lit but the music and the singing are gone, and Kurt noticed that the other group of skinny dippers who had braved the frigid ocean along with them have long since vacated the water and returned to their tents.

Kurt looks forward to the peace of not having to deal with people, and he’s sure Sebastian would concur. Everyone they’ve spoken to so far has been nice (with maybe the exception of Carlos), but everyone’s constant enthusiasm and energy (probably fueled by drugs and hormones) has become exasperating. It’s like being trapped on an island full of Brittany S. Pierces. The thought makes his head start to hurt.

Kurt and Sebastian are not entirely out of the woods yet. Between them and Sebastian’s Mustang, Kurt can see late night revelers playing football or Frisbee, or dancing (which looks more like disjointed flailing about. It actually looks kind of painful).
“Don’t worry, babe,” Sebastian says, interpreting the way Kurt’s back stiffens at the sight of the walk ahead of them, “I’ll protect you.”

Kurt wants to pinch Sebastian, but he can’t get his frozen fingers to obey his bidding.

They fully emerge from the water, and as soon as they set foot on the dry sand Kurt hears a racket from one of the tents – manic shuffling, the clattering of several pots dropping, and the sound of a woman crowing excitedly.

“Oh! Abel! Look!” a sing-song voice calls out, echoing down the quiet beach. “Mermen, Abel! I see mermen!”

Kurt sputters, then laughs, not sure if he heard her right but finding the notion hilarious anyway.

“Where?”

Kurt hears an older man’s voice, thick with exhaustion, answer the tittering woman from somewhere in the tent city. Kurt blinks, peering to where the tents circle the closest fire, but his blurry vision won’t clear long enough for him to zero in on where either voice is coming from.

“There! There!” The voice bounces through the air, getting louder as a woman comes into view from behind the firelight. She races down the beach, dragging a haggard man behind her, heading to where Kurt and Sebastian have stopped at the water’s edge.

Kurt looks to Sebastian, waiting for his response to the foolish couple tripping over themselves in their falsely-placed excitement, but Sebastian says nothing, his face impassive as he strides purposefully out of the water.

Kurt is surprised that his own first instinct isn’t to shield his naked body from view. At this point, all of his previous insecurities have become a moot point. Sebastian thinks he’s sexy, and that knowledge puts Kurt more at ease. He didn’t know what all these other knuckleheads thought, and honestly he didn’t care. So he doesn’t put his hands up to cover his nakedness and he doesn’t hide behind Sebastian’s body.

He doesn’t want to do anything that would force him to leave the circle of Sebastian’s arms.

“Children of the water,” the man says with a low, gracious, and endearingly genuine bow, “please take this blanket to cover yourselves and keep your bodies warm until you can return to the sea.”

The exuberant woman holds out a thick, navy blue wool blanket draped over her arm, pushing it toward them, her wide eyes begging them to take it.

Kurt is on edge, waiting for the big showdown, but Sebastian appears to be completely unperturbed by these two. He doesn’t sneer, doesn’t push past them, doesn’t make a single snide remark. Kurt isn’t sure what disturbs him more – being mistaken for mythical fish-folk or the complete 180 Sebastian is pulling.

It goes without saying that Kurt is confused to no end.

“Oh…thank you?” Kurt says, not sure how he should react. His eyes jump back and forth between the besotted couple and his deferential boyfriend, who simply accepts the gift of the blanket and wraps it quickly around their bodies.

“Thank you very much,” Sebastian says with a genuine smile. “We’ll make sure you get it back.”
“Oh, no need, no need,” the woman says, her face bright as she almost genuflects at their feet.

Sebastian nods once at the couple in a distinctly urbane manner and steers Kurt in the direction of the dismantled bandstand to fetch their belongings. While Sebastian gathers up their clothes and shoes, deciding on the best method to juggle the whole lot while holding up his end of the blanket (refusing all of Kurt’s attempt at help, calling him an invalid) Kurt glances over his shoulder and watches the couple return to their tent. They keep their arms linked around one another, nearly skipping with their shared glee, talking loudly and feverishly (though the word ‘mermen’ is the only word Kurt can hear that makes any actual sense). Sebastian comes up with a way to handle his new burden and the blanket at the same time, and they head off down the beach with Kurt only responsible for holding his edge of the blanket and not falling on his face.

The blanket is rough and scratchy against Kurt’s skin, but it’s not entirely unpleasant. It smells of camp fires and spicy incense, maybe sandalwood with a touch of patchouli. Most importantly, it traps the warmth of their bodies, and keeps Sebastian close to Kurt’s side to boot. Sebastian juggles the pile of clothes expertly and Kurt is sincerely impressed.

“So, that was…different,” Kurt broaches, trying to find a reason behind Sebastian’s uncharacteristic behavior. Kurt doesn’t want Sebastian to change, especially not if he thinks that’s what Kurt wants. Kurt fell for cocky, snarky, overly self-confident Sebastian Smythe and everything that comes with him, but this more mature, more compassionate side of Sebastian peaks Kurt’s interest.

“What?” Sebastian asks, weeding his way around a couple of women thoroughly engrossed in making out in the sand.

“What happened back there…with that couple, I mean.”

“Yeah, well, they’re probably just high,” Sebastian offers, tugging Kurt quickly out of the way of a group playing Frisbee. All of the participants look pretty much dead on their feet, but they don’t seem to be in any hurry to stop the game - as if they’re compelled to finish, however long it takes. Kurt feels the same way. He doesn’t want this night (or more accurately ‘morning’) to end, but each step becomes heavier and more painful. If he could simply lie down in the sand again and fall back to sleep, he would consider doing it in a second.

“I get that,” Kurt says, fighting the urge to yawn, “but what I don’t get is…you.”

Sebastian stops short and takes a moment to look at Kurt, facing hooded blue eyes that stare back at him with befuddled interest.

“What about me?”

Kurt shrugs, wary of the rising agitation in Sebastian’s voice, not wanting to tarnish a glorious night with a petty argument.

“I don’t know,” Kurt says, pulling on the blanket to get Sebastian to start walking again, “I guess I just expected you to…”

“To what?” Sebastian interrupts.

Kurt wants to recant. Saying it out loud sounds rude and reprehensible. Kurt doesn’t want to come across as if he’s judging Sebastian, regardless of whether or not what he says might possibly be the truth.

“I expected you to, maybe, say something sarcastic, or...”
“Why should I?” Sebastian asks, not letting Kurt finish and sounding oddly surprised.

“Well, they were acting kind of ridiculous,” Kurt explains, jumping to his own defense.

“Did that bother you?” Sebastian slows down to match Kurt’s steadily declining pace.

“Not really, but, uh…” Kurt turns his head to look at Sebastian with raised eyebrows, “I thought for sure it would have offended you?”

“Why would it offend me?”

Kurt feels like he’s pulling teeth – dragging Sebastian by the hand toward an obvious conclusion. He wonders if Sebastian’s being serious. Did he actually not know what Kurt was getting at?

“Well…have you met yourself?” Kurt chuckles, trying to make light of an uncomfortable subject.

“Yes, Kurt,” he says, “yes, I have.”

Sebastian sounds defensive, and Kurt senses an old wall coming back up between them, but Sebastian still stays close to his side. Kurt thinks he might see the hint of a smirk on Sebastian’s face, but he can’t be sure. It could be a trick of the passing firelight, or the moon overhead casting shadows across Sebastian’s face as they walk.

“You’re just usually not the kind of person who puts up with that type of behavior.”

Sebastian looks up at the sky above them.

“So, I’m not necessarily a people person. The existence of most people offends me, I won’t lie.” Sebastian trains his eyes along the beach, scowling at miscellaneous people as they pass by almost randomly to prove his point. “But those people back there? They’re what you would call a ‘chaotic good’.”

“Chaotic good?” Kurt feels like he should be familiar with the concept but he’s not certain why. He remembers it indistinctly, like the background noise of a conversation that he wasn’t necessarily a party to. “What does that mean?”

“A person you can classify as a chaotic good is someone who acts the way his conscience tells him to, not the way others expect him to act,” Sebastian explains. “They believe in what’s good and right. They don’t really abide by laws; they just behave the way their moral compass tells them to.”

Kurt’s eyes light up.

“Ooo! That sounds cool!” he exclaims. He hops up on his injured foot and hisses. Sebastian rolls his eyes and redistributes all his cargo, wrapping an arm around Kurt’s waist to help shoulder some of his weight. “Do me next!”

“I will if you want me to, babe, but we should really wait until we reach the car.” Sebastian wiggles his eyebrows.

“Bas,” Kurt whines, pushing against Sebastian’s side with his hip.

“You’re easy,” Sebastian says suggestively. Kurt smacks him on the arm, but Sebastian only holds him tighter, maneuvering them toward the strip of parking spots and the dusty Mustang. It’s tricky and inefficient, like they’re trying to run a three-legged race. “I would say you’re a ‘lawful good’.”

Kurt’s eyebrows shoot up to his hairline.
“A lawful good?” he asks. ‘Lawful good’ strikes him as kind of dull. From the name alone, it sounds like it could be the exact opposite of what Kurt’s been aiming for during this vacation.

“Yup. Your lines in the sand, so to speak, are strictly drawn. Black and white. You side with what you know to be good and you battle evil. You tell the truth, you keep your word, you fight against injustice…”

Sebastian punctuates his points with kisses to the crown of Kurt’s head, but as he speaks, his voice wanders off and Kurt wonders – is that really the way Sebastian sees him? So definitively set in his ways? Always upright and honest?

“That sounds boring,” Kurt says with a thread of disappointment in his voice.

Sebastian shrugs.

“Boring isn’t necessarily bad,” he says. “To be honest, you’ve been boring eighty percent of the time and you still landed me.”

Sebastian smirks as Kurt kicks out with his good leg, but Sebastian picks him up and kisses him, effectively silencing any further attempt at violence. When Sebastian sets him back down, Kurt stares at him with a lopsided grin. Normally Kurt doesn’t permit PDA (a rule that’s becoming less hard-and-fast every second he spends with Sebastian), but he can definitely get into this thing Sebastian has for manhandling him anytime, anywhere.

“So, what does that make you?”

“Oh, babe,” Sebastian says with a chuckle, “I’m a ‘chaotic neutral’.”

Kurt rolls his eyes at the satisfaction in Sebastian’s voice at his declaration.

“So, what is a ‘chaotic neutral’?”

“I follow my whims,” he explains. “Look out for my own best interests. I have a problem with authority, resent restrictions…” He looks down at Kurt, leaning in to whisper into his ear, “…I’m unpredictable.”

Kurt is inclined to agree with that statement and he’s about to say so, but sudden comprehension derails his train of thought.

“Wait…” Kurt feels more sure than ever that he’s heard this all before. As with most of his less defined knowledge regarding popular culture, it’s something he overheard Finn and Puck discussing, something Kurt spurned as sad and pathetic. “Chaotic good, lawful good, chaotic neutral…” A grin of pure mischief forms on his face as he comes to the conclusion – “that’s from Dungeons and Dragons, isn’t it?”

Sebastian stands up straighter, his body going rigid, eyes focusing on the sand.

“N-not necessarily…”

Kurt rarely gets the chance to hear Sebastian stumble, and he basks in the effervescent glory of it.

“Oh, please don’t tell me somewhere there’s a story of little Sebby and his big brother Julian playing D&D in their parent’s basement?”

Kurt doesn’t stifle his grin but beams at Sebastian, punch drunk and giggling. Sebastian stares at
him crossly, his mouth drawn in a thin, unamused line, though Kurt is sure that Sebastian is more amused than he lets on.

“Call me Sebby again,” Sebastian says drily, “and one of your precious Vivienne Westwood scarves will meet with an unfortunate accident.”

Kurt sobered up, but not completely. He’s not thrilled with the prospect of one of his favorite rare scarves getting shredded, but having this to hold over Sebastian’s head is too good to resist.

“You…wouldn’t…dare,” Kurt says sternly back, threat firmly implied.

Sebastian is more than willing to take that challenge.

“Try me.”

Kurt glares at Sebastian, unwilling to back down, but his foot slips into a hole in the sand and he almost plummets to the ground. Sebastian’s arm around his waist, which up until now he’s taken for granted, rescues him from twisting his ankle and incapacitating himself any further.

Kurt recovers what’s left of his dignity, feeling Sebastian laugh beside him.

“Serves you right,” Sebastian grumbles but in a light-hearted tone.

Kurt feels his heart swell. He’s enjoying this – this banter back and forth. So, maybe Sebastian is growing and maturing and changing a bit, but so is Kurt. Everybody does. But they still have this – the old ‘them’ that they can always fall back on.

“You know,” Kurt says thoughtfully, eager to keep the verbal volley going, “you being into D&D actually explains so much.”

Sebastian’s next laugh is more of a derisive grunt than an actual laugh.

“Not that I’m interested in perpetuating this psychotic delusion any further, but what exactly would it explain?”

“Your sexual promiscuity,” Kurt says.

Sebastian’s head snaps so quickly to meet Kurt’s gaze that Kurt is sure he hears a few of Sebastian’s vertebrae crack.

Sebastian glowers, bristling all over as Kurt continues, but Kurt can’t seem to stop. That look in Sebastian’s eyes is dangerous and exciting, and Kurt wants more of it aimed his way.

“You’re posturing,” Kurt continues, “showing off your sexual prowess to deflect from the fact that you’re actually…” Kurt pauses for effect, relishing the next few words, “a gigantic nerd.”

Sebastian glares at Kurt’s teasing face, eyes practically on fire, and frowns.

“That’s it,” he says. “You’ve lost your blanket privileges.”

“No!” Kurt squeals, holding tight to the blanket as Sebastian tugs it hard, shoving him over with his
hip, trying to push him out. “No! Okay! You’re not a nerd! I give! I give!” Kurt slips again, heading for the sand, and he’s thinks that this time Sebastian is going to let him face-plant completely as payback for his teasing, but Sebastian catches him again with the hand around his waist.

“God, you’re a fucking klutz, aren’t you?” Sebastian accuses, bringing Kurt up into his arms and hugging him this time, burying his nose into Kurt’s hair as he gives him a chance to rest his injured leg. Kurt balances awkwardly on one foot, holding his ankle up while he tries not to stumble in the sand.

“Hold this,” Sebastian says, handing Kurt his edge of the blanket. Kurt takes it and holds onto it while Sebastian slides his hand beneath Kurt’s knee and lifts it up, holding his hurt foot aloft and helping him maintain his balance.

Kurt bites his lip, counting about a hundred different times Sebastian has managed to make him mentally swoon this morning alone.

“Thanks,” Kurt mutters, noticing how with their bodies close together and his leg angled up this way he can feel everything about Sebastian’s body, even more so when he was bent over backwards in his arms in the water.

It’s risqué and raunchy, but it makes Kurt want to drop down into the sand and try his hand at seducing Sebastian all over again, even though he’s confident the results would be the same.

“Seriously, though,” Kurt says, deflecting some of his mounting desire by drumming up more conversation, “how do you know that?”

Sebastian’s eyes are focused down at Kurt’s chest, not meeting his eyes, and Kurt realizes that past the racing of his own heart, which had started up again at the touch of Sebastian’s skin sandwiched against his own, he can feel Sebastian’s rapidly thumping heart beat as well.

“I had a contemporary European literature professor who used alignments as a framework for examining character loyalties in turn of the century French and German post World War II literature,” Sebastian says, his voice unsteady and less mocking in light of their current position. Kurt can only guess what Sebastian is thinking, imagining the two of them lying naked in the sand worshipping each other as well.

Kurt’s face is flushed when Sebastian looks at him. Kurt raises an eyebrow, his expression blank and somewhat skeptical.

“But yes, it’s from Dungeons and Dragons,” Sebastian admits finally.

“A-ha!” Kurt cheers. “I knew it!”

“You know nothing.” Sebastian lowers Kurt’s leg back to the ground and directs him toward the car.

“If it makes you feel any better, I imagine you as a twelfth level paladin,” Kurt says grinning, “or the dungeon master.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Sebastian groans, knowing he’s still being ruthlessly taunted, “and by the way, wouldn’t knowing all this make you a gigantic nerd?”

“I see it more as the unavoidable symptom of a communicable disease.”
“What disease?” Sebastian scoffs.

“Puck and Finn.”

Sebastian’s eyes shift to catch a glimpse of Kurt’s serious face.

“Okay,” Sebastian says, sympathizing as a brother to a brother, “you’re excused.”

“Thank you,” Kurt says dramatically, as if Sebastian’s approval justified Kurt’s whole existence.

Sebastian laughs.

“You do realize you called your stepbrother a disease, right?”

“He’ll live.” Kurt grimaces as they head up the slight embankment to the car.

The thirty or so steps up the embankment turn out to be the slowest steps of Kurt’s life. He hadn’t noticed that they had walked quite so far, but now that he can barely put any weight on his leg he curses all the adrenaline and enthusiasm that had propelled him down the beach in the first place.

“So, are we going to drive back inland now?” Kurt asks around a yawn.

“Nope,” Sebastian says, leaning Kurt up against the Mustang for support. He slips out from beneath the blanket, walking completely naked to the rear of the car. Not that Kurt minds at all. He stares blatantly at Sebastian’s toned ass until he rounds the rear of the vehicle, out of sight.

Sebastian pops the trunk and rummages around for a bit, coming back with a duffel bag, a box of cornstarch, and several bottles of water. “I told you, there’s no way we’re getting off this beach tonight.”

“Why not?”

Sebastian doesn’t answer; he simply points in the direction of the way they came in. Kurt’s eyes follow the path of Sebastian’s finger and he sees groups of tents, campfires, the bodies of people passed out in the sand - all blocking their exit.

“What are we going to do then?” Kurt asks, not looking forward to sleeping with sand stuck to his body. Sebastian picks up one of the bottles of water and the box of cornstarch, shaking them in front of Kurt’s face, waiting expectantly for Kurt to guess.

“We’re going to make papier mache?” Kurt tilts his head and squints, not in the mood for guessing games.

Sebastian shakes his head.

“We’re going to take a camping shower.”

Kurt’s face drops, his expression going completely inscrutable while Sebastian starts opening the caps on the water bottles and lining them up on the roof of the car. Once that’s done, he opens the box of cornstarch, squeezing the sides of the box to soften up the powder inside. His turns around and finds Kurt standing, unmoved with the blanket still wrapped around him.

“Come on, babe.” Sebastian reaches out a hand and tugs at the rough cloth. “Open up.”

Kurt doesn’t know why he stalls. Didn’t he already strip for Sebastian? Hasn’t he seen him naked? Why is this different?
With shaking hands, Kurt opens the blanket and holds it wide, blocking the view of anyone who might walk behind him. Sebastian starts to dust Kurt’s skin with the cornstarch, coating his skin until it’s completely white. The powder puffs up toward Kurt’s nose, the tiny particulates irritating his sinuses. He moves to pinch his nose, but he stops halfway, knowing that doing so will involve either closing the blanket around him and hindering Sebastian’s progress or dropping the blanket completely.

“You know, this would be easier if you dropped the blanket,” Sebastian says, struggling to dust Kurt’s back with the wool cloth clutched in his fists. Sebastian’s gaze flicks up, catching Kurt sweeping his eyes over the parking lot. “Carlos isn’t here if that’s what you’re worried about.”

“Where did he go?” Kurt coughs as he inhales a cloud of powder, but it’s a perfect cover for the question that he almost asked but really didn’t want to know the answer to – How do you know?

Sebastian shrugs.

“Probably to one of those tents,” Sebastian speculates, bending over to powder Kurt’s legs, carefully avoiding the sopping wet bandage encircling Kurt’s ankle. After Kurt is covered to Sebastian’s satisfaction, he grabs a clean dry towel from the duffel and starts knocking the cornstarch off Kurt’s body - the thin, smooth powder sliding off Kurt’s skin and taking the coarser sand along with it.

Kurt looks over the tents, most of them brightly lit from the inside, shadows and silhouettes dancing along the sides of some, showing clearly what the inhabitants are doing. Kurt briefly wonders which one Carlos might have commandeered for himself when a splash of water hits his shoulder.

“Jeesh!” Kurt hops back and Sebastian laughs.

“Settle down, Hummel. You don’t want to waste it.”

Mesmerized, Kurt stands, unmoving and lets Sebastian wash him, pouring bottled water over his skin and rinsing what’s left of the sand away. He closes his eyes just a moment when the water trickles in thin rivers around his hips and over the swell of his ass. It feels so intimate, even standing here on a public beach, surrounded by cars and the occasional passerby. They could be standing in the middle of a crowded mall on Black Friday for all Kurt cares. Sebastian rinses the sand from between his fingers, placing a quick kiss to his inside wrist before traveling down his legs. He unwraps Kurt’s bandage and flushes out the sting.

“Wh-where did you learn this?” Kurt asks, not so much curious but needing something to focus on while Sebastian cleans the sand off his ankle – a place Kurt didn’t know was an erogenous zone until Sebastian brushed his fingertips lightly against it.

“My father was an Eagle Scout,” Sebastian says, switching to Kurt’s other ankle, biting back a smile when a quiet moan slips past Kurt’s lips, “my mom was a Cadet. They know all about this camping in the woods, living off of bark, and surviving the zombie apocalypse shit.”

“Oh yeah?” Kurt asks, the words somewhere between a breathy gasp and a whimper when Sebastian works his way back up Kurt’s leg toward his inner thigh. He tries to picture Gregory and Charlotte as weekend warriors, hiking in the wilderness, purifying water with a coffee can and some bleach, if for no other reason than to kill the hard-on that’s threatening to make an appearance.

Disturbingly enough, it doesn’t help in that capacity.
"Yeah," Sebastian continues. "They took us to one of those endurance retreats in the California desert when I was in the fifth grade. They thought it would be a bonding experience or something."

Kurt shifts from one foot to the other, spreading his legs and swallowing hard, looking straight ahead, categorizing the cars in the lot by style and color, finding anything to draw his attention away from the water drizzling lightly down his stomach in a way that seems to direct the stream straight down his already half-hard cock.

Kurt has a suspicion that Sebastian chose that path on purpose.

"What happened?" Kurt says, steadying his voice, refusing to be flustered.

"Me, Liv, and Julian spent the whole trip taking bets on who would die or get eaten first, which turned into a huge argument over what part of the body is suitable for human consumption, and three hours later my parents called it quits and took us to Disneyland." Sebastian empties the rest of the bottle down Kurt’s chest, staring deep into his eyes as he does it, seeing something in Kurt’s gaze that he apparently likes because his smirk turns into a sultry grin and he licks his lips. He kisses Kurt quickly, slipping his tongue into Kurt’s mouth with a low growl and enough heat to leave Kurt wanting so much more. Then he breaks away and hands Kurt a fresh towel.

"You dry off and get dressed," Sebastian commands, gesturing to the open duffel bag lying on the ground. "It’s my turn next."

Kurt starts to dry off, watching Sebastian shower (if it can honestly be termed that). He starts the process over on himself, dusting his skin with the cornstarch and then swatting it off with the towel, brushing away the sand in a much rougher manner than he used on Kurt. Sebastian opens a bottle of water and pours it over himself, bending his neck back and starting beneath his chin. The water slides over his skin in a way that Kurt can almost feel, his own skin tingling with the memory of it. Sebastian sets aside the empty bottle and reaches for another one, but Kurt reaches a hand out for it, too. Their hands meet somewhere in the middle.

"Did you want me to…"

Sebastian looks at Kurt’s face, into his beckoning blue eyes, and his breath hitches in his throat. "That’s okay," he says with a smirk. "I’ll just take a second. Finish getting dressed. I don’t need you catching a cold."

"Right," Kurt says with a smirk to match Sebastian’s, "because you don’t want to have to take care of me?"

Sebastian’s grin burns brighter and he winks.

"That’s right."

Dressing on the beach is a tricky business. Struck with a sudden case of modesty as more and more beach goers start heading towards their cars, Kurt attempts to keep the towel wrapped around his waist and manages, at least, to get his shirt on that way. But keeping the towel from slipping while balancing on one leg and negotiating pants is a feat bordering on the extraterrestrial, so eventually he has to abandon propriety, and bares ass so he can bend over and put on the sweat pants Sebastian lent him. Kurt dresses carefully, trying not to get sand in the leg of the pants. Luckily, the sweats have loose elastic around the ankle and Kurt opens it wide to slip each foot through. He stops every once in a while to continue watching Sebastian rinse the sand off his skin. He starts to feel guilty, thinking that maybe he shouldn’t, that he’s peeking in on a private moment, but then
Sebastian catches his eye and smiles. 

“Do you see something you like, Hummel?” he asks cheekily.

“Geez,” Kurt says with a roll of his eyes, “isn’t that the most overused statement of our generation?”

“I’m not sure,” Sebastian says. “I think it might be tied with ‘baby bump’ and ‘I don’t think so’. Oh, and let’s not forget the ever popular ‘I’ve got your back’.”

Kurt nods in agreement. He turns to the car and picks up a bottle, holding it out to Sebastian. Sebastian takes it, but doesn’t continue bathing. He waits for an answer to his question, overused or not.

“So, do you?” he repeats.

Kurt feels color rising to his cheeks, burning so brightly that he knows even the night and the shadows can’t hide it, which is good in the long run. It gives him the freedom to be honest.


This time it’s Sebastian who turns his head to hide his blush.

“What?” Kurt asks. “You can’t tell me you haven’t heard that from someone before. I won’t believe it.”

Sebastian pours what’s left of the water down his legs and holds the empty plastic bottle in both hands, crushing it flat.

“No,” he says. “I haven’t. Not like that.”

It never dawned on Kurt, not once since he’s known him, that of all those boys and men that Sebastian must have been with that not one of them would have paid him a compliment – an honest compliment, that is. Kurt was sure that’s where the bulk of his overly vaulted sense of self-esteem had come from. Sebastian must have heard he was handsome, but probably in that way that people tell you what you want to hear in order to get something out of you.

Kurt wants Sebastian to look at him, to give Kurt permission to comfort him, but Sebastian doesn’t look at him right away. He dresses on autopilot, his eyes distant as he puts on his clothes. He’s lost in his thoughts and Kurt lets him stay there, not put out at being ignored, giving Sebastian whatever time he needs. Sebastian clears away the empty water bottles and the cornstarch, putting them beside the pile of their sandy clothes, the duffel bag, and the wool blanket in the trunk before he speaks to Kurt again.

“Uh…I brought a tent if you want to set it up on the beach,” Sebastian offers.

“That sounds…amazing,” Kurt admits, “but I’m exhausted. I think if I take another step I’m going to die.”

Sebastian chuckles, shaking his head, and all of a sudden Kurt’s boyfriend is back. Sebastian opens the passenger door to the Mustang. He leans down and pulls up a lever, collapsing the seat forward.

“Climb on in, babe,” Sebastian instructs, gesturing to the back seat.
“But…but it’s tiny,” Kurt complains around another, more persistent, yawn.

“Kurt,” Sebastian says sternly, “nothing about this car is tiny.”

“Does that include the car’s owner?” Kurt teases, climbing into the back seat with Sebastian close behind.

“Don’t you know it,” he answers back, swatting Kurt on the ass. (Kurt is beginning to get the impression that Sebastian is an ass man.) Sebastian shuts the door behind them and locks it. He grabs a pillow and a blanket that he had stashed in the front seat at some point when Kurt wasn’t paying any attention.

“This is going to be a tight squeeze,” Kurt says, climbing onto the seat with Sebastian, cautiously kneeling down so that he doesn’t unwittingly knee Sebastian in the groin.

“Those are the best kind,” Sebastian mumbles, adjusting beneath Kurt’s body, maneuvering so that they better fit together.

It’s not perfect, and by no means the most comfortable sleeping arrangement. They shimmy up to adjust and readjust several times – Kurt lifting up so Sebastian can scoot further down the seat, then doing it one more time so Sebastian can scoot back up again, half twisting separately, then together, Kurt draping an arm over Sebastian, and then Sebastian wrapping an arm around Kurt and holding him tight - until the pillow rests behind Sebastian’s neck just right and Kurt curls against his boyfriend’s body in a way that means none of his limbs will fall go numb, even though Sebastian is practically holding him suspended in mid-air. Kurt giggles once, imagining what the rocking Mustang must look like to the casual outside observer.

They settle down finally, and what at first blush seemed like an ill-conceived idea (with Kurt constantly questioning if he should swallow his pride and ask Sebastian to build the tent after all) turns into something enchanting. The back seat of the Mustang becomes their own quiet safe haven; secluded from the ocean air and the prying eyes of stragglers roaming the beach. They stop moving at the same time, catch each other’s gaze in the dark, and all at once without any words spoken Sebastian is kissing Kurt, or Kurt is kissing Sebastian. It happens so suddenly that Kurt can’t tell who starts it, but he doesn’t want it to end.

Kurt chuckles quietly in the space between kisses.

“How did this happen?” he asks, closing the gap for another inevitable kiss.

“How did what happen?” Sebastian hums against Kurt’s lips.

“This,” Kurt says, sweeping his eyes around the car as a gesture meant to imply everything that’s transpired between them so far, “us. How did that happen?”

Sebastian shrugs, kissing a patch of skin below Kurt’s ear, running a hand up his neck, fingertips grazing lightly.

“I’m not sure,” Sebastian admits, “but I learned a long time ago not to question a good thing when it comes along.”

“Am I a good thing?” Kurt asks, thinking about all those boys, all those men who have probably used Sebastian over the years. That isn’t to say Sebastian didn’t use a few of them, too, but Kurt doesn’t care about those nameless, faceless strangers. He cares about Sebastian – a beautiful boy who only wants a chance to love someone, and feel loved in return.
Kurt doesn’t overthink kissing Sebastian. He lets whatever is going to happen come in its own time. He gives his body permission to do and be. His hands roam over Sebastian’s body, toying with the hem of his soft, white t-shirt, fingertips brushing at the slightly salt-dry but smooth skin underneath.

“Kurt,” Sebastian mutters when Kurt snakes his hands beneath the elastic waistband of Sebastian’s sweatpants and finds him hard and aching beneath his fingers. Kurt takes hold, takes control, and strokes him slowly.

“Kurt…” It’s a question, a plea, and it’s deliciously broken. Sebastian’s hands are on him, reaching for him, but Kurt moves out of his grasp. Kurt wants to experience this in its entirety, without any distractions. “Kurt…”

Kurt deliberately experiments with pressure, speed, a slight twist of his fist, finding all those subtle variations that make Sebastian shudder and gasp beneath him. Kurt feels his own desire grow at every breathless mention of his name, but he’s determined to finish what he started.

“Kurt…” Sebastian finally grabs hold of Kurt’s hand and stills his movements.

“Sebastian…” Kurt objects.

“No, Kurt…” Sebastian interrupts. “No, it’s not that. I need you. Please.”

Sebastian helps Kurt climb over him, repositioning their bodies in the confines of the car so that Kurt can lay on him. Sebastian’s legs drop open at the knees so that Kurt can rest between them and Kurt picks up where he stopped earlier. The temperature inside the Mustang rises sharply as Kurt moves, his forehead damp with perspiration at the strain of staying balanced in such a cramped space, but it’s worth it when he feels that first surge of pleasure course through his body, and Sebastian arches his back and moans.

“God, yes!” Sebastian groans, loud enough to be heard outside the car, evidenced by the muted sound of cheering they can hear from the owners of the Lexus parked next to them. “Yes, Kurt! Right…right there. D-don’t stop…”

Sebastian’s tortured muttering is just as sexy, maybe even more so, than his drawn out, sinful moans every time Kurt rolls his hips down, sliding their cocks together. Kurt had been so nervous about initiating this, so nervous that he would pale in comparison, but he reminds himself that Sebastian’s former exploits mean nothing.

They are nothing.

It’s in the past, the same way Blaine is swiftly becoming a part of Kurt’s past.

Sebastian wants Kurt. With every scrape of his nails down Kurt’s back, with every rise of his hips to meet Kurt’s thrusts, with every pant and whimper and shudder – Sebastian wants Kurt.

Sebastian watches Kurt snap his hips above him because he needs to see him there.

There is no one else.

Sebastian lets Kurt take him, and when he cums again, after hours spent kissing and teasing and edging so close just to be pulled apart again, it’s with Kurt’s name on his lips and their fingers laced together.

Sebastian cums because of Kurt, and for Sebastian, it’s almost like a dream.
“Finally,” Sebastian groans. “I didn’t know how many more near misses I was going to be able to take.”

“Yeah,” Kurt agrees, still hovering in the delirium of his own orgasm. “I guess this car is bigger on the inside than it seems.”

Kurt stares down into Sebastian’s face, and in the light coming in through the windows Kurt can see the track of a single tear staining Sebastian’s cheek. Kurt longs to lean over and kiss it away, but he decides not to. Sebastian, in many ways, is still so guarded about certain feelings; he still has so many secrets. He might not be ready to share this one.

Kurt has one or two of his own that he’s not ready to reveal, even though the loose lips that come with post-coital bliss are dying to spill everything.

“How do you feel?” Kurt asks, half-hoping that Sebastian might come clean on his own.

“I feel like I need to go get my suspension checked because I think we rocked my Mustang pretty hard,” Sebastian jokes. He raises a hand and wipes the tear away but says nothing about, and Kurt sighs knowing that is another puzzle piece he’s going to have to come to terms with letting go.

“Please,” Kurt scoffs. “You have an American muscle car with an independent rear suspension. I’m sure she can handle us rocking her a little bit.”

Sebastian stares for a moment, and then pulls Kurt down on top of him.

“Yes,” he moans, “talk automotive to me! It gets me so hot!”

“Well, I bet,” Kurt laughs. “Tell me you brought one of those towels in here so I don’t have to go to sleep with a mess down my pants this time.”

“Are you always this high-maintenance?” Sebastian reaches into the front seat, grabs a towel, and hands it to Kurt.

“I didn’t know that not wanting to sleep in a pool of bodily fluids constituted being high-maintenance,” Kurt argues, slipping the end of the towel into the front of his sweatpants to clean himself off. Sebastian grabs the opposite end and does the same. Kurt raises an eyebrow.

“So, does that mean you’re high-maintenance, too?” Kurt jeers, dropping his end of the towel when he finishes.

“Nope,” Sebastian says, wrapping the towel in a ball and shoving it to the floor when he’s done, “I’m piggybacking off a good idea.”

Kurt curls up in roughly the same position as before, with his head on Sebastian’s chest, and melts onto his boyfriend’s body much easier now that they’re both relaxed. Kurt can hear Sebastian’s breathing along with his heart beating against his ear. It’s calm and soothing, and his body responds to it - his own breathing slowing to match, his own heart quieting to equal its pace.

Sebastian pulls the forgotten blanket around them, tucking it around Kurt to keep him warm. Before the thought of saying ‘good-night’ even enters his mind, he hears Kurt’s breathing even out, and he knows that Kurt’s already asleep.

Sebastian stares up at the ceiling of his Mustang, fighting the pull of sleep long enough to let one more tear slip, holding on to this bittersweet feeling for as long as he can.
The sound of dull, staccato knocking against the rear windshield wedges into Kurt’s unconscious mind, like a pickaxe chipping away at his sleep. He winces with every hit against the glass, but he doesn’t open his eyes. Whatever it is trying to make its way through his skull with its incessant knocking will have to work harder, because Kurt refuses to move.

Sleeping in the tight confines of the Mustang’s backseat with his limp body draped over Sebastian has been blissful, dreamless, and even though the muscles in his back and hips ache from the strained, arched, and slightly corkscrewed position he’s had to maintain, he resents whatever it is outside the car that is trying so hard to disturb him.

He makes it his mission to stay asleep almost entirely out of spite, even though a trip to the Porta-Potty is long overdue.

Sebastian doesn’t stir an inch as the slow, erratic knocking starts, or when it increases in tempo, so Kurt feels safe ignoring it. If it was something worth worrying about, Sebastian would wake up and take care of it. So Kurt simply shifts his body a little, relieving the agony of his compressed spine, and repositioning his head on Sebastian’s chest so he can better hear the soothing rhythm of his heartbeat.
The two tempos compete but there is no contest. The calming pulse of Sebastian’s heart lulls Kurt back to sleep. He smiles, relaxed and completely at peace.

When the knocking outside turns into a driving wallop a few hours later, accompanied by the sound of a man’s voice yelling at them through the sliver of a crack in the driver’s side window, both boys’ eyes snap open as they finally begin to take better notice of their surroundings.

Kurt sits straight up. Dazed and muddled from lack of sleep and from spending the night out on the island instead of in Sebastian’s bedroom, and with his Circadian rhythm thrown completely out of whack, he tries to get his bearings, but it’s hard when everything around him is obscured and grey. The sky, the water – all grey – a single, conjoined mass of blurry wetness and indecipherable movement. Looking out of the window, peering past the people rushing around outside, their forms weaving in and out of the thick morning mist, it’s impossible to tell where the sky ends and the water begins. They bleed together, and it gives Kurt the impression of being suspended smack dab in the middle of the ocean. There’s a storm raging outside. Rain is beating down on them relentlessly - an urgent, insistent drumming against the body of the Mustang. Kurt can hear the surf pound against the narrow shore, and the wind wail as it batters the car, jostling it from side to side.

Kurt doesn’t like it.

The summer storm had started as a drizzle while they slept- not much more than a sprinkle of occasional water droplets mixed with the spray from the sea - but in no time, it had become a deluge.

Kurt is no stranger to storms – unseasonal or otherwise. Ohio gets its fair share of torrential rain storms. Some of them can relocate a mailbox, or even a tree, quiet effectively, but for the most part, the rain in Ohio is soft and soothing. It beats along the rooftops and the concrete, and the clouds filling the sky take on a soft, smoky hue, filtering the light behind them. It’s almost romantic the way the rain falls in Lima. On a cold autumn day, sitting by his window with a mug of warm milk and gazing out at the rain washing over the sidewalk and the houses was one of his favorite pastimes.

Something about this rain bothers him. The storm here by the ocean is different. It’s violent and loud – rain falling in droves and mixing with the multitudes of churning waves outside. The forks of lightning cut through the sky, almost immediately followed by the booming thunder, riling right above their heads. Kurt’s whole body trembles with each clap, like a physical hand reaching down from above and striking him forcefully.

It’s unsettling, disturbing, and all Kurt wants to do is run from it, but there’s nowhere to go. He feels trapped.

Sebastian starts to rise, scooting up on the seat with one hand rubbing the sleep from his eyes, the other raking through his hair, carding through the knots. He yawns leisurely, shaking his head from side to side, seemingly unperturbed by the tumultuous squall. His eyes focus on Kurt, kneeling on the opposite end of the seat, trembling as another fork of lightning flashes through the sky, this one connecting with the water.

“Sebastian…” Kurt starts, his shaking voice betraying his fear.

“Hello, handsome,” Sebastian says with a bawdy half-smile that would be irresistible if not for the crash of thunder that shakes the car on its struts.

“Sebastian, we have to go.”
Sebastian blinks and Kurt stares at him, wondering exactly what it is about the words he just said along with the obvious racket from the rain does Sebastian not understand.

Sebastian looks around, his eyes widening as if he’s noticing the storm for the first time.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know,” he mutters around another infuriatingly lazy yawn.

“Sebastian,” Kurt urges, grabbing his boyfriend’s arm and shaking him awake, “we’ve got to go now!”

“I know, I know,” he continues in the same exasperatingly relaxed manner.

“Sebastian!” Kurt yells, his head turning chaotically left and right, noticing how his anxious breathing has fogged up the windows, making it even harder to see through them.

“Calm down,” Sebastian says, reaching out to take Kurt’s arms and pull his focus. “Everybody on the island is trying to get to the mainland. Even if we start driving now…”

Sebastian’s sentence is stopped by a crash of thunder so loud the car’s windows shake, and he swallows down the rest of his unimportant comment.

“Right,” he says with his eyes raised to the skies, as if answering Mother Nature’s call to leave and not Kurt’s, “we’d better get going.”

Sebastian grumbles beneath his breath, dragging his body over the back of the seats and landing heavily in the driver’s seat. Kurt follows, making his way into the passenger seat with more finesse, and buckling his seatbelt, feeling more secure with it wrapped around him.

Sebastian seems less concerned than Kurt. Even after he turns on the car and switches on the windshield wipers, now better able to see the organized hysteria outside, he still seems to dismiss the notion that they are in any real danger. As they roll out of the makeshift parking lot, Kurt begins to wonder how much of Sebastian’s laissez-faire attitude might be a touch of false bravado for Kurt’s benefit. Behind his calm façade, his green eyes dart around unceasingly, taking in the sight of the people and cars egressing en masse. He maneuvers the Mustang carefully through the oversaturated sand, which has now become a dark, sticky muck. Kurt watches it slough off into the water after the waves hit, and a new alarm goes off in his head.

Could a storm this fierce erode this narrow strip of island completely away?

A quiet voice – what remains of his rationale and common sense – pipes up to reassure him.

Of course not. This area of the Atlantic Coast is no stranger to storms worse than this, he assumes, but that voice becomes quieter and quieter the stronger the storm becomes, with them sitting right in the thick of it.

The Mustang inches closer and closer to the line of cars assembled to leave the island, and as soon as they meet up with it and edge into its ranks, they stop. They sit…and wait…with the ocean creeping closer in on their left and Kurt crowding as close to the door on his right as humanly possible. There he crouches like a frightened, cornered animal, with his knees drawn up to his chest.

It takes more than a couple of hours to get off the island because of the sheer number of people clustered together on this narrow strip of sand, all of them doing exactly what Kurt and Sebastian are attempting to do – get back to the mainland. Every few minutes the parade of cars comes to a sudden halt, waylaid by stray partyers passed out on the beach who cannot be motivated to move,
even if it does seem like the end of days is suddenly at hand. Kurt doesn’t become too nervous on their behalf until the waves come up further onto the sand, washing beneath their car’s tires. He sees a Frisbee and a beer cooler wash away with the waves and he’s curious if anyone has been swept up by the tide.

The water inches higher and higher, and Kurt becomes less concerned with the random people milling about, focusing entirely on the perilous state of their own safety.

Kurt hops around inside the car, peering out the windows, trying to see past the sheets of rain pelting the glass.

“Would you sit your ass down?” Sebastian chides. “You’re vibrating like a fucking Chihuahua and I don’t need you peeing inside my car.”

“We’re going to get washed away,” Kurt mutters. “We’re going to get washed away and float out to sea.”

“Calm your tits, Hummel,” Sebastian laughs lightly. “I don’t think we’re going to float away.”

“Really?” Kurt asks, fishing for reassurance. “Why not?”

“Because we’re in a one-ton vehicle, Kurt,” Sebastian says, laughing a little louder. “We’re going to sink straight to the ocean floor.”

Kurt’s face blanches as he stops moving, staring out the window and considering the possible truth of that statement. Sebastian looks back at him – Kurt’s blue eyes wide, looking past Sebastian, past the turbulent water, past the cars rolling and braking at odd intervals, calculating…

It suddenly hits Sebastian where exactly Kurt’s terror might stem from.

“Hey,” Sebastian says, changing his tune, putting a hand on Kurt’s shoulder and pulling him close. “Hey, it’s okay, babe. We’ll be okay. I promise.”

Kurt nods and sits back in his seat, leaning awkwardly to put his head on Sebastian’s shoulder. Sebastian hands Kurt his iPhone, silently giving him permission to choose from his selection of music or audiobooks to keep his mind off of their impending journey to Davy Jones’s locker.

Even before their tires cross over the interchange from sand to asphalt, the storm quiets down. It still powers overhead as they take the bridge to the mainland, but it’s much less intimidating with the water a fair distance below them as opposed to right on their heels.

“There,” Sebastian says, pecking a kiss to Kurt’s hair as the traffic thins and their drive becomes smoother, “is that better?”

Kurt sighs. They sky is still dark, the persistent wind still batters against the sides of the car, but everything seems brighter now, less daunting.

“Are you trying to kill me on this trip?” Kurt asks, recovering a bit of his humor and stealing back the euphoria of earlier this morning - of having Sebastian beneath him, experimenting with the intimacy growing between them.

“I know I’m good,” Sebastian says, “but I’m not sure that I can control the winds and the tides.”

Kurt shakes his head.
“At this point,” he says with a chuckle, “I wouldn’t be surprised.”

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The storm seems so far away when they reach the beach house. The dark water still roils outside, and spray from the waves hits the side of the house and the windows, but it stays sanctioned at a much more manageable distance. The house is their safe haven, and no matter what happens in the days to come, Kurt will always remember it that way.

He sighs with regret as he realizes he’s been here three days so far and he hasn’t taken a single picture. He can blame his efforts to stay unplugged, but a part of him was afraid of recording this amazing vacation in case something went wrong.

In case this thing between him and Sebastian didn’t last.

But he plans to rectify that as soon as possible.

Sebastian parks the Mustang in the car port and kills the engine. Both boys collectively relax into their seats with the relief of being home. Kurt opens his door and steps out, appraising the outside of the car, which looks worse for the wear. Sebastian sees Kurt’s eyes and the look on his face, and laughs.

“We’ll run her through a wash when the rain lets up,” Sebastian says, reaching out and taking Kurt’s hand. “Believe me. She’s looked worse.”

Kurt smiles at his sentiment, at his need to reassure Kurt, but mostly he’s smiling at Sebastian’s hand in his and how easy it is for these small displays of affection to nearly melt Kurt’s heart.

How is it that what seemed inevitable with Blaine seems like magic with Sebastian?

They walk quietly into the house. The door shuts behind them and that’s all Kurt needs to feel like himself again. The storm stays harmlessly at bay outside while they are secluded in their hideaway.

Nothing can touch Kurt inside these walls, especially with Sebastian’s hand in his.

“I need to wash off all this sand,” Kurt says, heading straight for the bathroom. He hears footsteps following him. He’s sure Sebastian will blow past him into his bedroom, but he doesn’t. He stops at the doorway when Kurt stops.

“Would you mind if I joined you?” Sebastian asks, hovering beside him, lips teasing over his, promising more than just a shower if they took one together.

“If we take a shower together,” Kurt starts, chasing Sebastian’s lips that seem to pull out of reach at the last minute, “would we be getting any actual washing done?”

“I’m sure we can fit it in,” Sebastian jokes, stealing a kiss, and then another, and another, moving his hands around Kurt’s back and reaching for the door handle. While Sebastian does that, Kurt focuses on the more important task of stripping off his clothes, peeling off his pants, ignoring the sting of his wounded leg as he grabs at the fabric with his feet and slides them off his legs, moving on to Sebastian’s pants in lieu of his shirt so as not to necessitate breaking the kisses that have begun to leave his mouth and pepper down his neck. Sebastian takes over when Kurt can’t finish, kicking off his own pants and pulling off his shirt.

“Come on, Kurt,” Sebastian says, barely moving away from his skin to speak, “let’s move this party to the shower or we’re never going to leave the hallway.”
“I fail…to see…the problem…” Kurt mumbles, struggling to get his lips to connect with any inch of Sebastian’s skin that they can. Sebastian smiles and ruffles Kurt’s hair, sending a shower of sand sprinkling to the floor around them. Kurt sighs, falling back against the door that Sebastian has yet to open. “Yeah, I see your point.” Kurt turns around and opens the door for them while Sebastian works at tugging up Kurt’s shirt. He strips it off and tosses it to the floor while Kurt limps to the shower and turns the water on. He bends over to turn the taps, unaware of what he’s done until he hears a low hum of approval and a quiet *hot damn*.

Kurt shoots back up so suddenly he gets tangled in the shower curtain.

“Don’t be so self-conscious, babe,” Sebastian says, resting his hands on his boyfriend’s shoulders.

“That’s easy for you to say,” Kurt says, disentangling his head from the vinyl curtain.

“Yup,” Sebastian says with less condescension than Kurt expected for such a forward comment, “it *is* easy for me to say.”

“Yeah,” Kurt confirms, “when you look the way you do, Mr. Captain of the Lacrosse Team.”

Kurt steps into the shower and beneath the spray, which feels hotter against his back than it had against his hand, but he leaves the steaming water engulf him anyway. He’s sick of feeling gritty. He needs to feel clean. He hopes he can rinse away the sand and only the sand – that the imprint of Sebastian’s touches, and of all his heated kisses, will stay behind.

“No,” Sebastian says with a slight emphasis, climbing beneath the water and crowding against Kurt, “I can say it because I get to look at you, my *hot* boyfriend, and his incredible body that he keeps hidden underneath all those vile girl clothes.”

Kurt reaches back to smack him, but his aim is derailed when Sebastian latches his mouth over Kurt’s neck, sucking and licking and tasting the salt on his skin. Kurt is keenly aware of every inch of Sebastian’s body pressed against his own, reminiscent of the way they were in the ocean beneath the moonlight. But here in their sanctuary they have privacy…and time. All the time they could ever need to touch and kiss and explore.

Kurt hears the sound of a flip-top lid and he stiffens. He knows what that sound usually means, but Sebastian shakes his head against Kurt’s shoulder. He puts a bottle into Kurt’s hands and then starts running his fingers through Kurt’s hair. The familiar scent of vanilla fills the shower. Kurt leans back against Sebastian’s shoulder, luxuriating in the feeling of his boyfriend washing his hair, massaging the sand out of his scalp, rinsing carefully with handfuls of water so the soap doesn’t run into Kurt’s eyes. Another bottle opens, and the vanilla scent becomes stronger as Sebastian follows up with the conditioning rinse.

“Hmmm,” Kurt sighs, content, all the knots in his muscles loosening with every stroke of Sebastian’s fingers, “you’re really good at that.”

“Why, thank you,” he murmurs. “It can’t be from practice. I don’t use half the amount of shit in my hair that you do.”

Kurt knows it’s a lie, having been privy to Sebastian’s impressive army of products out on the sink. Kurt recognizes the comment for what it is - a code, one that Kurt is beginning to be able to decipher without much effort.

What Sebastian is actually saying is *he’s never done this with someone else before.*

This is another first - an intimate moment that belongs to the two of them alone.
There’s nothing else to do than to enjoy it. Kurt feels spoiled. How in the world is he expected to return to the frugalities of everyday life when he’s had this singular attention lavished on him? Nope. He decides it’s impossible. He can’t do it. He’ll just stay here with Sebastian, in the shower, until he’s wrinkled and prune. Why would he ever want to leave the hands that are massaging his shoulders - that have grabbed a shower pouf and are scrubbing the sand off his skin? What is on the other side of the shower curtain that is better than the lips whispering along his jaw line, nibbling at his earlobe, speaking so quietly that no matter how hard Kurt strains to listen he can’t seem to hear what they’re saying?

Maybe Sebastian’s telling him secrets he’s not prepared for Kurt to hear just yet.

The thought that he’s so close to the answers drives him insane.

What won’t Sebastian just tell him?

Kurt turns in Sebastian’s arms. It’s a movement that he has to force himself to do because he’s still not convinced that moving is the best option.

“Okay,” Kurt says, leaving the subject of Sebastian’s hidden secrets alone for the time-being, “my turn.”

Kurt reaches out for the bottle that Sebastian had put on the edge of the tub, but Sebastian grabs his wrist and leads it away.

“No, no, no,” Sebastian says, “only one of us gets to smell like dessert. Here.”

Kurt looks at the black bottle that Sebastian places in his hands and frowns.

“Ah, yes, you know that something is truly manly when it has the words *pour homme* on the bottle,” Kurt says judgmentally, opening the lid and squeezing a dollop into his hands.

“How about you put those hands to good use,” Sebastian suggests, removing the bottle from Kurt’s hands and returning it from whence it came, “and I’ll put that snarky mouth of yours to better use?”

Kurt doesn’t have a moment to object before Sebastian’s mouth is covering his, and Kurt stands with his hands outstretched, supinated to keep the shampoo from dripping into the tub. He moans into Sebastian’s mouth when Sebastian bites down on his lower lip.

“Uh, Kurt?” he mumbles into Kurt’s mouth.

“Yeah?” Kurt whimpers, wondering why the incredible kissing has stopped.

“My hair?”

“Oh.” Kurt runs his hands through Sebastian’s hair, and Sebastian kisses him again.

Kurt had expected Sebastian to be all over him – naked in the shower, hot and wet and covered in soap, begging to be touched. But this attention Kurt is getting from Sebastian is different. It’s savoring. Kurt is so turned on his body is screaming for Sebastian. Sebastian can’t possibly miss how embarrassingly hard Kurt is against him, but even so, it’s not urgent - not as important as the hand trailing lightly down his side, or the mouth pressing sweet kisses to his temple.

*This* he can do all day long and never tire of it, never have enough, even after the water gets cold….which it does, long before Kurt is ready.
“Well, that’s a first,” Sebastian says. “I don’t think I’ve ever been here until the water’s gone cold. We have a two-hour water heater.”

“We’ll have to circle this day in red on our calendar,” Kurt says, shivering despite the warmth of the water still left.

Sebastian moves away to turn off the shower and Kurt whines, missing the intimate atmosphere the cascade of water created the minute it’s gone.

“Don’t worry…” Sebastian pushes aside the curtain and helps Kurt out of the tub, his eyes traveling down Kurt’s body, stopping for a moment on Kurt’s now half-hard erection, “we’ll get a chance to christen the shower another time.”

Kurt doesn’t blush this time as Sebastian openly stares at his body. Kurt wants those green eyes on him. Sebastian’s growing smile of admiration is addictive. Sebastian reaches behind him and grabs a towel hanging on the back of the door, passing it off to Kurt. He watches Kurt wrap the towel securely around his body. With Kurt completely covered, Sebastian winks and walks out of the bathroom ahead of Kurt, naked.

“S-so what did you have planned for today?” Kurt stammers, enjoying the view.

“I’m not telling,” Sebastian tosses over his shoulder.

“Why not?” Kurt asks, turning his attention to the picture windows and their unfettered views of the storm outside. “It doesn’t look like we’re going to be doing much of anything today.”

“Just because it’s not going to happen today doesn’t mean it’s not going to happen,” Sebastian explains, opening his dresser and rooting through the contents. “Besides, I like surprising you.”

Kurt dries off and then starts to moisturize, aware of the side-long looks he gets from Sebastian when he props his legs up on the bed to smooth cream over his skin, and the not-so-subtle stop of Sebastian’s hand grabbing at a change of clothes when Kurt contorts around to rub lotion on his ass. As soon as he stops and reaches for a new bottle, Sebastian goes back to his task, tossing Kurt a t-shirt and a pair of sweat pants. Kurt watches them land on the bed, mildly amused.

“You do know I brought clothes with me,” Kurt says, motioning to the pyramid of mostly untouched luggage in the corner.

“Yeah, I figured that out,” Sebastian replies.

“So then, why the insistence on the grunge couture?”

“Because as amazing as you look in all of your carefully crafted ensembles,” Sebastian says without a hint of mockery, “I like you in my clothes.”

Kurt bites his lower lip and smiles.

“So your clothes are a no-no for now.”

“Well, I’m going to need to get some underwear,” Kurt argues, playfully continuing the flirty thread of the conversation, “unless you’re going to lend me that, too.”

“Nope,” Sebastian says with a firm shake of his head. “No underwear.”
Kurt scoffs, but Sebastian ignores him, slipping into his pants.

“Why, may I ask, not?”

“Because I like the thought of you in my clothes…wearing no underwear.” Sebastian winks and heads for the door, carrying his shirt, leaving Kurt to ponder the fact that Sebastian has thought about Kurt wearing his clothes, while going commando.

Kurt dresses quickly and follows Sebastian out, not even bothering with styling his hair. Instead, he follows Sebastian’s example and simply runs his fingers through it a few times, letting his damp locks settle haphazardly on his head.

When in Rome and all that.

He sees Sebastian standing in front of the flat screen with the remote in his hand, pressing at buttons with absolutely no results.

“Well, the satellite’s out,” he announces when Kurt walks into the room.

“You wanted to watch t.v.?” Kurt asks, surprised since he can’t picture Sebastian being the vegetative type, unlike Puck and Finn who always had the remote permanently affixed to their hands.

“No, I wanted to sit on the sofa and make-out with you while something mind-numbing played in the background.”

“Really?” Kurt asks, excited over the concept of a good, old-fashioned make-out session on the couch.

“Yeah, that and I was hoping that we could do something that involved junk food.”

Kurt shakes his head.

“You have a Blu-Ray player,” Kurt points out. “Do you have any movies?”

“I thought about that…” Sebastian yanks the top off a nearby ottoman that doubles as media storage and reaches inside. “We usually only use the satellite, and we barely watch that as it is, so we only keep three DVDs here - Top Gun, Scream, and some black and white copy of Romeo and Juliet that I think belongs to my mom.”

“Wow,” Kurt says. “I’m not even going to ask who picked those out.”

“Safer not to,” Sebastian agrees, looking over the aging DVD covers, his eyes scanning the words and scowling after every third or fourth pass.

“I can definitely appreciate a shirtless Tom Cruise,” Kurt says, adopting a far-off, dreamy expression and gazing out the window.

“Pass,” Sebastian says, dropping the movie back into the ottoman.

“And I’m not really up for a blood and gore flick.”

“Oh, why did I know we were going to get stuck watching fucking Romeo and Juliet?” Sebastian groans, dropping Scream down alongside Top Gun and hastily throwing the lid back on the ottoman.
“Come on, Bas,” Kurt says, heading to the kitchen in search of popcorn, “it’s a classic.”

“It’s boring,” Sebastian moans after him.

“Don’t worry…” Kurt finds the box of popcorn and opens it. “This will be as painless as possible. You’ll see.”

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“But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun…”

“Ugh! Laaaame!” Sebastian tosses a kernel of popcorn into the air and catches it in his mouth. He’s done that for most of the kernels he’s eaten so far, and he never misses.

*Finn and Puck would definitely be impressed,* Kurt thinks.

“Bas, are you going to groan *every* time Romeo says something romantic to Juliet?”

“Yes.” The answer is straight-forward and simple, unapologetic.

“Why?” Kurt reaches for the remote to put the movie on pause while they talk, but Sebastian snatches it quickly away, not willing to prolong his agony by stopping the film while they hash out the pros and cons of Shakespearean romance.

“Because they were imbeciles,” he says, shoving the pilfered remote beneath his cushion of the couch.

Kurt gasps.

“Romeo and Juliet were *not* imbeciles,” he says in defense of the Bard’s masterpiece. “Shakespeare was not an imbecile.”

“I didn’t say *Shakespeare* was an imbecile,” Sebastian says, “but Romeo and Juliet definitely were.”

“Give them a break.” Kurt reaches for a handful of popcorn, trying to come up with a way to steal back the remote. “They were only teenagers. They got a little…overdramatic.”

“They killed themselves! That’s a little more than overdramatic.”

“They were soul…”

“Uh-uh,” Sebastian says, throwing up a hand and covering Kurt’s mouth to stop him from going any farther with his statement, “don’t say that word. They were 14! And they only knew each other for what…four days?”

Kurt cocks his head and looks up at the ceiling, doing some mental math in his head.

“No, wait,” he says, shaking off Sebastian’s hand from his mouth so he can speak clearly, “they met on a Sunday and they were dead by Thursday. Isn’t that five days?”

“Yeah, but Juliet was fake dead for about 42 hours,” Sebastian clarifies. “It’s a continuity error.”

“Well, Shakespeare was a playwright, not a mathematician, and you’re changing the subject.” Kurt continues. “The story was trying to prove a point.”
“Yeah, and the point is that they were imbeciles.”

Kurt huffs in frustration and turns away, but Sebastian, passionate about his argument, sets the bowl of popcorn aside, kneels on the sofa, and hovers over him.

“I mean, what if Romeo wasn’t even the one?” Sebastian presses.

Kurt grimaces up at his insistent boyfriend. There’s something strange in the soft green of Sebastian’s eyes. This isn’t just an argument about Romeo and Juliet. There’s something else behind it.

“But for Juliet, he was,” Kurt explains.

“Well, how will they know?” Sebastian asks. “They’re both dead now!”

“They were so completely in love that they didn’t want to live without each other!” Kurt now feels like he’s defending more than just the play. “It’s romantic.”

“It’s deranged!”

Kurt rolls his eyes.

“We’ll agree to disagree.” Kurt clicks his tongue and shakes his head. “You’ve obviously never been in love.”

Sebastian, in the process of returning to his seat on the sofa, stops cold. He stares down at the floor, contemplating, and then turns his head to look back at Kurt.

“You don’t really know anything about me, Kurt,” Sebastian says, and Kurt’s surprised by the hard, determined tone in his voice. “You said so yourself. And you don’t get to hold the franchise on being in love just because you write Twilight fanfiction and you buy into all that soulmate crap.”

Kurt flinches. He doesn’t know why, but he feels like he’s been hit. He doesn’t have a response for Sebastian. He never said he had the franchise on love, but Sebastian’s reaction seems a little out of left field and slightly uncalled for considering the circumstances. Kurt finds himself pulling away. Suddenly, he doesn’t want to be there anymore, sitting on the couch, watching Romeo court Juliet in a scene that he had always considered the epitome of romantic expression. Sebastian has just changed Kurt’s perception of all his romantic ideals - the way he has changed Kurt’s perception about so many things - but with regard to this one, Kurt doesn’t feel those perceptions have been changed for the better. He wants his ignorant assumptions back.

He turns his face, and then his eyes, and stares back at the screen with the movie still running, unperturbed by the argument taking place.

Kurt hears Sebastian sigh on the seat across the couch but he doesn’t avert his eyes to look at him. He assumes he’ll switch the movie off and then do…what?

Kurt doesn’t know.

“I’m sorry,” Sebastian says quietly. “I didn’t mean to get on your case like that.”

“It’s alright,” Kurt says banally. “Forget it.”
Kurt doesn’t expect an explanation, but he wants one, and when Sebastian doesn’t offer, he feels his hackles rise.

Kurt feels put at a disadvantage - that in some ways, this relationship is mostly one sided.

Sebastian knows Kurt’s pain. It was like a play performed, in some ways, for Sebastian’s amusement, Kurt feels. Kurt is beginning to know Sebastian better, but the pain that Sebastian carries is like another wall surrounding him. Even with most of his barriers broken down to let Kurt in, this one remains – too high to climb, too wide to walk around, with no way for Kurt to pick through because he has no idea what he’s trying to tear down.

The silence that follows is excruciating. So many of Romeo’s speeches pass without any of Sebastian’s commentary, and Kurt feels like he’s sitting beside the old Sebastian again.

Kurt hates it.

He takes a deep breath, trying to think of a way to muscle through the tension.

“So, who is he?” Kurt asks.

A whole minute passes before Sebastian answers.

“Who?”

Kurt pauses, certain that he should abandon his next question, but a small glimmer of indignation rears its head and Kurt finds he can’t let it drop.

“The guy who broke your heart?”

Sebastian looks at his boyfriend, looks at how he sits ramrod straight with his eyes staring at the screen while he speaks. He crosses the couch quickly and captures his lips in a kiss. Kurt’s face scrunches. He pushes against Sebastian’s chest, shoving him away, not allowing this conversation to be swallowed away with placating affection.

“You can’t diffuse every uncomfortable situation with sex,” Kurt snaps.

“Who says I can’t?” Sebastian’s smirk returns and Kurt’s happy to see it, but it infuriates him, too.

“You said I get to learn things about you,” Kurt says, moving back from Sebastian’s advances until he’s nearly leaning backward over the arm of the couch, “and you get to learn things about me, too. But you don’t get it both ways. You don’t get to pry into my life while you keep secrets. You know who broke my heart, and I want to know who this boy…man…person is who broke yours.”

“You’re right,” Sebastian says, wrapping an arm around Kurt’s waist and pulling him back over the arm of the couch and down onto the cushion, “but I reserve the right to answer that question another time.”

“But…”

“You…” Sebastian bows his head, pausing to take a breath, not wanting to start a fight, not after everything that’s happened between them so far, “I’m not saying this phantom asshole that you want to know about exists…” Kurt stifles a groan and steers his head away. Sebastian kneels up, fighting to catch Kurt’s eyes. Kurt struggles to look away, but Sebastian pins him to the cushions, staring, his face almost uncomfortably close “…but even if he does, being here with you isn’t about him…or Blaine. It’s about us.”
Kurt hears a tiny crack in Sebastian’s tone when he mentions Blaine’s name – an almost indecipherable fissure that Kurt catches, and with that break, Kurt gives in. Maybe Sebastian doesn’t have a tale of mysterious heartbreak, but Kurt does, and it’s almost always hanging over their heads.

“Now, you have every right to know about every person I’ve ever fucked or had my mouth on,” Sebastian continues. “You have the right to know if I’m clean, which I can promise you I am. But is now really the time to drag out the long, uncomfortable list of my past partners, or can we just jump to the end where I get to make love to you…and only you?”

Kurt’s mouth drops open in surprise.

“Tonight?” he asks, pleading with his mind.

Yes, tonight. Please, tonight.

“No, not tonight,” Sebastian says. Kurt deflates and Sebastian laughs, burying his head into Kurt’s shoulder, “but there is something I’d like to do…if you’d let me.”

Kurt raises an eyebrow, relieved at the return of his boyfriend - relieved with the fact that they can have these disagreements and still be them. One fight won’t end them.

“Does it involve small furry animals…or insects?” Kurt asks. “Because I have lines that I don’t have any intention of crossing.”

“That’s not until later.” Sebastian stands, pulling Kurt off the couch with him, walking backward toward the bedroom, leading Kurt along. Flashes of memories fight with the present, and in the fading light that shifts when lightning strikes outside, a different face replaces the one in front of him. Kurt blinks hard to dispel the image. Kurt’s tied up in a braid of emotional knots - excited and anxious, but melancholy, too. He follows Sebastian, keeping that string of knots tucked hidden away. Sebastian is right. This trip is about them – every single moment of it.

It’s not about him forgetting about Blaine necessarily.

It’s about his blossoming feelings for Sebastian.

Be that as it may, he hopes there will come a day when foraging ahead into the new doesn’t come with so many bittersweet memories of the past.

They walk through the threshold of Sebastian’s room, and Sebastian pulls Kurt close, spinning him around, and shutting the door behind them. He holds Kurt and kisses him, moving, swaying, dancing in small circles, all the while backing up toward the bed.

The room is aglow in soft, amber light from the sunset outside. The rain is still falling, beating against the window, but it’s more melodic than it was before. It’s an addition, not an intrusion. There’s an occasional flash of lightning and clap of thunder, but the lightning doesn’t scatter the shadows quite as chaotically, and the thunder is muted, traveling swiftly out to sea with what remains of the receding storm.

Sebastian lays Kurt down on the bed behind them, watching Kurt’s face as he does, feeding off his cues, making sure that he’s alright. He gives Kurt one more kiss when his head hits the pillow before sitting up and pulling his shirt back off, tossing it aside and onto the ground. He doesn’t tug Kurt’s shirt off right away. He leans over him, licking circles onto the skin of his neck while he peels the garment up slowly, brushing up his smooth skin with the tips of his fingers, running his nails back down to his stomach, and then pushing the shirt back up his torso again. Push and pull,
up and down over his skin, as Sebastian’s lips slid against Kurt’s mouth, tugging at his lip, teasing
his tongue, smiling against his skin when Kurt whimpers for more. Sebastian picks that moment to
sit up and tug the shirt over Kurt’s head, tossing it somewhere in the room.

Sebastian looks down at Kurt, looks down at his face, his lips, the stretch of his neck, the planes of
his chest, trying to decide on a place to kiss. Kurt swallows; the movement of his throat catches
Sebastian’s attention, so that’s where his mouth goes. He kisses and sucks, blazing a trail down his
neck to his chest, circling one nipple with his tongue, lapping in swirls until Kurt lets out an audible
moan.

“You like that?” Sebastian murmurs, humming over the sensitive, rose-colored nub.

Kurt wants to say yes. He wants to say anything. He wants to be witty and smart, and not the
incoherent puddle of goo that he becomes beneath every swipe of Sebastian’s tongue. So, instead
of saying anything intelligible, he moans again, but to his benefit it sounds remotely like a yes.
Sebastian smiles. Kurt can feel it. He can feel everything more now when Sebastian runs his
tongue over him. Sebastian kisses across Kurt’s chest to the other nipple, showing it the same
attention in small, slow circles and gentle tugs of his careful teeth. Kurt arches his back and
Sebastian slips his hands beneath him, curling his fingers over Kurt’s spine.

He doesn’t want to compare Sebastian to…well, to the-boy-he-has-no-intention-of-thinking-about-
from-this-moment-on, but it’s hard not to. This is all brand new now. There are things he expects,
things he thinks Sebastian is going to do, and when he doesn’t, it’s exhilarating.

“Oh my God,” Kurt mutters in an unbidden voice as Sebastian’s tongue travels lower, in lazy
circles, curling over his ribs, tracing along his muscles, planting a long kiss over his soft belly.
Sebastian grabs the waistband of Kurt’s pants, tugging down slowly, inch by inch, kissing and
sucking over every new patch of sensitive skin he reveals.

“Sebastian?” Kurt breathes. He doesn’t necessarily mean for it to sound like a question, but it does.
He’s asking the question Sebastian will ask when he catches his breath.

“Are you okay with this?” Sebastian asks, peeking up over Kurt’s pants, over his belly, so that
when Kurt peeks back all he sees are his eyes – cautious and anxious and full of something that
could very well be close to…

Stop, Kurt tells himself. I’m not thinking of that, either. The nameless boy and that. Not now.

“Yes,” Kurt says. “Yes…completely okay…totally okay…yes…”

He may have rambled on like an idiot, he realizes. Sebastian snorts as he returns to kissing Kurt –
actually snorts when he laughs, and it’s the most adorable thing Kurt has ever heard. He files that
under the list of things he’s beginning to learn about Sebastian.

Kurt’s first instinct is to close his eyes, lie back on the pillow and suck all this in, but he can’t
believe this isn’t a dream, and for that reason, he needs to see.

He watches Sebastian undress him. He takes such care in pulling the pants down his legs, stopping
to plant kisses on his hip, his thigh, his knee, his ankle.

“So beautiful, Kurt,” Sebastian mumbles to himself as he moves over Kurt’s body; it’s only a
consequence that Kurt actually hears. Sebastian keeps muttering as he takes off his own pants and
climbs back up on the bed, “So beaut…why didn’t I…should have told…”

Kurt only catches bits – a word here, a phrase there. Sebastian lies comfortably between Kurt’s
legs. He takes one last look up Kurt’s body, meeting his eyes, smiling, looking shy which Kurt hadn’t expected, and he blushes – honest to God blushes. He kisses the inside of Kurt’s thigh, creeping slowly up his skin, and Kurt grabs at the sheets, rumples them tightly in his hands in anticipation of where those kisses will end. Sebastian kisses up between his thighs and Kurt lets them fall open, silently asking for more, unafraid and unashamed and begging for his mouth. Kurt feels Sebastian’s nose run along his skin, breathing him in.

A single touch of Sebastian’s tongue to his shaft has Kurt gasping loudly into the open air.

Kurt lets his head fall back, his eyes falling shut. He can’t look at Sebastian…correction – he can’t keep looking at him and expect not to cum in three seconds flat. He can’t keep gazing into those eyes - green like spring moss after the rain, blowing wide around dark, unfathomable pupils, staring up at him, watching his every breath, every move, every inflection. Sebastian’s mouth engulfs him, devours him, and after one, long suck from base to tip, Kurt arches his back and moans.

“Sebastian!”

Sebastian hums when he sucks again and Kurt almost cries out. This is so different, so unreal. Kurt feels so exposed, but so safe. He wants to be perfect, but he’s not afraid of his flaws. He revels in the heat of this new mouth on his skin. Sebastian’s tongue, which does not disappoint, strokes him back and forth. His hands scrape down Kurt’s legs, following the trail back up again, lighting every nerve on fire as they go. They slide behind Kurt’s ass and knead his taut flesh, pushing Kurt’s cock inside Sebastian’s mouth while Sebastian takes him deeper and deeper.

Kurt’s hands scratch and claw at the sheets beneath him. He contemplates the social faux-pas of possibly shredding the sheets to pieces when Sebastian’s hands move again and take ahold of Kurt’s hands. He laces their fingers together and Kurt’s breath catches in his throat. He would have thought that having Sebastian suck him off was one of the most intimate things he could think of, but this…holding his hands, running his thumbs over his knuckles, being connected, needing to know Kurt is there – that is where all other intimate moments fail. Kurt feels Sebastian’s need. Sebastian needs him. It’s a raw need, but not a sexual one.

And that’s the trigger.

All the bittersweet memories from before this started, all the unnecessary comparisons he’s been making, they all wash away, and his mind becomes a flurry of thoughts and emotions tied to this love he’s had for months that he only now became aware of.

“It apparently kinda kills me a bit to see you crying…”

“I call him mine…”

“I want to take care of you…”

“So, I’m hiding behind the rose bushes along the garden wall, just so you know, and getting stuck with about a million thorns in order to have this conversation, so don’t say I never did anything for you…”

What he’s feeling is love. It has been love for a while now. It’s not just the love that comes from a surge of adrenaline in those precious euphoric seconds before you cum in the arms of your lover. It’s more than that. It’s love wrapped up in snarky remarks, inappropriate comments, vengeful dance lessons, the Aston Martin Sebastian borrowed without permission, and Kurt’s favorite cup of coffee.
Now Kurt can stare it in the face, acknowledge it - accept it.

The only problem he has now is does he let Sebastian know?

“I…” Kurt whispers, but since the only sounds in the room are the snuffle of Sebastian’s breathing and the pitchy whine of Kurt’s moans, Sebastian hears him.

“Hmmm?” It’s a sound, not a word, since Sebastian refuses to stop what he’s doing to talk.

“I…” Kurt licks his lips. His head rolls back and forth on the pillow. He tries to capture his thoughts, school his breathing, but he can’t do it. Sebastian squeezes his hands and Kurt squeezes back, and that’s the moment when his entire body spirals completely and rapturously out of his control. “I’m cumming. I’m… I’m cum… oh, God…”

Kurt’s back arches beneath him as Sebastian sinks over him, taking him in and swallowing around him. Kurt squeezes his eyes shut so tight his head aches, but that’s nothing compared to the great swell of complicated pleasure overflowing within him. He feels light, like he can simply float away into the atmosphere, that he will dissolve into ozone and blow away on the breeze if not for Sebastian’s hands in his, anchoring him to the earth.

Sebastian crawls up Kurt’s body, looking wrecked, sated strangely, Kurt thinks, seeing as he wasn’t on the receiving end of that amazing orgasm. Sebastian bites his lip so innocently that Kurt expects a bolt of lightning to strike them any second from the epic lie of those demure-looking eyes.

Kurt doesn’t know what to do, face to face with Sebastian – Sebastian’s eyes searching his in question. Does he say thank you? Does he say wow? He doesn’t think on it too long before he decides he wants to return the favor.

“Now you,” Kurt says with a sly grin, climbing on top of Sebastian as an uninvited yawn escapes his lips. Sebastian grabs Kurt’s waist, stopping him.

“Kurt,” Sebastian says, his voice soft but for some reason stern, “I didn’t do that so you would reciprocate…”

“I didn’t say that you did,” Kurt responds quickly, not wanting to seem insulting… or maybe ungrateful. He’s not sure how he sounds exactly. Some of what he’s thinking doesn’t even make much sense. His head is swimming with the need for a good, solid night’s sleep, but he’s fighting it with everything he’s got.

“Let me finish.” Sebastian runs his hands through the loose waves of Kurt’s hair. “I did it because I’ve spent a lot of time taking from people. I don’t want to take from you. I want to give. And part of giving means doing something and expecting nothing in return.”

“But, it’s not a have to,” Kurt argues past another yawn. “I want to do something for you.”

Sebastian traces circles over Kurt’s hip, looking into his eyes, the wheels in his head turning.

“Ok, there is one thing…” Sebastian’s smirk overwhelms his face, and Kurt balks for a second, imagining what outlandish thing Sebastian might think up to stump him. Sebastian laughs at the stunned look on Kurt’s face, and he shakes his head. “Nothing like that,” he says, reading his thoughts. “Sleep with me…”

Kurt rolls his eyes.
“We’ve done that every night we’ve been here.”

“No, I mean…naked. Don’t put your clothes back on. Just, lie in my arms and let me feel you next to me.”

Kurt stares at Sebastian in the gathering dim light, trying to unravel the ever-changing emotion on his face that comes with those words.

Kurt crawls back beside him, lying against him, resting with his head over Sebastian’s chest and winding a leg over his. Sebastian’s arms wrap around him and Kurt notices how Sebastian holds him close. Kurt kisses his chest, on the spot above his heart, and he hears Sebastian sigh.

It’s a sad, lonely sound.

Kurt thinks about this – the way they are, what they’re doing. He thinks about how Sebastian gazes at him with a wistful look in his eyes, seeing something that Kurt has yet to see.

Everything Sebastian says, he says with such finality.

Kurt knows what his own fears are.

He falls asleep, trying to imagine what fears a boy like Sebastian might have.
For the last few mornings, it has been the gentle touch of sunlight on his face or the soothing rhythm of the ocean that has woken Kurt from his slumber (minus, possibly, the terrible storm of yesterday, but still, waking up on top of Sebastian’s body had been its own blessing). But this morning, Kurt is awoken to something better…much much better: Sebastian’s naked body lying beside his, an arm draped over his side, wrapped slightly around his waist.

And Sebastian’s incredibly hard cock pressing into his thigh.

Kurt turns in Sebastian’s arms to look at him, to have his fill of looking at him, caressing every line and curve of Sebastian’s body with eyes that are unashamed to enjoy the beauty of the handsome boy in front of him. Why should Kurt feel ashamed? For all intents and purposes, this gorgeous boy is his to look at, his to touch, his to kiss. He never thought he would have these feelings about Sebastian Smythe. Even now, knowing that he loves Sebastian (he mouths the words I love you soundlessly to make sure they still fit his feelings from last night, and yes, they definitely do) he can still see a scintilla of the old Sebastian lurking beneath the surface, but even that has gone from something Kurt once despised to simply another fragment of Sebastian’s multi-faceted character. It is part and parcel of the boy that Kurt fell in love with, and ergo it must belong.

Kurt takes his time soaking Sebastian in, not wanting to rush this opportunity, probably the first real opportunity he’s had to look, memorize, and catalog every inch of Sebastian with no distractions. He starts with Sebastian’s hair – his enviably sexy bed hair. It’s not fair, Kurt concludes for the hundredth time. It’s just not…well, moving along. Kurt’s eyes travel down his forehead, over the arch of his eyebrows, half-cocked as if he can hear Kurt’s ridiculous thoughts in his sleep. (He’s impressed that there’s another boy in the universe who knows how to properly shape his eyebrows. Who knew they existed? Unless that’s natural, too…) His eyes slide down the slope of Sebastian’s nose and Kurt stops there a moment to count the freckles dotting his skin. He has three that are slightly larger than the rest, but otherwise they sprinkle lightly across his cheekbones - tiny mocha-colored spots faintly darker than the surrounding skin.

Kurt had never really noticed all these freckles before. From a distance, they blend seamlessly into Sebastian’s lightly tanned complexion.

In reality, someone would have to be as close to Sebastian as Kurt is right now to notice them.

Kurt loves that he gets to notice them.

Sebastian’s eyes are closed, and Kurt kind of hates that. He considers flicking Sebastian a couple of times on the forehead to get him to open his eyes, but decides against it. Kurt always thought that Sebastian had peevish, conniving eyes, but now he can admire their illustrious beauty, their ever changing tonality – their heat and passion.

Kurt gazes down Sebastian’s body as best he can with the sheet that covers them obscuring his view (though part of it has been kicked off of Sebastian's legs, and another section hugs Sebastian’s lower back, his hips and his ass, which makes up for it). Sebastian is strong - Kurt knew that before – but his muscular physique has always been hidden by the unflattering cut of that parochial Dalton uniform. Of course, Kurt has gotten to see much more of Sebastian’s body since they’ve been at the beach, and he had seen Sebastian in board shorts before, even in his underwear, but it’s amazing what a difference removing a few meager ounces of cotton makes.
Sebastian is stunning (a word that Kurt doesn’t toss around too often, usually reserving it for the latest in Vivienne Westwood or Alexander McQueen’s genius), but without sounding too cliché there’s no way around it, no other way to describe him, and even then, that single word doesn’t seem to do him justice. He’s got that mixture of rugged, athletic, all-American effortless good-looks and charm that any human being with two eyes and a brain craves.

Kurt craves him right now. He wants to make up for lost time, dial back denial and reclaim every wasted moment. He wouldn’t go so far as to erase all the arguments they ever had or every snarky remark they’ve ever made to one another. Kurt has to be realistic. There is a good portion of the time that they’ve known each other (misunderstood or not) where Sebastian acted like an insufferable, selfish, manipulative jerk. But if he could travel back to, say, the fourth of July (knowing what he knows now), Kurt would develop a better appreciation for every one of Sebastian’s unaffected laughs, every time he caught Sebastian staring, every phone call Sebastian made or text that he sent where the conversation between them held a veiled double-meaning. Kurt would follow up every argument with a kiss.

Kurt gets the sneaky idea to wake Sebastian up by reciprocating for last night. He knows that Sebastian said he didn’t give Kurt that amazing blowjob in the hopes of getting one back, but today is a brand new day. New day, new rules. He can use that as a plausible argument, right? Flashbacks from the previous evening flood Kurt’s brain and he has to take a pause as the images flare brightly in his memory – Sebastian looking up at him with unexpected guileless fervor, the way he reached for Kurt, linking their hands together, the feeling of his tongue caressing Kurt’s skin. This was a brand of intimacy that Kurt hadn’t expected from Sebastian – not right away, maybe not ever – but knowing that it exists, that it’s been hiding there inside Sebastian all this time…

Kurt’s stomach flips, and then twists into a tight, tangled mess.

There’s such an unsettling duality to their relationship. In some ways, Sebastian has a Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde vibe going on, but beyond that, Kurt feels like he and Sebastian are rushing into this thing that he’s waited forever for.

The clouds outside, which have been keeping the sky mellow with their grey cover, part ways and the room fills with the golden light of a new day that crept up on them. Kurt sighs when it blurs his vision, rays seeping their way into Sebastian’s skin. Kurt turns his head toward the windows with a grimace pushing down on his lips to greet the invasive light. The rays remind Kurt that time marches on. There’s a world outside this room that, despite his best efforts, continues to find a way to make its presence known. Kurt could stay in bed all day with Sebastian, but with his boyfriend asleep, this actually gives Kurt a good opportunity to rectify some things he has neglected to do. He wants to record what’s left of this amazing trip so that he has more than his memories to reflect on when the time to leave comes.

But first, he’s going to make himself a nice, hot cup of coffee, and go sit on Sebastian’s porch swing.

It’s a difficult endeavor climbing out from underneath Sebastian’s arm and removing his stiff ankle from where it’s sandwiched between Sebastian’s legs. When Kurt moves the first time, Sebastian stirs. He tightens his grip around Kurt’s body and makes a small, distressed noise that claws at Kurt’s heart and almost convinces him to stay. But the added effect of gravity on his full bladder turns his want into a need, and Kurt finds himself contorting, scooting down the length of the bed on his back to escape Sebastian’s arm, then awkwardly sliding off the edge, landing squarely on his ass onto the ice cold floor.

Kurt scrambles to his knees, quietly mumbling ow ow ow ow when he puts weight on his sore leg,
and peeks up quickly to make sure that Sebastian stayed asleep. That wasn’t Kurt’s most graceful moment, and definitely not the image he wants to leave his boyfriend with before he limps away to the bathroom. He raises his eyes to the level of the mattress and sees Sebastian, face half-hidden by his bent arm, sound asleep, breaths quiet and even. Kurt watches him a second before he rises to his feet, unsteady on his injured leg, and hobbles off to the bathroom, his need to pee more urgent than ever since the chill from the floor hit his spine. He thinks he hears a chuckle follow him as he goes, but it must have been nerves because when he returns, vastly more relieved, Sebastian is still asleep. He’s moved – rolled onto his stomach, limbs splayed like a starfish. He has Kurt’s pillow pulled beneath his head with his cheek resting against it, the end bunched toward his face, his nose buried in the fabric.

Kurt looks at this position, with the pillowcase beneath his nose, and wonders if he unconsciously placed the pillow there to block the sun from his eyes, or did he do it in search of a missing Kurt.

Kurt gathers up the clothes that Sebastian lent him and quickly dresses, sans underwear per Sebastian’s request (he didn’t exactly give Kurt a choice, but who is Kurt to deny his boyfriend?). He grabs his neglected phone - the message alert light blinking like a frantic warning beacon - and shoves it in his pocket, a sinking feeling following at the thought of unlocking the screen and checking his messages. When he first saw the green light, he could almost hear the bellow of a klaxon whirring in his head, accompanied by a tinny robotic voice screaming Warning! Warning! Angst and drama ahead! The voice reminded him a lot of Rachel Berry, to be honest. He has no other way to take pictures, so glimpsing the alert light or any snippet of his messages is a necessary evil. He tries to ignore it for now, regardless of how heavy its presence seems in the pocket of his pants, and pads his way out to the kitchen. Before he leaves the bedroom, he takes one more look over his shoulder at the exceptionally naked boy sleeping in the bed, grinning to himself at the knowledge that this boy was his.

The kitchen is brighter than the bedroom since the windows that face it capture more of the morning sunlight. Kurt suspects that the house was constructed that way on purpose - with the half facing the ocean in the shape of a triangle to tilt the common rooms toward the sunrise, providing those rooms with more light during the day and directing less light to the bedrooms. That way, the house requires almost no electric light during the day and accommodates those who want to sleep in.

Intelligent planning - Kurt adores it.

Kurt rummages through the cabinets on the hunt for coffee. He’s been caffeine-free for a couple of days, and the withdrawal pangs are slaying him. It’s gotten so bad that he starts salivating at the mere thought of having a cup. He sifts past boxes of crackers, cereal, tea, cans of vegetables, soup… He whines pitifully, beginning to think that Sebastian purposefully didn’t buy coffee when he went shopping, knowing how much Kurt wanted it, just to irk him, until his hand touches a cool, smooth bag that deflates beneath his touch. It makes that telltale crunch noise that bags of coffee make, releasing a pungent whiff of Arabica goodness.

The single short-lived smell opens Kurt’s eyes - a Pavlovian response to that bitter fragrance.

Kurt brings down the bag, his eyes opening wider when he sees the red and silver foil packaging branded with a giant number 3 on the front.

It’s not just a run-of-the-mill bag of coffee – it’s Kurt’s favorite brand of coffee, Seattle’s Best. That had to be why Sebastian bought it, Kurt realizes promptly and without a doubt. Yes, Seattle’s Best is the lowly little brother of upmarket Starbucks brand, but somehow he doesn’t see Sebastian favoring a working class coffee. If he can’t stand the smell of public school, he probably wouldn’t
buy a paltry $6 bag of coffee. Sebastian probably drinks that imported stuff ground from beans eaten and pooped out by cats in the Amazon (or wherever they’re from. To be frank, Kurt’s mind usually switches off at the mention of cat poop coffee).

Kurt mulls ruefully as he looks over the red and silver bag - another detail that he has never thought to ask.

Kurt mentally adds this to the list of things that they hadn’t expressly discussed, but that Sebastian just seems to know about him. Though in this case, Sebastian could have simply seen the bag of grounds in Kurt’s kitchen when he and Julian wrecked it trying to make breakfast, but the fact that he remembered makes all of the difference.

Kurt pulls out the coffee maker and plugs it in. He fills the glass carafe with water, deciding to make enough coffee for two mugs in case Sebastian should wake up and want some. Then he opens the bag. It feels like a sacred ritual, ripping through the sticker seal, unrolling the top, and tearing it open at the seam. The scent of coffee is stronger now that he’s opened the bag. Kurt leans down, sticking his nose in the mouth of the bag to full inhale it, letting the aroma absorb into him, arousing his senses, reviving any part of him fighting for sleep.

It seems like it takes an eternity before the coffee machine starts to steam and drip, and not because he’s jonesing for a cup (though he is), but because in the back of his mind, those text messages sitting in his phone’s inbox, waiting for him to open them, niggle at his head. As his caffeine fix du jour starts to spit into the carafe, he fantasizes the worst of the most patronizing but subtly cruel messages that Rachel Berry – or any of his other friends – can contrive. They fire at him in the form of bullet points, shooting him full of self-doubt, their true meanings clear:

- Traitor
- Soulmate
- New York
- NYADA

Fortunately, the coffee finishes and he fills himself a mug before he considers the fact that he may have to eliminate the last two items from that list. He finds a container of cream in the refrigerator and sighs with relief. He had been afraid that Sebastian had used all the cream making his exquisite leek soup. He locates the sugar and dresses his cup – a splash of cream, half a spoon of sugar. He lifts the cup to his lips as he shuffles back toward the bedroom, taking a tentative sip, then stopping mid-step to fully appreciate the glorious perfection bathing his tongue.

A gorgeous boy, a seaside vacation, and the perfect cup of coffee.

This is definitely a life Kurt could see himself getting used to.

He tiptoes back into the bedroom, cutting across the floor on silent footsteps, headed for the porch door, when the view from the window captures his attention – the pounding surf, the sandy beach, the radiant cornflower blue sky. He has woken to this felicity every morning.

This he wants to remember, from this vantage point, standing just where he is. He puts his cup down on an obliging dresser and fishes in his pocket for his phone. He wraps his hand around it and sighs. Best to get this over with quickly. He reminds himself that he’s not going to read the messages. He only needs the phone for the camera app. On the off chance that he should accidentally open his inbox, any words or sentence fragments that slip into his view would be taken completely out of context, so he should purge them from his memory immediately.

Easier said than done.
He pulls out his phone, unlocks the screen, and with his finger hovering over the icon for the camera app, his eyes glimpse the message icon with the big red number plastered above it. He freezes.

It’s worse than he thought.

The amount of text messages accumulating on his phone are reaching epic proportions, but he can’t bring himself to open them – not yet. *Nope*, he thinks as he bypasses them. *I’m not here.* He doesn’t need the sting of reality ruining his time with Sebastian, not from anyone. Then again, he knows there must be a message from his father shoved in among them, and he knows his father worries. As a compromise, he takes the initiative to send his father and *only* his father a message back – a generic *all’s well, I’m doing great, having a wonderful time, thank you again for understanding, I love you* communiqué.

After he hits send, he opens the camera app and turns back toward the window. He holds the phone up, moving it back and forth till he gets the image outside the windows to fill the screen, and takes the shot. His camera clicks softly, but the sound resonates in the quiet room. Kurt stands still, throwing a look over his shoulder, and waiting to see if the sound wakes Sebastian from his sleep. Sebastian breathes in stuttered little huffs, murmurs, then falls back out.

Kurt checks the picture’s composition after he takes it, making certain it looks exactly the way he wants – aureate beams breaking through the clouds and glancing across the water, foamy caps of the waves dissolving on the sand. He smiles. This is the view he wakes up to – this is exactly it. He selects the photo, about to upload the image to Facebook, but he stops. He’s not sure what Sebastian would say, how public he wants to be about their relationship. It shouldn’t matter. Sebastian *wants* to be with Kurt; he’s made that pretty clear. But he might have privacy concerns, other reasons he wouldn’t want his face on the Internet. Or maybe he would prefer to tell his friends about their relationship in person.

Kurt finds himself suddenly struck by a paradoxical set of circumstances. He’s not Sebastian’s friend on Facebook. According to Sebastian’s original lie, the two of them have been dating since before the summer. What *is* Sebastian’s relationship status on Facebook? Does it mention Kurt in any way? He would think not. Kurt has a few remaining friends among the Warblers – friends that he and Sebastian share - and he hasn’t heard a word about it from them. Kurt’s not sure about how some of them might react to the news, but Jeff Sterling and Nick Duval for sure would have sent him a slew of inappropriate text messages by now.

They would have definitely told Bl--- the-boy-who-will-not-be-named

Alas, another thing that would have been good for him to know.

Kurt looks at his magical, Hallmark-card-worthy photograph and hits the upload button. Sebastian isn’t in this picture, and Kurt doesn’t have to mention him. If he captions his pictures with ambiguous comments about the wonderful time he’s having in North Carolina without bringing up who he’s with, it won’t matter. He wants his friends to see the fabulous time he’s having. Considering the very public nature of his break-up, he wants his friends to know he’s okay, that he’s happy, that he’s not sulking around Lima, or working at the Lima Bean all summer.

Sebastian makes another noise and Kurt watches him to see if he’ll wake. Sebastian rises up on his hands and knees an inch, tilts his head, then collapses back to the mattress, the blanket slipping down his back, exposing it to just above the swell of his ass. His arms sneak beneath the pillow under his head, and he snuggles in against it, taking a breath in and exhaling out, sounding completely at ease and content.
Content because of Kurt.

Kurt is charmed by that thought.

Kurt bites his lower lip and raises his phone, training it on Sebastian lying asleep in bed, and snaps a picture. The image appears on the screen – artistically angled instead of precisely straight, Sebastian’s head bowed into the pillow so only a sliver of his face shows, back uncovered, the cut of his muscles throwing shadows across his skin, white sheet wound tight around his bottom half.

It’s an awe-inspiring shot.

Kurt stares at the picture while he grabs his coffee mug, the liquid now borderline warm instead of screaming hot, and devoid of its rising wisps of steam, but Kurt is not complaining. His morning has been beyond compare.

He wedges his phone under his chin to free up one hand before he opens the porch door. He lifts the lever lock and slides the door open slowly, the door frame sticking in its rails as if this door hasn’t been opened in forever. He shivers as a cold onshore breeze circles around his feet and rushes into the room. Kurt hurries through the narrow opening he’s made and closes the door behind him. A blast of cold air invading their warm sanctuary isn’t the way Kurt hopes to wake Sebastian this morning.

Kurt takes a healthy sip of his coffee and retrieves his phone, snapping pictures of the swing, the house, and the beach down below. He uploads them to Facebook, adding snobbish captions like *I think I’ll spend today relaxing on this private beach* or *Sitting on a swing and drinking my morning coffee with a sublime view of the Atlantic to keep me company. Jealous yet?* He finishes typing in his last caption, and then, the long-awaited moment arrives. He turns his back to the swing chair and lowers himself into it, sighing as he sinks into the seat.

“Yeeahh,” Kurt says, drawing the word out until he’s completely settled with the mug of coffee up against his lips. “This is the good life.” Kurt flips his phone around, holds it out at arm’s length, and takes a picture of himself.

“I’m glad you like it.”

Kurt smiles, his cheeks pinking at the sound of Sebastian’s voice, unable to resist the thought of Sebastian’s mouth on him. He’s left invisible imprints that Kurt can feel tingle in response when he speaks.

“It’ll do,” Kurt says, kicking his legs off the deck to start the swing swaying and taking another sip of his coffee.

Sebastian walks over but stops a foot away, staring at the swing, contemplating something before he closes the distance and takes the seat beside Kurt. He sits close, rubbing their arms together, huddled in tight beside Kurt as a shield against the cold.

“You know, I was right,” Sebastian says out of nowhere.

“Hmmm?” Kurt murmurs, swallowing another sip. “Right about what?”

Sebastian turns his glassy green eyes on Kurt - green eyes that darken beneath the light of the sun. Eyes telling Kurt that Sebastian remembers last night as vividly as he does.

“My name on your lips during the throes of ecstasy is hot as fuck,” he says unapologetically.
Kurt’s body overheats at Sebastian’s remark, and he hides his face behind the already empty coffee mug. He remembers when Sebastian said something similar to Julian. Kurt thought his comment was crass at the time, but now it has a decidedly different effect on Kurt. It works on his muscles, turning them to jelly.

And it makes him hard – achingly hard – so that he needs to cross his legs to calm himself down.

“I’m sorry if I woke you,” Kurt says, putting the empty cup down on the deck and wrapping his arms around himself, rubbing along his skin with his palms to chase away the goose bumps.

“You did wake me,” Sebastian confirms, putting an arm around Kurt’s shoulders and drawing him into the warmth of his body, “but that’s okay. So, you finally made it out here. I know you’ve had your heart set on coming out here since we arrived.”

“A-ha,” Kurt says, relaxing into the lee of Sebastian’s body. “It’s so nice out here. Peaceful…”

“Yeah, it’s pretty chill,” Sebastian agrees, but it’s not all too convincing. The tone of Sebastian’s voice strikes Kurt as kind of peculiar.

If Kurt had to speculate, he would guess that Sebastian doesn’t actually like it out on the porch.

“You were taking a selfie,” Sebastian says, grabbing Kurt’s phone with Kurt fumbling to snatch it back. “Here, let me help you.” Kurt expects Sebastian to stand up and take a picture of him on the swing, but instead he turns the phone on both of them sitting together. “Okay, say Velveeta.”

“Velveeta!” Kurt crows, astonished that Sebastian would want to take a picture with him.

Sebastian flips the phone over in his hand to look at the photo.

“Cute,” Sebastian says, handing the phone back to Kurt. “You should upload that one to Facebook.”

Sebastian grins, appearing completely nonchalant about the subject, but the tone he uses makes his comment sound more like a dare…or a test.

A test that Kurt is determined to pass with flying colors. He looks down at the phone, selects the photo, and uploads it without batting an eye.

“There,” Kurt says, slipping his phone in his pocket before Sebastian can take it again, terrified that Sebastian might stumble across the photo he snapped while he was asleep, “now everyone gets to see how proud I am of my sexy bedhead boyfriend.”

Sebastian ducks his head, smiling, and runs a self-conscious hand through his hair.

They swing in silence, cuddled close together, Kurt relaxing into Sebastian’s embrace, his head resting against Sebastian’s shoulder. They take turns pushing the swing. It’s an unspoken arrangement – Kurt kicks off with his right foot, then when the swing returns to rest, Sebastian keeps it going with a kick of his left foot.

“You’ve been outside, looking at the ocean every morning since we got here. What in the world are you going to do when we leave?” Sebastian asks, placing a kiss in Kurt’s hair. Kurt knows he’s teasing – not in the least bit sardonically, giddy with the afterglow of a glorious evening – but the comment stings anyway. Kurt tries not to think ahead. He can conceivably see staying in this beach house with Sebastian in North Carolina and living happily ever after. It’s a daydream, impractical, and probably postcoitally conjured, he knows, but there it is.
“I guess I’ll have to become unnaturally obsessed with something else,” Kurt says, doing his best to hide the melancholy in his answer, “and hope that I’ll be invited back here someday.”

“Of course you’ll be invited back,” Sebastian says. He holds Kurt tight, in that way that suggests that Sebastian is afraid that if he doesn’t, Kurt will simply disappear. “You’ll come back for spring break and summer break…”

“You make it sound like I won’t have a choice,” Kurt laughs, snuggling deeper into Sebastian’s arms, catching a soft sigh in Sebastian’s throat when he does.

“You don’t,” Sebastian affirms. “You’ll also be here for all the major holidays, like Easter, Thanksgiving, Arbor Day…”

“Thank goodness,” Kurt cuts in with a dramatic sigh, putting a hand to his chest. “I was worried I would be the only one without any Arbor Day plans. You saved me from that embarrassment.”

“Happy to help,” Sebastian says, laughing Kurt’s favorite laugh - the one that’s spontaneous, carefree, and genuine. “Well, it is fucking freezing out here.” Sebastian gives Kurt a squeeze and then stands from his seat, raising his arms over his head to stretch his back. His shirt lifts up a bit just as a breeze swirls around them, blowing underneath and lifting it up farther, causing Sebastian to crumple in on himself. Kurt chuckles at the dance Sebastian does to pull his shirt down, tugging on the hem and holding it close to his body, sealing the wind out.

“We have a big day ahead of us,” Sebastian says with a yawn, taking a step backward away from the swaying swing, “so we’d better get started.” Sebastian extends a hand his way, fingertips curled, beckoning Kurt to take it. Kurt stares at Sebastian’s hand, silently pouting, not quite ready to relinquish his seat even though up on the cliff with the wind whipping their exposed flesh it is getting unbearably cold, the morning sun doing little to keep them warm.

Kurt misses Sebastian’s body beside him.

Sebastian’s eyes glance down, a little shyly, a little reservedly.

“Come shower with me?” he asks sweetly, eyebrows raised, his smile pleasant with only the faintest shadow of a smirk aimed Kurt’s way.

That is an offer Kurt cannot turn down.

“Of course,” he says, taking Sebastian’s hand in his, letting Sebastian pull him out of the swing and into his arms. “What do you have on the menu for today?”

“Are we talking actual food, or…” Sebastian starts to walk backward toward the house without letting Kurt go, staggering rhythmically in something close to a sloppy waltz.

“I mean, what do you have planned to torture me with today?” Kurt asks, laughing when Sebastian’s hand slips down his side and finds a ticklish spot.

“Well, remember the thing I had planned for yesterday that we didn’t get the chance to do?” Sebastian asks, running his hand over the ticklish spot again to watch Kurt squirm.

“Yes…” Kurt laughs, grabbing Sebastian’s hand and moving it away.

“We’re doing it today.” Sebastian’s eyes sparkle, proud of this surprise, maybe a bit more so than all the others, leaving Kurt implicitly intrigued.
“Should I wear something special?” Kurt asks, grasping for hints. “Or are you going to force your style inept clothes on me again?”

They stop in front of the sliding door, and Sebastian reaches a hand back, preparing to open it.

“Just dress like your usual sexy self, hot stuff,” Sebastian says with a sultry growl. “Oh, but you will need this…”

Sebastian releases his grip around Kurt’s waist and reaches into the pocket of his pants, pulling out a familiar length of blue and red striped fabric. He holds it up in front of Kurt’s face for him to examine, pinched in the middle between his thumb and forefinger.

It’s his Dalton neck tie.

“I…need to wear a tie?” Kurt asks, taking the tie from Sebastian’s hand and holding the accessory up to his neck, cocking an eyebrow. He didn’t like these God-awful ties when he actually attended Dalton. After Dalton, he liked them even less. Besides, it doesn’t go with a single thing he packed.

“Not as a tie,” Sebastian says, tossing a wink at his confused boyfriend. “You’re going to be wearing it…” Sebastian slips the tie from Kurt’s fingers and holds it up to lightly cover Kurt’s eyes, “as a blindfold.”
Warm, soapy water sliding down Kurt’s skin…strong but tender fingers threading through his hair, cradling the back of his head after every pass, then following a trail down his neck and over his spine…the mouth on his – soft, coaxing, but not demanding…the body against his hard, muscular, but bending when he bends, molding where his body dips and curves, the caress of skin against skin intoxicating, sending his mind whirling, muting whatever voices remain of his past doubts and indecisions and replacing them with the soothing patter of the shower water hitting the tile, Sebastian’s breathy moans, and the best thing of all, Sebastian uttering his name over and over – Kurt, Kurt, Kurt - with two other equally powerful words strung along with it.

Please and yes.


In this space and time, with Sebastian’s naked body pressed against his, trapping him just shy of the cool shower wall, kissing him endlessly, in no hurry to be done even though they have a big day ahead of them, Kurt realizes three things: he loves showering with Sebastian, he never wants to stop kissing him, and he could easily forget himself here in his boyfriend’s arms.

The water goes cold long before Sebastian considers them done, but it doesn’t deter him. He simply relocates Kurt away from the frigid spray, picking him up and moving him bodily when he doesn’t catch on right away to Sebastian’s non-verbal cues to take five steps to his right. Sebastian keeps kissing Kurt when the cold water collects up around their ankles in the bottom of the shower. He kisses Kurt when Kurt giggles, keeps kissing him when those giggles turn into moans, kisses him until Kurt is throbbing, hard, and entirely at Sebastian’s mercy.

Kurt sneaks a hand between them, reaching for both their erections, debating whose need required his attention first, but Sebastian grabs his wrist in one hand and pins it against the slick tile.

“Nu-uh,” he says, pressing Kurt’s wrist to the wall to keep him still. “I’ve got this.” Sebastian puts his hands around both their cocks together and starts to pump slowly, and Kurt, enraptured by this new sensation, throws his head back, conking it on the wall behind him.

“Ouch,” Kurt hisses but also laughs, laughing harder when Sebastian smiles and looks at him like he’s utterly ridiculous.

“Are you going to be okay?” Sebastian asks, not stopping for injury or concussion.

“I…I think…yeah…I’m ok--- aren’t we going to be late?” Kurt rambles, barely able to think with Sebastian’s body against him, their erections flush together, Sebastian’s strong hands managing to stroke them both.

“Did you want me to stop?” Sebastian speeds his hands and Kurt throws his head back again,
smacking the tiles with a hollow *thunk* a second time. Sebastian curbs his laughter behind clenched teeth and bitten lips, trying not to kill the mood.

“Fuck, no…” Kurt groans, moving his hips to meet Sebastian’s pace. “No, don’t you dare…”

“I won’t, babe,” Sebastian promises, leaning in to kiss Kurt’s exposed neck. “I don’t think I could if I tried.”

Kurt whimpers and Sebastian groans, the two sounds mingling together as erotic as anything Sebastian is doing with his hands.

“Is this…” Kurt starts, pausing to swallow when the rippling sensation of his oncoming orgasm starts to overwhelm him, consume him, even as his wet skin shivers with the cold, “is this going to be a thing with us? Showering together and…and…”

“That a bad thing?” Sebastian asks, his voice failing as quickly as Kurt’s, his arms pumping faster when his muscles start to shake.

“No,” Kurt says, but his answer is only the ghost of a sound. It’s surrender, his body overfilling with a heat that has nowhere to go, threatening to tear him to pieces.

That’s the thought he’s left with when he cums over Sebastian’s hand. This boy is ripping him to pieces in the best ways and putting him back together differently, so that by the end of this summer, wherever it leads, he’ll never be the same or look at things the same way again.

It turns out to be way later than either of them anticipate by the time they leave the shower, but Kurt doesn’t regret a minute of it, even if he ends up developing hypothermia before noon. Neither does Sebastian regret it, if the way he whistles Mellencamp while he packs up their road food gives any indication, or the way he smiles to himself and chews on his lip in a manner very unlike the criminal chipmunk Kurt had long ago despised.

Sebastian had tossed on a pair of slim fit dark wash jeans and a pine green colored polo a shade off from his eyes, just different enough to make his irises pop. But Sebastian had called upon Kurt to dress sexy (that’s the way Kurt had heard it), so the effortless casual chic that Sebastian manages to get away with simply will not do for Kurt. Kurt searches through his luggage, laying out three potential outfits on the bed, standing back to examine each one, holding the pieces up to the sunlight to see how they differ in direct natural light and indirect natural light, until he comes up with the perfect ensemble – a pair of black trousers (form-fitting at the waist but more open and flow-y around his calves and ankles than his jeans, allowing air to circulate over his jellyfish sting since it doesn’t bother him much anymore and he’s getting tired of bandaging it), a white paisley button down with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and a black vest to cinch the shirt in at the waist and break up all the white that will glow like a beacon beneath the summer sun.

He looks himself over in the mirror, twirling left and right to check for unsightly wrinkles and bunching, especially since he somehow forgot to hang up his more wrinkle-prone clothes when they arrived at the beach house. With everything they’d embarked on, the state of his clothes had somehow slipped his mind.

Kurt sighs. What has this boy done to him if he can’t remember to properly tend to his dress shirts and slacks?

Kurt tugs at the hem of his vest and smooths his hands down the front of his pants, ensuring that every conceivable inch of him looks pitch-perfect before he walks out to greet his boyfriend. Before he leaves the bedroom, he pockets his phone (Sebastian had told him to bring it because he
knew that Kurt would want to take pictures...to quote a good friend, “wanky”). The only thing left for him to bring is the necktie. He eyes it lying on the bed, waiting for him.

Not a necktie, but a blindfold. Sebastian wants him to be blindfolded.

Sexy and blindfolded.

Whatever Sebastian has planned, it’s already turning out to be his best surprise yet.

Kurt quickly goes over the things they’ve done so far, trying to find a connection. Kurt knows that Sebastian is trying to woo him, but he’s going about it in an interesting way. He analyzes each activity individually, then lumps them together, searching for a common thread, but Kurt is still at a loss, so he decides to let it go for now and hope that the answer will come to him.

He picks Sebastian’s necktie up off the bed, winding it around his four fingers and sliding it in his pocket. Carrying it with him, knowing its intended purpose, feels as much of a thrill as trying to figure out why Sebastian wants him to wear it – and Kurt has come up with a plethora of tantalizing reasons, each one worthy of becoming the premise of a new fanfic when they get back to Ohio.

Kurt takes a deep breath, pulls himself straight, and walks down the hall to the living room, hoping he hits sexy out of the park.

Sebastian is busy packing the last of their snacks and drinks into a collapsible cooler when he sees Kurt strut into the living room. His hands stop fussing with the food in front of him, his jaw dropping an inch, and he tilts his head to the side.

“Is that what you’re wearing?” Sebastian asks, and at the arcane tone in his voice, Kurt comes to a dead stop.

“Yeah...” Kurt answers, his defenses rising, his stomach coiling, preparing to defend his outfit choice. His heart drops a little, watching Sebastian’s teasing eyes appraise his clothing.

“Okay,” Sebastian says, crossing the room, looking Kurt over from his hair to his shoes, “now, I need to know...does any part of this ensemble belong to Puck?”

“No,” Kurt snaps, on his guard, not sure where Sebastian’s line of questioning would lead, but blaringly offended. Puck can be accused of many things, but being fashion forward is definitely not one of them. Not a single thing Kurt currently wore would be owned by a boy who doesn’t know McQueen from McDonald’s.

“Good,” Sebastian says, putting his hands on Kurt’s hips, careful to avoid wrinkling anything that Kurt might not appreciate getting wrinkled. “Then I don’t feel weird telling you that you look fabulous.”

Kurt loosens up in Sebastian’s grip, warming to his praise. Kurt loops his arms loosely around his boyfriend’s neck.

“Why, thank you, sir,” Kurt says, running his fingers through Sebastian’s damp hair. A couple of months ago, Kurt might have cringed at Sebastian’s contempt lately for drying his hair, since Kurt makes it a point to completely dry and style his hair before he gets ready for the day. But he likes this. He likes damp hair on Sebastian.

It reminds Kurt of being in the shower with him, of being naked with him, of being close to him.

“Ooo, sir,” Sebastian says, bending close to Kurt for a kiss, “I think I like the sound of that.”
“I bet,” Kurt quips back, slapping Sebastian lightly on the shoulder.

The kiss Sebastian places on Kurt’s mouth is the kind of gentle kiss they could share every day before school, between classes, when they meet each other at the door before family events – it’s a polite exchange, like a handshake…

…but when Sebastian dips his tongue between Kurt’s lips, it becomes a taste of things to come.

“Do you have your phone?” Sebastian asks, bringing a hand up to brush Kurt’s cheek, not moving his face too far away.

“Yeah…” Kurt says, leaving the single word open-ended, hoping that Sebastian will fill in more details.

Sebastian knows that Kurt is fishing for information, and smirks. He’s not biting.

“That’s all,” he says, “except…"

“Except…” Kurt copies, the air around them charged as Sebastian looms closer and Kurt hopes the next words out of his mouth are something close to *Fuck this. We’re staying here so I can spend the next eight hours ravishing you.*

Sebastian stands over him, bumping their foreheads together.

“Where’s the tie?” Sebastian asks quietly, patting down Kurt’s pockets, feeling the slight bulge in the front right one and stopping, his fingers massaging that spot.

“It looks like you found it,” Kurt says, raising an eyebrow, leaning into the fingers caressing his skin.

“May I?” Sebastian asks, his fingers crawling up the fabric and dipping shallowly into the pocket.

“Be my guest.”

Kurt stops breathing, his brain following the motion of Sebastian’s hand as his fingers skim over Kurt’s skin with the silky material of the pants pocket between them. Sebastian’s nails rake lightly over Kurt’s thigh, then slide inward, brushing close to Kurt’s cock. The material, tight around Kurt’s waist and upper thighs, translates the action of Sebastian’s hands over to other areas of Kurt’s skin as he scoops up the tie with his middle finger and pulls it from Kurt’s pocket.

“Now, you’re going to keep this on like a good boy,” Sebastian says, tying the necktie over Kurt’s eyes. Kurt sucks in a sharp breath as the striped fabric blocks out the light rather effectively. With the necktie over his eyes, Kurt is blind – surprisingly completely blind – and it hits him just how much he’s going to have to trust Sebastian to keep him safe, to guide him around, to not accidentally drop him off the side of a steep cliff. He has a second of hesitation when he thinks *I don’t like this, I don’t like not having control,* but then Sebastian puts his hands on Kurt’s shoulders, his lips kissing the nape of Kurt’s neck.

“Too tight?” he asks, the breath from his mouth heralding each kiss before he places it on Kurt’s skin..

“No, I…it’s just different,” Kurt answers, blinking his eyes behind the fabric, marveling at the total lack of light.

“If it makes you uncomfortable, I…”
“No,” Kurt says quickly, reaching up to cover Sebastian’s hand with his own. “No, I want to do this. I trust you.”

Sebastian becomes silent behind him, and Kurt wonders if he said something wrong, but then Sebastian turns Kurt around and crashes their lips together.

“Thank you,” he mouths over Kurt’s lips. Kurt feels the words; it’s not an audible statement. There’s a chance that it wasn’t meant for him to hear. Sebastian pulls his mouth away and puts his hands on Kurt’s shoulders again.

“Let’s get a move on,” Sebastian says, giving Kurt a tiny push and leading him from the living room to the kitchen, then through the front door and carefully, step by treacherous step, down to the carport. With his vision no longer a factor, Kurt focuses on everything he can hear and feel – Sebastian’s secure hands guiding him through the rooms, the cadence of their heels hitting the floor, the difference in air pressure and temperature when he leaves the house and exits into the outside air, the dull click of the Mustang door opening, the leather seats molding to his body when he sits down.

“Sit tight, sexy,” Sebastian says, helping Kurt with the latch to his seat belt. “I’ll be right back.” Sebastian’s voice, soft and smoky, is right beside Kurt’s ear when he reminds him, “No peeking.”

The door closes and Kurt fastens his seatbelt, waiting for Sebastian to return, which he does with lightning speed, putting what Kurt assumes is the cooler in the back seat before hopping into the driver’s seat, starting the Mustang, and getting them on their way.

They start their journey in silence, with Kurt determined to simply enjoy the ride and let whatever is going to happen happen (isn’t that supposed to be one of his mantras for this summer anyway?). He reclines in his seat and releases the curiosity eating at him into the indifferent arms of the universe, but it seems to boomerang back at him tenfold. He tries to tune it out, but it mounts inside him, piling up and piling up until he feels bloated. He suffers it for exactly five minutes more before he decides that an interrogation is in order.

“How far will we be driving?” Kurt asks this question as a test to see if Sebastian will answer, since whatever he says will literally mean nothing to Kurt as far as figuring out their destination.

“Far enough,” Sebastian responds with no other elaboration.

“Have you kidnapped many people before?”

“Funny,” Sebastian says, not commenting any further past that one word reply.

“You said we were rained out yesterday,” Kurt starts, building his questions on clues he already knows, “so that means we’re going to be outside, right?”

Kurt hears the music on the radio become louder and he sighs.

That’s the end of that, unless he wants to spend the rest of their road trip screaming out questions he’s not going to get the answers to. He might as well take a cheese grater to his vocal chords, and he can’t risk his voice that way. Kurt knows he’s not going to get any information out of his stubborn ass of a boyfriend, so he stops trying.

Kurt thinks the drive to wherever they are going will be boring with the tie covering his eyes, keeping him from guessing the location of Sebastian’s surprise (something Kurt feels is unnecessary since he has never been to North Carolina, knows nothing about North Carolina, and would have no hope of guessing where the hell they might end up, blindfold or no), but it’s actually
quite enjoyable having no other choice than to feel the sun on his face, the breeze in his hair, and Sebastian’s musical selection for their ride – Dvorak’s *New World Symphony* – filling his ears. The only thing he wants that he can’t have is to see the expression on Sebastian’s face while they drive. Sebastian is certainly pleased with what he has planned for today – that’s plain for Kurt to tell.

They spend the rest of the trip not talking. Sebastian hums to the music, but Kurt is caught between wanting to nap, and sitting on the edge of his seat, bouncing up and down like a toddler on his first trip to Disneyland. After close to an hour’s drive, Kurt senses the car braking and feels them turn off the road. The Mustang dips as it leaves the flat asphalt and drives onto the dirt. The ground flattens out, but is marked with a few shallow potholes that Sebastian slows down to navigate. They drive straight for about a hundred yards and then abruptly park. Sebastian doesn’t say a word. Kurt hears Sebastian cut the Mustang’s engine, then his door opens and closes, and Kurt assumes that Sebastian got out of the car. Then Kurt’s door opens, and he feels Sebastian reach over his body to unbuckle his seatbelt, the scent of Ivory filling Kurt’s nose with Sebastian’s body so near.

“Be careful out here,” Sebastian warns, taking Kurt’s hand in his and helping him out of the Mustang. “The ground is a little uneven in spots.”

“So, we *are* outdoors,” Kurt cheers.

“Yes, we are,” Sebastian says, and Kurt can almost hear his eyes rolling. Sebastian closes the car door behind them. He holds Kurt’s hand and waits patiently while Kurt takes a first tentative step, the second and third steps more confident when he doesn’t plummet to the ground. Kurt knows there’s grass under his feet. Even with his shoes on, he can feel the blades brush against him, but he smells the pungent fragrance of freshly cut fescue warming beneath the North Carolina sun.

“Any bees this time around?” Kurt asks, purposefully being a noodge.

“Maybe one or two,” Sebastian answers, “but I don’t think they’ll bother us.”

“Any jellyfish?”

“No,” Sebastian laughs. “No jellyfish.” Sebastian’s arm wraps around Kurt’s waist when his toe hits a rock and he trips, diverting him toward a safer path.

“Anything else that might otherwise try to kill and/or maim us?” Kurt asks, regaining his balance in the shelter of Sebastian's arms and continuing on.

“Depends on your definition of kill and/or main.”

They walk quite a ways more than Kurt expects. Around them in the distance, Kurt hears people laughing and talking, but for another sound that interjects from time to time, a sort of *whoosh* that erupts in short bursts, he can’t make out clearly what anyone is saying.

He does hear the word *basket*. He knows that for sure.

A picnic, maybe? But then why would that be a surprise, unless the Smythes came to the house early and they’re meeting up here? Feasible, but then why the blindfold?

Unless it’s that wedding Sebastian keeps joking that his mother is planning for them. Kurt pictures it in his head – Sebastian taking off the blindfold with a flourish to reveal a huge white canopy stretched over rows of portable folding chairs, each one filled with a member of the Smythe entourage that Kurt has yet to meet, including, bizarrely enough, Jeremiah from the country club and Max, covered in glitter and looking particularly pissed off, along with his dad and the whole of the *New Directions*, dressed in the costumes they wore at Nationals. The image is so patently

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idiotic that Kurt barks out a laugh just as he and Sebastian stop walking, and even with the blindfold covering his eyes, he feels people looking at him.

“O-kay…” Sebastian says in response to Kurt’s outburst, but aside from a chuckle, he doesn’t say anything else about it. “I’m Sebastian Smythe,” he hears his boyfriend continue. “I have a reservation.”

“Oh, yes,” an older man’s voice responds. It’s a gruff voice, probably roughened by years of cigar smoking (which Kurt can smell on the breeze when it changes direction), but it’s a cheerful voice. He seems genuinely happy to meet them. That’s something that Kurt is beginning to appreciate about the people they’ve encountered so far on this trip. Everyone seems so kind, so open, so accepting, so come-as-you-are. “You have a reservation for two at noon.” Kurt hears the man laugh, as a result of seeing Kurt in his blindfold, he thinks. “First timer, eh?” the man asks, and that more or less confirms it.

“Yup,” Sebastian says, kneading Kurt’s shoulder muscles, noticing them tighten up before Kurt does.

“Well, you’re going to love it,” the man assures Kurt, patting him on the upper arm. “Right this way, gentlemen.”

Sebastian’s hands on Kurt’s body leading him around become necessary to keep Kurt moving. Kurt likes surprises as much as he dislikes surprises, and as they get closer to whatever it is that Sebastian is taking him to, Kurt becomes reluctant, questioning if he really wants to know what Sebastian has planned that takes place in the middle of a field of grass and requires a blindfold to get him there.

“Breathe, babe,” Sebastian says, taking Kurt by the elbow and edging him closer to something. He puts Kurt’s hands down on a surface that’s hard and smooth, but knotted. It feels like wicker, but if that’s what it is, it’s the largest thing made of wicker he’s ever felt. “Step up.” Kurt feels around with his foot for a ledge to step up on, but when he can’t find one, Sebastian is there, putting a hand beneath his knee to help him find his way. Kurt steps down on a solid floor and pulls himself up, following the surface beneath his hands, his fingers hitting something that feels like rope along the way. He hears Sebastian walk up behind him, then the sound of a door swinging shut and a lock clicking closed.

“Okay, are we ready to go?” the man asks, keeping his question vague, not giving anything away, in cahoots with Sebastian’s plan.

“Yup,” Sebastian says, patting Kurt’s hand.

“I…I guess, yes,” Kurt replies when he notices the quiet and realizes both men are waiting for him to respond.

“My name’s Roland, by the way,” the man says, “so if you need anything, just yell.” Then the man laughs, long, throaty, and way too amused with all of this. “Let’s do this.” Roland does something, and Kurt hears that whooosh, but it’s right over his head. Then they’re rising…rising! Lifting off the ground and rising into the air!

“Sebastian?” Kurt asks, gripping tighter with his hands. He feels Sebastian’s fingers behind his head, untying the knot and pulling off the blindfold.

The white sunlight hits Kurt’s eyelids and it takes a few minutes for Kurt to adjust to the brightness, but instead of taking the time he needs to become accustomed to it again, he rushes to
blink. He needs to see where they are. He needs to make sure they’re not doing what he suspects they’re doing.

The floor lurches and that does it. Kurt’s eyes fly open, his head panging with the stunning burst of light flooding his eyes, but he can see mostly where he is. His jaw drops, watching the world beneath them fall away. People gather on the ground to watch them take flight while other balloons, deflated in the grass, wait for their turn to rise into the air. Kurt snaps his head up to look above them, seeing a burner spitting flame into the gigantic mouth of a bulbous, rainbow-colored hot air balloon.

Kurt’s eyes dart from Sebastian’s grinning face to the face of the older man - Roland, barely containing himself - then back to Sebastian. Sebastian’s smile for Kurt not only reaches his eyes, but lights them entirely, overcome by the enormity of this event he was able to pull off.

Kurt wants to congratulate him. He wants to kiss him and hug him and thank him for his thoughtfulness. Kurt knows he tried, he’s been trying this whole time, but when he opens his mouth, hysteria speaks for him instead and he stammers, “Sh-shit! Sebastian! Wha--- what the hell?”

Sebastian’s smile doesn’t just disappear, it dies, and in its place Kurt sees confusion, anger, embarrassment, disappointment…and hurt. But all of those are erased immediately and replaced with a solid mask of exasperation.

“No! Sebastian parries back, though he knows he should probably comfort his terrified boyfriend. “Don’t tell me you’re afraid of heights!”

“O-ok!” Kurt stutters in a voice that sounds like it’s teetering on the verge of full-scale panic. “I won’t tell you! It’ll…it’ll be my secret!”

Sebastian shakes his head, his chest heaving with sarcastic laughter.

“When were you planning on telling me that you were afraid of heights?”

“I don’t know!” Kurt cries, choking on his anger when the wind blows through their basket and the simmering flame above them flickers. *(They can’t go out like that, can they? he thinks. They’re not like candles…they don’t just blow out…do they?)* “When were you going to tell me about all of your deathly fears? The subject never came up, alright!”

“This is great,” Sebastian says, leaning against the side of the basket and staring up to the sky, as if looking to a higher power for help. “This is just super.”

Kurt’s whole body shakes and he swallows hard.

“You don’t get to be angry at me.” He tries to take his hand off the basket to point at Sebastian accusingly, but he can’t make his hand let go. “I know what’s going on here,” Kurt says as he breathes heavily, bordering on hyperventilating. “You don’t like me at all, do you? You’re trying to get rid of me. You drove me all the way out here to get rid of the body!”

“If I wanted to kill you, I sure as hell wouldn’t drop you out of a balloon!” Sebastian growls. “I’d strangle you with my fucking bare hands!”

Kurt hears Roland chuckle, lighting the burner and taking them higher despite Kurt’s freak out.

“So, what the fuck are we doing up here then?” Kurt whines.
“We’re up here because I’m trying to do something fucking romantic for you, God dammit!” Sebastian retaliates, crossing the small space to confront Kurt on the level.

“Giving me a heart attack is something romantic?” Kurt screeches, hands gripping the edge of the basket, fists trembling like mad, knuckles going from white to nearly transparent. “Putting my life in danger is romantic?”

The laugh that sputters from Sebastian’s lips makes Kurt want to rear back and slap him across the face.

“You’re afraid of heights?” Sebastian chortles, repeating it again incredulously, leaning back as he laughs. “You’re afraid of heights? What kind of imbecile puts ride in a hot air balloon on their bucket list if they’re fucking afraid of heights?!”

“The kind that…wait…” Kurt’s eyes narrow, scrutinizing the boy in front of him who at least has sense to look guilty at being caught. “You…you did go through my phone! I knew it!”

“You knew nothing!” Sebastian retorts, turning his head away, eyes searching out the horizon to calm himself down, to eradicate his guilt.

“I did!” Kurt argues. “I did!”

“No,” Sebastian contends, “because if you knew, you definitely would have said something. You’re not a big one for keeping your mouth shut.”

“Well, I was suspicious,” Kurt compromises, losing none of his ire. He isn’t exactly pissed at Sebastian. He’s more curious, but he also wants to know if invading his privacy is going to be a habit with him. “But, why would you go through my phone again? Did you think I was texting…”

“No!” Sebastian cuts in with conviction enough that Kurt knows he’s telling the truth. No, Sebastian didn’t think Kurt had been texting Blaine. “That first day we were here, I woke up and you were gone. I thought you left. I thought you called…” Sebastian has a name on his lips, but he bites his tongue and chews around it. It only takes a single flicker from his eyes to tell Kurt who.

Julian.

Sebastian thought Kurt had called Julian to come get him.

On the one hand, Kurt wants to be sympathetic, but on the other hand, God, how infuriating! There’s something there – something between those two that shows itself in tiny ways, in ever so subtle and sometimes not subtle ways, but Sebastian won’t explain it to him.

But that’s not the issue now.

“Why would I leave?” Kurt asks. He can’t help feeling hurt – after everything he’s been through, after everything Sebastian has put him through, even before today, and how far they’ve come, now that Kurt realizes…

“I don’t know,” Sebastian says - old, crumbled walls inching their way back up around him to protect him. “Why would you stay? Maybe you thought…”

“What did I think?” Kurt asks, talking over Sebastian, not hearing the rest of his reason, annoyed that Sebastian would tell Kurt what he thought without even asking him. “I came all the way out here to be with you! What did you think…”
“I thought that you thought this was a mistake,” Sebastian butts in. “That coming here with me was a mistake. And I’ll tell you Kurt, it slayed me. It slayed me because…”

“A mistake?” Kurt gasps, letting go of the basket, forgetting about his fears and about falling with the brutality of that one word barreling through his heart. “Don’t you think you should have talked to me if that’s how you thought I felt? Jesus Christ, why is everyone putting words in my mouth all the time, huh? How come no one tells me how they really…”

“I’ve never had to explain my feelings to anyone,” Sebastian continues, regardless of Kurt’s constant interruptions. “That doesn’t mean I don’t have them, but no one seemed to care. Shit! I didn’t care. At least, I thought I didn’t care until you and I started…”

“I promised I’d give us a chance.” Kurt argues. “Not just for one day and one night. I’m in this for the long haul because I realized that…”

“I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t want to ruin this. I didn’t know how I was supposed to tell you that I…”

“…regardless of everything, regardless of our past, regardless of my past, that I…”

They come to a full stop midsentence and stare at one another, the air at 2,000 feet completely silent for the first time since the balloon went aloft.

Kurt stares at Sebastian.

Sebastian stares at Kurt.

Roland stares at both of them, mildly amused, but neither boy notices him anymore.

Sebastian pulls himself to his full height, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Say it.”

Kurt scoffs, offended by the audacity of Sebastian to make that command.

“You say it.”

Sebastian rolls his eyes.

“Why should I? You obviously don’t if you can’t say it!”

“Well, you can’t say it either!”

“It’s not as easy for me as it is for you!”

“It’s not easy for me!”

“Why? Because you can’t love me?”

“Because I didn’t think that I could fall in love again so soon, and it’s terrifying!” Kurt confesses, losing steam, feeling like he’s drowning in these emotions that tend to gobble him up and spit him out without warning. This back and forth arguing, bouncing between admissions, saying things but leaving them unsaid, is maddening. “But I did, Sebastian…and I do.” Kurt looks into Sebastian’s eyes, at the abundance of dynamic greens combined in his irises – moss and sea and juniper – as convoluted as the boy himself, lit ablaze by their arguing and Sebastian’s rebounding cockiness, but reflecting his need for Kurt’s reassurance. Sebastian, independent and strong, but he needs
Kurt. He needs Kurt to tell him. “Sebastian, I…”

Sebastian slaps a hand over Kurt’s mouth, and Kurt glares at him in surprise.

“You jerk---“ he mumbles.

Sebastian smirks at Kurt’s adorable umbrage.

“I love you, Kurt.”

End of argument.

That’s all he has to say.

Kurt reaches up and pulls Sebastian’s hand down from his mouth.

“I love you, Sebastian.”

Kurt watches Sebastian’s face change - his eyes in particular, projecting his misery and doubt, smile again.

“Yeah?” He puts his hands on Kurt’s shoulders, runs them down his arms, and then takes Kurt’s hands in his. “Well, just remember who said it first.”

Kurt almost rolls his eyes but Sebastian doesn’t let him do anything but be kissed – kissed above the earth, floating among the clouds, up over the world where nothing can touch them. It doesn’t even matter to Kurt that other balloons are hovering nearby, each one full of people watching them, or that poor Roland is stuck next to them in this confined basket while they make-out.

Life is made up of moments – big moments and little moments. Some moments are a curse, others are a blessing.

Kurt’s summer has been full of moments – some heartbreaking, some annoying, and some renewing.

This…this here…in Sebastian’s arms…high in the sky, knowing that someone loves him again…this is a moment for Kurt.
Sebastian releases him, kissing across his cheek as he turns him around, ignoring the cheers from
the onlookers around them. He aims Kurt’s gaze out toward the horizon, where the land stretches
out beneath them, the blue sky rises up above them, and everything in front of them is like the
future - beautiful and bright.

“So, now that the fear of plunging to a painful and untimely death is over, what do you think?”
Sebastian asks, hooking his chin onto Kurt’s shoulder, his attention only partially occupied by the
view before him. Mostly he looks at Kurt, awaiting his reaction.

Kurt turns his head and smiles, looking into Sebastian’s eyes when he answers.

“It’s better than I could have ever thought possible.”

***

The drive back to the beach house takes half the time than it normally would with Sebastian
disregarding speed limits left and right and Kurt only partially belted into his seat, licking stripes up
and down Sebastian’s neck, biting on his earlobe and palming over his cock.

“God, Kurt,” Sebastian moans, slamming on his brakes at the last minute and stopping his car
before he blows through one of the few red lights on this strip of road. “We’re going to…oh God…
we’re going to get into an accident, you keep doing that.”

“Do you want me to stop?” Kurt whispers, deftly unbuttoning the top button of Sebastian’s jeans
with the fingers of his right hand and slipping it inside while scratching lightly up the back of his
neck with his left hand.

“Not a chance,” Sebastian moans, dropping the car into gear a second before the light turns green,
sending his Mustang flying down the asphalt, tires squealing, leaving a Chevy Malibu and a Dodge
Charger in his dust.

Sebastian pulls into the carport with no other desire than to have Kurt and have him now. The
Mustang barely comes to a stop before Kurt unbuckles his seat belt – not that it was restricting
much more than his right ankle the whole drive back. Sebastian turns in his seat, grabs Kurt by the
shoulder, and pulls him in for a kiss. Kurt laughs at Sebastian’s impatience, as if it isn’t a match to
his own. The car isn’t even in park, Sebastian’s foot pressing down the brake pedal the only thing keeping them from driving full speed through the wall. Sebastian grabs Kurt around the waist and kisses him hard, crushing their mouths together, fumbling with his left hand to put the car in park and kill the engine.

Sebastian nearly drags Kurt out of the car through the driver’s side door, refusing to let go of him, and Kurt, his head spinning from kiss after kiss, his body yearning to be savored and devoured, wonders will it be now? Sebastian said he wanted to go slow, but struggling with the door handle to get them inside the house, Sebastian kisses Kurt as if the secret to eternal happiness lies somewhere along the seam of his lips. Kurt unbuttons his vest and Sebastian slips his hands underneath, running light nails down his back. He mumbles I love you after I love you along the curve of Kurt’s mouth. He’s smiling – Kurt can feel it wherever Sebastian’s mouth touches.

It has to be now.

What else could there be for them to do? What other steps are there for them to take?

They make it up the stairs - luckily without falling off the side of the dune - into the house (they both reach for the doorknob at the same time, but as Sebastian has the keys, he won), through the kitchen, tripping over one another, staggering their steps as they make their way to the living room. Stopping at the first flat wall they come across, Sebastian pins Kurt up against it and kisses him more, unable to stop now that this gate has been opened.

“Say it again,” Sebastian pleads, pausing for a breath.

“Say please,” Kurt teases, letting Sebastian claim his mouth over and over, till his lips are red and swollen and his cheeks hurt from smiling.

“Please, Kurt. Say it again?” Sebastian asks with a slight edge in response to Kurt’s kidding.

Sebastian looks into Kurt’s face, waiting for the words, green eyes begging, something they aren’t accustomed to doing.

“It again,” Kurt repeats with a laugh. Sebastian looks furious, but he tickles Kurt beneath the armpits, making him yelp.

“Please, Kurt,” Sebastian whines but sweetly, “I need…I need to hear it.”

Kurt watches Sebastian’s face slowly fall, and Kurt can’t put him through this torment any longer.

“I love you, Sebastian,” Kurt says, enunciating every word and following it with a chaste kiss, making sure there’s no mistake. “I love you, I love you, I love you…”

“Good,” Sebastian says with a nod and a laugh, “because I love you, too.”

Sebastian kisses Kurt again, these kisses urgent, hungry, meant to light a fire in Kurt’s belly that would be damn near impossible to extinguish in any way except one. Kurt rolls his head on his neck, offering it up so Sebastian can kiss, suck, mark to his heart’s content. Sebastian’s lips against Kurt’s throat cause him to moan, and he smiles, drunk from the scrape of Sebastian’s teeth on his skin, the alternating way he nibbles and sucks shooting sparks like Roman candles firing straight to his groin.

“I love you,” Kurt mutters, smiling and laughing and moaning beneath the reach of Sebastian’s tongue. “I love you, I love you, I…”
The words wedge in his throat as his eyes lock on to an unexpected face staring at them from the living room.

It’s his eyes – those heart-stopping, criminally seductive bedroom eyes – that Kurt sees first. Then the rock star smile. It seems that every Smythe sibling has a signature quirk to their lips. This one can bring anyone to their knees.

Well, maybe not Kurt. Not anymore.

He’s wearing black pants that look painted on, and he wears the hell out of them, to be honest. Except Kurt pictures the way they might look on Sebastian, the way they would hug his every muscle, how glorious it would be to peel them down his legs slowly...

“Julian?” Kurt meant it to sound like a curse, an expletive, he had intended on turning that name into the vilest of four-letter words, but Sebastian finds a sensitive spot on Kurt’s neck and licks it, and Kurt gasps the name on accident. Julian’s smile curls devilishly at the edges, the words, “I thought so” dancing on his tongue, his hedonistic sensibilities satisfied, but Sebastian jerks his head back, glaring at Kurt with a look of such boundless pain that had Kurt actually seen it, it would have broken him.

“Really, Kurt?” Sebastian growls. Pressed against the wall, Kurt sees Sebastian from the corner of his vision, green eyes flashing dark with lust clouded by anger - the look of a boy stricken by the sting of a scar torn from a wound too quickly. Kurt wants to examine that pain, but there are other things that need to be dealt with before that. “Are you fucking kidding me with that sh---”

Kurt grabs Sebastian’s chin in his grip and wrenches his head to the side. For the first time Sebastian sees the intruder who has poached his boyfriend’s attention. He snarls, slamming his fist into the wall above Kurt’s head.

“Julian!”

“Hello, baby brother…gorgeous…” Julian addresses them, his smooth voice slicing into their midst, swiftly and shamelessly destroying the promise that Sebastian’s kisses and Kurt’s touches, coupled by their repeated declarations of love, had created. “Did you guys miss me?”
“Please, guys, continue,” Julian says, his eyes shining with self-satisfied amusement, his grin burning, its flame fanned by Sebastian’s expression of rage. “Don’t stop on my account. Wait a second…let me get a little more comfortable so I have a better view…” His face becomes nearly 70% his this-is-funnier-than-hell grin as Julian makes a big show of readjusting his seat on the sofa, reclining back on the arm, and propping his right ankle up on his left knee. His gaze shifts between Sebastian and Kurt, and it’s obvious that he’s more than pleased with himself.

Sebastian always goes on about Julian being a fucking voyeur. Man, he wasn’t kidding.

In the silence that grows around them, pregnant with tension and carrying with it a history of something that Kurt hasn’t fully been debriefed on, Julian stares at them, and the two boys, standing up against the wall, stare back. Julian makes a gesture with his hands, clearly meant to convey What’s the hold up? I’m waiting.

“What are you doing here, Julian?” Sebastian grates out, the question made up of less actual words and more a guttural noise that comes as a result of his jaw clenching tight. Kurt hears Sebastian’s teeth scrape together, the unnerving sound a symptom of his unrest, poking down Kurt’s spine like ice cold fingers.

“Why, Sebby,” Julian teases, smiling with the satisfaction that he’s pushing Sebastian’s buttons, “aren’t you happy to see your big brother?”

“Julian…”

Julian has yet to explain himself, and Sebastian does not have the patience at this moment to accept his brother’s usual jokes-at-his-expense as an excuse.

“After all, I drove nine hours straight,” Julian says with mock sincerity.

“Julian…”

The emphasis on the name sounds like a warning. Sebastian is not going to put up with Julian’s evasive commentary much longer.

“What is it you are doing here, Julian?” Sebastian says, unruffled by Sebastian’s menacing attitude and turning his lightning blue eyes Kurt’s way, “may I say that you look simply dashing in this classically stylish ensemble you’ve chosen, even with the addition of my brother attached like a remora.”

“Thanks,” Kurt grumbles, turning his face away from Julian’s blinding smile and dropping his forehead onto Sebastian’s chest.

“And you, Sebastian,” Julian says, moving quickly back to taunting his brother. “You look pretty debonair yourself, considering your pants are falling down around your ass.”

Kurt can’t stop his snicker at that. He had unbuttoned Sebastian’s jeans on the way in and well, they had had other plans before finding Julian sitting on the sofa, awaiting their arrival. Sebastian doesn’t remove his eyes from his brother’s face, and spares only one arm from where he has Kurt crowded to tug his jeans up.
“Why…are…you…here?” Sebastian repeats in a low growl.

“I came here to warn you that the rest of the flock will descend on your little love nest the day after tomorrow,” Julian explains, “so I personally wanted to make sure that the two of you were… respectable.”

“Information that you could have relayed by phone, you realize,” Sebastian says, his expression murderous, which seems to make Julian smile brighter every second it’s directed at him.

“Yes, but again, I missed you guys so very much,” Julian says with a fake, syrupy whine.

Kurt feels Sebastian shake – tremors of repressed anger circulating under his skin like a serpent trying to find a way to strike – and Kurt wraps his arms around his boyfriend’s waist, trying to hold him together.

Kurt understands Sebastian’s anger as much as he doesn’t understand it. Trading verbal barbs with Julian seems to be par for the course, and yes, Julian disrupted what was about to be a beautiful, long-awaited moment – one they’ve been building up to these past few days that they’ve spent alone, piece by piece, like a puzzle that’s all one color, with no clue where to go, no hint as to how they need to proceed. In essence, wasn’t that what Julian had wanted? Wasn’t that the favor he had originally asked of Kurt, to give his brother a chance? Julian probably doesn’t know exactly what he’s walked in on, the significance of it. He most likely thinks they’ve been going at it hot and heavy for days.

But Sebastian’s body has launched into a state of high-alert as he stares down his brother, and it takes some retrospection before Kurt realizes what’s actually bothering him.

It’s not that Julian showed up. The entire Smythe clan is set to arrive soon anyway. They knew that the privacy of their sojourn would only be temporary. It’s the fact that Julian showed up unannounced. Sebastian feels vulnerable, somewhat, with his brother around, especially at this pivotal point between him and Kurt. It’s amplified here in this place that holds history for them, the same way Kurt’s house - heck, all of Ohio - holds history for him and Blaine…which is why they left in the first place, why they drove nearly twelve hours to go somewhere as far removed from that history as possible to work through their remaining differences.

Julian might be a dick, but he wasn’t intentionally being a bastard. By the way the thick silence around them holds taut, not slacking an inch, and how Julian’s smile begins to slip, Kurt is sure that Julian realizes he stepped into something he should have stayed away from for at least one more day.

But right now, Kurt’s job is to alleviate Sebastian’s anxiety, not scold Julian over his disastrous timing.

“Has your brother always been this much of a shit,” Kurt asks quietly, “or am I just noticing it now?”

Sebastian doesn’t react right away, almost as if he’s forgotten that he has Kurt pinned against the wall, but then he chuckles, and Kurt is glad to hear some genuine humor in it.

“You’re the one who had a hard-on for him the first day you two met,” Sebastian mutters in reply.

“Yeah, well, it’s worn off,” Kurt mutters back. Sebastian shakes his head, his eyes not meeting Kurt’s as Kurt looks affectionately up at him from where he’s trapped between Sebastian’s arms – lips still swollen from kisses that relayed in no uncertain terms how badly Sebastian wanted him,
chest heaving with breaths that had yet to even out around a heart still beating way too fast. “Incidentally,” Kurt adds, “in case you think I had a choice somewhere along the line, I fell in love with the right brother.”

Sebastian still doesn’t look down at Kurt, hiding the thread of insecurity he knows is unraveling behind his eyes, but the smile that starts to replace his frown is encouraging.

The fact that Julian is watching them becomes entirely unimportant to Kurt as he starts to kiss Sebastian’s neck. If Julian wants to watch them make-out so much, let him. Kurt is going to give him a great big eyeful. Sebastian’s eyelids flutter shut and he lifts his chin, sighing into the air at the touch of Kurt’s lips against his skin. Kurt feels Sebastian’s pulse racing, too. It’s not over. His desire is still there, beating against his lips, pressed against his thigh, reconciled by the arms sliding down the wall to wind their way around Kurt’s body, hands smoothing down Kurt’s back to palm over his ass. Kurt smiles into his next kiss, nibbling lightly on Sebastian’s pulse point, pulling a moan from his throat.

Maybe they can salvage this moment – intrusion or no.

A small, not remotely understated cough makes Kurt think not, and he breaks off his kisses when Sebastian sighs in frustration.

“Well the kissing between the two of you is much improved, I must say,” Julian pipes up, “but as much as I like a good soft porno, I do actually have a matter I wanted to discuss with Kurt, and I wanted to do it in person.”

Sebastian rolls his eyes and Kurt hugs him tighter. Kurt turns on Julian, whose smile has softened considerably despite his remark, and Kurt gets the impression that whatever he came to say might actually be important.

“Come,” Julian says, beckoning them over with both hands, sitting up to make room on the sofa for them. “Sit.”

Sebastian’s head falls forward and he knocks his forehead against the wall. 

Bang…bang…bang…bang…pounding out the driving rhythm of his aggravation.

“Come on, Bas,” Kurt whispers, hoping that the addition of the nickname he knows Sebastian likes so much will help soothe him, “maybe the faster we hear him out, the faster he’ll leave? Go to a hotel?”

“Drop off a cliff into the ocean and be eaten by Great white sharks?” Sebastian offers, taking Kurt’s hand and letting Kurt lead him to the living room.

“There’s always that,” Kurt agrees, relaxing as Sebastian’s temper begins to subside.

Kurt pulls a reluctant Sebastian along - a Sebastian whose eyes are trained on Julian, trying his level best to irradiate him molecule by molecule until he’s nothing but dust. Sebastian drops down onto the cushions of the sofa first, pulling Kurt along with him, mostly into his lap.

Julian sighs, reaching out to take Kurt’s hand in his, but Sebastian intercepts it, weaving their fingers together and holding his hands clasped around Kurt’s waist. It’s an overtly possessive display of Sebastian marking his territory. It’s something that Kurt turned his nose up at the beginning of the summer.

Now, it turns him on, his head buzzing with dizziness as blood in his brain reroutes elsewhere,
making this interlude with Julian that much more agonizing.

Julian looks at them, at their two hands joined together, and the corner of his mouth quirks.

“Kurt,” Julian says, and this time, he’s not teasing, “I wanted to invite someone to come out here and spend the summer, too, but I needed to make sure that his presence wouldn’t be too uncomfortable for you in particular.”

Kurt’s mind and his expression go blank. Wrapped up as he is in this new thing he has with Sebastian, he kind of forgets that other people exist in the world, people with wants and desires like him…people that are a bit rough around the edges and broken, too.

He forgot that there’s another heartbroken Smythe brother in the world.

Kurt narrows his eyes and Sebastian tightens his grip, both of them coming to the same conclusion at the same time but only Kurt vocalizing it.

“Cooper?” Kurt asks.

Julian nods, biting his lower lip, which dulls his smile, but his eyes show the full breadth of his excitement. He looks young again, but not in that defeated way he did when he saw Cooper at the gala – before that horrible moment when Cooper spilled the beans about the true nature of Kurt and Sebastian’s relationship.

“When did that happen?” Sebastian asks, but instead of sounding royally pissed, he sounds concerned.

“After you guys left,” Julian says, defensively. “We went out for coffee, talked a few things over…”

“Talked?” Sebastian interrupts, skeptical about the accuracy of his brother’s word choice.

“Yes, we talked,” Julian says, nodding his head back and forth as if his body physically rejects the half-truth he’s telling “… mostly.”

Kurt feels Sebastian chuckle behind him, and even though his grip on Kurt’s hands doesn’t loosen, it seems that he’s on the road to forgiving Julian’s recent indiscretion.

“Mostly…” Sebastian prods, trying to lead Julian into revealing more than he’s telling.

“A story for another time,” Julian says, waving the subject away and fixing his gaze on Kurt again, “but what I need to know is if Cooper being here is going to be…”

“No,” Kurt cuts Julian off, answering too adamantly, shaking his head too vigorously. “No, it’ll be fine. It’ll be great.”

It’s a tiny lie and Julian probably knows it, but he has such a look of hope in his eyes, a look similar to the one Kurt has been seeing in Sebastian’s eyes the last few days, Kurt can’t bring himself to snuff it out in any way.

“He’s still sworn to secrecy, of course,” Julian continues. “Anything that happens here stays here. He’s just coming here to see me, not report on you guys. I promise.”

Kurt feels Sebastian drop a kiss in his hair and Kurt relaxes back against his body.

“Thank you,” Kurt says with a smile. “Thank you for discussing this with me in person. I actually
really appreciate it."

“Yeah,” Sebastian agrees. “that was really cool of you. Now do you mind getting the fuck out?”

Julian waggles a finger at Sebastian, tsk-tsking him condescendingly.

“Quid pro quo, little brother,” Julian reprimands, doing his best Hannibal Lecter impression (and doing it rather well, to be honest), “quid pro quo.”

“Ugh!” Sebastian groans, burying his face in Kurt’s hair. “What do you want?”

“Testy,” Julian quips, back to enjoying his brother’s sulking. “I think that my driving all the way out here entitles me to a bit of hospitality. What do you say?”

Sebastian doesn’t answer, and Kurt can sympathize – God, can he sympathize – but seeing as Julian came out there to do something nice for him, he can’t despise Julian completely.

A little, but not completely.

“What did you have in mind?” Kurt ventures, maintaining his poker face when Sebastian squeezes him so hard he thinks he might vomit his appendix.

Julian claps his hands, rubbing them together with a glint in his eyes that’s both endearing and kind of frightening.

“I want you guys to go get changed, because Sebby here’s taking us out to dinner, and then…”

Julian’s eyebrows wiggle suggestively, and Kurt is sure he’s going to request a threesome, but Sebastian apparently knows what Julian is really referring to. He groans oh God, kill me now as his head slides onto Kurt’s shoulder and sinks into his neck.

“Why?” Kurt asks, looking as best he can at Sebastian, and then back at Julian with eyes that silently beg please don’t say threesome, please don’t say threesome, please don’t say threesome…

Not that he’d agree to one, but Kurt still doesn’t want the offer extended.

“Karaoke,” Julian finishes.

“Karaoke!” Kurt gasps, thrilled and relieved beyond measure.

“Oh, God,” Sebastian groans, holding his breath, hoping for someone to come along and put him out of his misery.

_____________________________________________________

“How do you not like karaoke?” Kurt sounds offended as he asks the question. “I mean, you sing…and you don’t just sing, you sing really well…” They head off to Sebastian’s bedroom to change and to…frankly, to put some distance between themselves and Julian for a while since they’re pretty sure he’s about to become a permanent fixture of their evening.

Preoccupied and a bit bewildered from their talk, the boys leave Julian to his own devices while they recover from their afternoon (they kept their hot air balloon excursion a secret since Julian didn’t ask about their day and neither of them felt he needed to know). Apparently Julian had arrived only minutes before they returned and had parked his car on the opposite side of the carport. Kurt and Sebastian were so occupied with tearing each other’s clothes off that they hadn’t
registered the presence of another vehicle parked not too far from where Sebastian usually parked his Mustang.

“I know I sing,” Sebastian says, ducking his head down and away to hide the blush that starts from Kurt’s unsolicited compliment, “I’m just not the kind of person for whom singing to drunk strangers at a bar is a thing.”

Sebastian stops suddenly in the hallway, turns Kurt into his embrace, and kisses him. He kisses him hard enough that Kurt can’t object, but with soft caresses from his lips, savoring more than taking, though Kurt can feel that he is taking – he’s taking strength and solace from Kurt, and Kurt willingly gives it.

“Tell me you love me,” Sebastian whispers his plea against Kurt’s mouth. “Tell me that nothing’s changed.”

Kurt feels a surge of Sebastian’s anxiety hit him like the waves down on the beach, waves he can hear from Sebastian’s open bedroom door, pounding the shore. Kurt looks up into Sebastian’s eyes, raises a hand to cup his cheek, and smiles.

“I love you,” Kurt says. “Nothing’s changed in the last twenty minutes. I still love you.”

Sebastian closes his eyes and nods, visibly relaxing.

“Kiss me?” he asks with eyes still closed.

“With pleasure,” Kurt says, leaning into Sebastian’s body, pressing their lips together, putting arms around him and holding Sebastian, hugging him tight, hugging him so they can exist as one person for a while instead of two separate souls – one briefly more crippled than the other.

Kurt kisses Sebastian until he feels his boyfriend pull away, opening his eyes, finally back from wherever it was he ran away to. In a flash of green eyes and a cocky smile (one that has a lower wattage than normal but is a more comfortable place for Sebastian to hide), Kurt’s boyfriend is back.

“You go on ahead,” Sebastian says. “I have to use the bathroom.”

Kurt raises an eyebrow.

“Are you sure you’re not making me wait in the bedroom so you don’t have any witnesses to your brother’s murder?” Kurt jokes, culling this version of Sebastian out further and further to help him recover.

“I make no promises,” Sebastian says, taking a backward step away, “but if things go wrong, the rendezvous point is seventy miles due east from here.”

“You are so weird,” Kurt laughs, walking off through the bedroom door, hearing the bathroom door close down the hallway behind him.

Kurt kicks off his shoes and falls down onto the bed, lying on his back and staring up at the ceiling, letting the last half-hour drain away – out through the tips of his fingers, his mouth and nose when he breathes, his skin where it touches the air. There’s a part of him – a tiny nugget embedded deep in his stomach where he hopes it disintegrates away – that’s as mad as Sebastian was, one that resents Julian for showing up right when he did, bringing with him news of Cooper.

Because thoughts of Cooper always bring up thoughts of…
Nope. Kurt can’t do that. He forces his mind to screech to a halt and make a U-turn. Back up. Go down the same way he came, remember all the things that happened today that made him incandescently happy (to borrow from Mrs. Elizabeth Darcy, née Miss Lizzy Bennet). To do that, he pulls out his phone and brings up his photo gallery full of pictures he took today – pictures of Kurt and Sebastian.

Kurt sits up, crosses his legs to lean his elbows on his knees, and swipes his finger across the screen, flipping through the photos, picture after picture taken from the air: panoramic landscape shots, clear blue sky, a green meadow dotted with wildflowers and trees stretching out for miles, more than a dozen selfies that he and Sebastian posed for together, some with other balloons in the background, one that they forced Roland to take with them. But his favorite, by far, is one that Roland managed to take on the sly and upload to his company’s website (Up, Up, and Away – Kurt thought the name was cuter than necessary when he saw it on their sign, but it still made him smile). Roland emailed Kurt and Sebastian a copy; Kurt received the picture when they were back on the ground and he saved it immediately.

It was a picture of him and Sebastian kissing, which they had done a lot of during their flight.

He’s usually not a fan of the gratuitous, candid, face-sucking photographs that businesses who pander to the romantic tend to litter all over their advertising materials, but this picture has him captivated. Kurt has never seen Sebastian kiss anyone (which his inner diva is immensely grateful for), or himself, for that matter. The two of them fit together so well. Many times he’s felt that way, but this is the first time he’s actually gotten to see it with his own eyes, from an outsider’s perspective.

In the picture, Sebastian is holding his head, commanding this kiss, and Kurt is letting him. Sebastian has always been a good kisser, even when Kurt couldn’t stand him and they locked lips for show, but more and more Sebastian kisses him differently. He kisses Kurt like he wants to kiss him. Sebastian kisses Kurt less like he’s trying to convince him that there’s something there, and instead enjoys what is there.

And what’s been there for some time is love.

Love.

Kurt bites his lower lip giddily and hops a little on the mattress.

He goes back over the photographs and starts uploading them, forgoing writing captions in order to get them up on his Facebook wall as quickly as he can, though here and there he sprinkles a few gems like Romance at 2,000 feet, Don’t look down!, or Wave hi to Roland everybody! Isn’t he darling? (He makes sure to tag that one with Roland’s name for Up, Up, and Away’s Facebook page.)

When he comes back to the picture of him and Sebastian kissing, he knows he can’t leave it blank. He has to write something. He has to find a way to memorialize this moment, to share a fraction of what it means to him with the people who are going to see it.

He stares at it, waiting for something to come to him. He looks over the fine details of the photograph - the way Sebastian’s closed eyes crinkle in the corners, the way Sebastian’s hand cups his head so tenderly, the way their lips line up and move together.

He looks at the sky backdrop, the woven basket, the metal rods that fasten it to the balloon above their heads, and the perfect caption hits him.
Defying Gravity, in homage to one of his favorite songs from one of his all-time favorite musicals - Wicked. That song meant so much to him on his journey to where he is now – the strong, independent, openly-gay man that he can claim to be. A man that makes his own decisions, stands by his own choices, in charge of his own destiny.

That song also marks a huge turning point in his life, a time when he learned about fighting for what he wants, about how he wants to be seen, and figuring out what in his life is most important. In high school he sang that song, auditioning for a solo, and threw the last note to save his father the embarrassment of his son performing a song meant to be sung by a woman.

Of course, the death threat his father received on his behalf helped in that, too.

Kurt knew he could hit that note. He could hit it in his sleep - still can. He could sing it right now if he wanted to, even with a dry, un-warmed up throat.

Throwing it was his decision.

But this time, admitting he loves Sebastian up in that balloon, he didn’t just hit the perfect note, he nailed it. He reads the caption under the photo again and realizes it doesn’t entirely fit. With a smile on his lips, he changes it to Love Defies Gravity, and then hits the upload button.

That description comes closer to the truth. This love that he and Sebastian share doesn’t only defy gravity. It defies so much more than that – stereotypes, expectations, a rocky past.

Before he’s done, he changes his relationship status. Admitting to it straightforward with a name attached makes Kurt tipsy, like the aftereffects of going on a rollercoaster too many times – flushed and exhilarated, ready to ride it again, but still with an urge to throw up.

It’s all good – every last bit of it.

There he thinks, reviewing his Facebook page with pride. He’s left more evidence of his and Sebastian’s relationship to go along with that early morning selfie on the porch. With excitement and a grain of stomach-twisting dread, he’ll sit back and see how his friends react.

Satisfied by the overwhelming amount of vacation SPAM on his timeline, he closes out of his photo gallery and moves to pocket his phone, but something else nags at him, and instead he switches over to his bucket list.

It's time for him to start marking off some items.

He scrolls down through the list until he spots something they’ve done.

#86 Go to school in a hot air balloon.

So, he didn’t go to school in the balloon, but meh. Semantics. The details don’t matter.

#89 Attend a circuit party.

Check.

#93 Visit a bee farm. Learn how to make honey - which is right above #94 Take dad to the Indianapolis 500. He had added these two items to his bucket list while sitting by his father’s bedside in the hospital, after he had suffered his heart attack. In the sterile room, listening to the monitors beep and the IV drip, Kurt had felt nostalgic about his mother and worried about his father.
Selfishly, he had also worried about himself – about being left alone.

As his dad lay unconscious, with no one able to tell Kurt when he would wake up or if he would wake up, Kurt spent evening on end talking to him. Kurt cried to him, pleaded with him, he even yelled at him once or twice. Eventually, Kurt entered the negotiating stage, promising his dad dozens of outlandish things if he would just come back to him. Kurt swore he would take his dad anywhere he wanted to go – The Canton Classic Car Museum, Dollywood, he even contemplated the Bacon Fest at the Fraze Pavillion (though that seemed like defeating the purpose). After an hour long conversation where he was the only contributing participant, Kurt came up with the idea to take his dad to the Indy 500.

When his father opened his eyes and could speak again, Kurt asked his dad about that conversation, but he didn’t seem to remember.

Technically Kurt figured he could void that entry, but doing that felt like lying – or breaking a promise. He couldn’t in good conscience do that, even if the outcome meant wasting most of a day inhaling unadvisable levels of toxic car exhaust and risking premature aging to his skin. Kurt might be a car enthusiast, but car races tend to become monotonous when the only job the driver has is to turn left. Going to the Indy 500 would be boring beyond belief for Kurt.

But Kurt would be bored beyond belief with his father by his side, and that’s all that counted, so he left it.

Kurt scrolls down the rest of his list, smirking at some of the items that jump out at him that Sebastian could have chosen – drive a motorcycle, learn to properly prepare Fugu, go skydiving, snowblowing…

Mmm, snowblowing. That might be doable on this trip.

Kurt feels the bed beside him dip without hearing Sebastian walk into the room, engrossed as he was with the idea of dragging Sebastian onto the sand, taking Sebastian’s cock down his throat until he came, and then the lengthy make-out session that would follow…

“What’s doing?” Sebastian asks, looking over Kurt’s shoulder as he exits his bucket list.

“I was actually wondering…” Kurt says, shrewdly watching Sebastian’s expression, “what’s your relationship status on Facebook? I mean, how did you get away with lying to your folks this whole time?”

“My parents don’t follow me on Facebook.” Sebastian scoffs when he answers, as if the idea of his parents tracking him via social media is laughable.

Kurt might agree. His father doesn’t follow him on Facebook, either, but not due to any objection from Kurt. His dad got the account while he was running for congress, to give his constituents the ability to contact him more easily. He didn’t feel the need to allow the public access to aspects of his private life – namely his wife and sons.

“Understandable,” Kurt concedes, “but Julian and Olivia must follow you, so you’d still have to cover. So, what is it?”

“It’s the same thing it’s been since my freshman year of high school,” Sebastian says, acting jokingly aloof. Kurt glowers, wondering how Sebastian would react if Kurt pointed out how much like Julian he is acting right now.

Kurt knows he wouldn’t take it well, so he shelves it.
“And that’s…” he continues to tug, trying to pull the answer from Sebastian.

“It’s complicated,” Sebastian answers, making his fingers into air quotes when he says it so that Kurt knows that’s his status and not an ironic, smartass reply. “Why? What’s yours?”

Kurt grins, toying coyly with his phone in his hands.

“Well,” he starts with a cocky grin on his face to rival Julian’s, “as of five minutes ago, it says in a relationship with Sebastian Smythe.”

Sebastian’s face goes completely blank at first, and then a blush starts on his cheeks as he laughs with disbelief.

“You’re shitting me!” Sebastian reaches out for Kurt’s phone, which Kurt hands over, flicking the screen lock and hitting the blue Facebook icon before he does.

“Not shitting you,” Kurt says, “except it’s not all that convincing seeing as you don’t follow me.”

“Well, you don’t follow me, either…” Sebastian says, but without a hint of sarcasm, “or at least, you didn’t until five minutes ago.”

“So, maybe you should fix that?” Kurt suggests, folding his hands beneath his chin and batting his eyelashes innocently.

The suggestion takes a moment to register as Sebastian scrolls through a few of Kurt’s recent entries to his timeline.

“Oh…right. Hold on.” Sebastian hands Kurt back his phone and pulls out his own, bringing up his Facebook account. The first alert that comes up has Sebastian biting his lip, the flush to his cheeks becoming a shade darker. “You sent me a friend request.”

“Yeah, well,” Kurt says, leaning his head against Sebastian’s shoulder, “I wanted to make it easy for you.”

Kurt doesn’t look over Sebastian’s shoulder as he changes his relationship status, accepts Kurt’s friend request, then scrolls through his new timeline to see the inclusion of updates from Kurt’s timeline.

“Done,” he says. “I see you took the liberty of uploading the pictures you took today.”

“Yup,” Kurt says, feeling explicitly smug, his face so tight from smiling that his cheeks begin to cramp.

“Love defies gravity?” Sebastian questions quietly, but it’s not a question he’s looking for Kurt to answer. He makes a slight noise, a breathless laugh…a happy laugh.

“Yup,” Kurt says, kissing Sebastian’s arm gently.

He feels Sebastian’s breathing stutter.

“When did you take this?”

“Hmm?” Kurt raises his head to look at the phone faced his way. Kurt swallows hard when he sees the picture filling the screen. Sebastian’s more expensive phone shows the photograph at a higher definition than Kurt’s phone does, displaying with sharper clarity every line, every freckle on Sebastian’s skin, every muscle of his back – his exposed back while he slept.
It’s the picture from this morning, the one he took of a sleeping Sebastian in secret. Kurt’s mind sweeps through the events from earlier. How could that picture have uploaded? He didn’t upload it? He took the picture, he was staring at it when he grabbed his coffee cup to go outside, he put the phone under his chin to open the porch door…

*Fuck!*

That must have done it. Holding it beneath his chin, he must have uploaded it somehow by accident and…

*Fuuuuuuck!!!*

“Oh…” Kurt chokes, looking from Sebastian’s hard to interpret expression to the picture on the screen, his cheeks flaming red, “I’m so sorry. I’ll take it down. I ---”

Kurt sees Sebastian toss his phone aside, and that’s the last thing he sees before Sebastian’s lips collide with his, hands secure on his back, lifting his body up and carrying him to the head of the bed. Kurt’s breath leaves him, but it’s replaced by Sebastian’s. He breathes in as Sebastian breathes out, and Kurt’s mind nearly leaves him, floating along above him on an incredible high.

“So, I take it you’re not upset?” Kurt giggles as Sebastian’s mouth leaves his lips to find a spot on Kurt’s neck to make his mark.

“Upset?” Sebastian laughs. “Why in the fucking hell would I be upset?” Sebastian raises his head from the indigo bruise he’s perfecting to look Kurt in the face. “You just told your whole world, every friend you have, that not only are we together…”

Sebastian leaves the sentence open-ended, keeping his eyes locked on Kurt’s, trying to insinuate with his silence the *more* that should follow the end of that statement.

Kurt’s eyes open wide when he gets it, so wide that a single sneeze might shoot them straight out of their sockets, and Sebastian, awaiting Kurt’s reaction, starts to chuckle with the onset of nerves.

With that one photograph, Kurt had announced to his closest friends as well as some people he didn’t know that well - all 221 members of the *Twilight Support Group and General Crying over Team Jacob* Facebook group, some miscellaneous fans of his fanfic, the open forum for National Show Choir Champions which included Vocal Adrenaline, a few NYADA blogs, and everyone else that he’s forgetting as his brain starts to shut down – that not only are he and Sebastian exclusive, but at the very least, they’ve been *intimate*.

“Kurt…” Sebastian says when he notices Kurt’s lower lip tremble, notices the way his eyes don’t seem to stop getting bigger and bigger. “Kurt…it’s okay. You can take the picture down. I won’t be offended.”

Kurt’s eyes snap back into focus. They see a boy in front of him struggling with his own feelings of minor rejection to soothe Kurt during this meltdown…

…a meltdown over what he assumes Kurt perceives as a colossal mistake.

Kurt sees Sebastian’s face fill his vision, feels the shadow of Sebastian’s lips still kissing his, and he grins, repeating a sentiment of Sebastian’s from earlier that appropriately fits the way Kurt feels about taking that gorgeous photograph down.

“Not a chance,” he says.
Kurt feels Sebastian’s smile on his lips, having only glimpsed it for a second before Sebastian kisses him again.

“I love you,” Sebastian mouths. The words aren’t spoken, but Kurt can feel them, like Sebastian’s lips tattooing them into his skin transmits them straight to Kurt’s brain. Kurt leans back against the pillows and tugs at Sebastian’s shoulder, rolling his boyfriend onto his body on the bed.

“But, I’ll wrinkle your mmph…”

Kurt grabs the back of Sebastian’s head and pulls him down onto his body, craning his neck to meet Sebastian’s mouth, muffling the last part of his sentence. Kurt is touched by his boyfriend’s concern but gives Sebastian permission to put his full weight on top of him.

“Shhh,” Kurt hushes him, lightly petting Sebastian’s hair, “just don’t…don’t say it out loud.”

Sebastian laughs with his lips pressed to Kurt’s neck, fingers unbuttoning Kurt’s shirt, and Kurt wipes Sebastian’s comment from his mind.

If he couldn’t remember to hang up his clothes when he got there, Sebastian lying on top of him is not going to matter, not when he’s doing that thing with his tongue on the hollow of Kurt’s throat that makes every last drop of blood in his head gather in other places.

Sebastian has Kurt’s shirt completely unbuttoned and his t-shirt untucked and pushed up to his collarbone, his mouth moving down his chest, his hand palming over his cock, fingerling along the outline of it over his slacks. He traces circles over the head with his index finger and Kurt’s eyes roll to the back of his skull, the words *God damn* hitting the air in small gasps.

“God damn is right,” a smooth voice invades their privacy, yet again, from the doorway – the door hanging wide open since both Sebastian and Kurt had conveniently forgotten that Julian was in the house. He leans with his shoulder against the jamb, his arms over his chest, legs crossed at the ankles. He leers at them, but at Kurt especially, and Sebastian positions himself protectively between his brother’s inappropriate gaze and Kurt’s half-dressed and aroused body. “But really boys, you’re not ready yet?” Julian asks, clapping his hands obnoxiously to hurry them along. “Let’s get going. We’re losing daylight.”

Cackling like a hyena, Julian barely makes it out of the doorway before two pillows fly through the air toward his face.
Chapter 26D

Chapter Notes

Yes, there is one more part after this (26E) that's about 7k words as well, and I'm sorry it's being split up. It's been a long couple of days xD If you want to know the full story, message me, otherwise, on with the show!

Sebastian opts not to change, attached to the outfit he’s currently wearing even if he won’t say why. He doesn’t want to admit in front of Julian that it’s because his no longer wrinkle-free polo and dark wash jeans still smell like Kurt, and not just Kurt’s shampoo or his body lotion, but him. His clothes carry the invisible prints of Kurt’s hands on them, as well as a few kisses that went astray and latched onto his collar as they rushed into the house, stumbling over hands and feet to get to Sebastian’s bed. It’s a personal confession, and he keeps it private for the time being, figuring he’ll slip the information into Kurt’s ear at some point during the evening. That way Kurt will know how much Sebastian adores wearing him on his body, close to his skin.

But Kurt feels too rumpled in his outfit to be seen by society in general. They can get away with Sebastian being mildly creased, but paired with Kurt looking wrecked the way he does screams *yup, we were getting it on not five-minutes ago.*

*Or trying to,* Kurt amends his thoughts with a frown.

*Damn fucking Julian.*

Determined to redeem his night from this setback, Kurt chooses one of his rejected clothing options from the morning, changing into a pair of feloniously tight fitting charcoal grey jeans and a navy blue button down shirt with short sleeves. He grabs the only scarf he brought with him, tying it in an elaborate knot around his neck to distract from the mark Sebastian made. It’s not as impressive as the last hickey he left Kurt with, and as much as Kurt has become fond of Sebastian’s territorial markings, it detracts from his outfit.

Kurt checks himself multiple times, adjusting his scarf here, tucking a hair back into his coif there, smiling at his own reflected profile and imagining what Sebastian’s reaction will be when he walks out into the living room.

Considering Kurt’s suspicions on Sebastian’s preferences regarding body parts, Kurt figures this outfit will appeal to his boyfriend’s tastes just fine. In fact, Kurt realizes as he stares at the way this particular pair of pants shamelessly hugs his rear, had he worn these jeans earlier in the day, there’s a chance Sebastian might have chosen to stay at the beach house and make love after all.

But then Kurt would have missed out on that magical moment at 2,000 feet. Nothing in the world could make up for that.

Kurt takes a breath in and lets it out slowly.

He wants Sebastian. He wants to give all of himself to Sebastian. He wants tonight to be the night.
Kurt takes another breath, holding it for a moment, taking his time to exhale.

*Let whatever happens happen.*

*Well, let the fun begin,* he thinks, hands on hips, sweeping aside thoughts of what might have been (*damn fucking Julian*) and letting himself get psyched about the night ahead.

Karaoke!

Karaoke and slumber parties - two of his favorite, guiltiest pleasures.

His mind rewinds to a night about seven months ago when he was sitting on Rachel’s bed, eating popcorn and pizza, watching a *Twilight* marathon with Rachel and Mercedes, talking about Glee club, fashion, and relationships, and his heart hiccups.

God, he misses his girls. He misses all of his friends, scattered the country over. He even misses Rachel Berry, despite her acting like a pain in the ass (though the jury is out on exactly *how much* he misses her). He’s only been on vacation a few days, but that’s still longer than he’s gone without Skyping or texting anyone.

He glances down at his phone, at the message alert light blinking again.

Who is he kidding? It never stopped blinking, except now he figures that the messages waiting for him are in response to the changes to his Facebook account, to the pictures and his relationship status.

*In a relationship with Sebastian Smythe.*

If anyone had told Kurt months ago that he would be in a relationship with Sebastian Smythe that didn’t involve a retaliatory Slushie to the face, he would have laughed himself hoarse. Without the pictures on his timeline to prove the authenticity of their relationship, his friends would most likely wonder what Sebastian has on him - what recorded private conversation or photoshopped pictures he’s holding over Kurt’s head - to force him to comply. They wouldn’t know that this is a different Sebastian Smythe that he’s dating – a Sebastian that Kurt is confident most people don’t know exists.

A Sebastian who showers him with affection.

A Sebastian who treats Kurt the way he deserves to be treated.

A Sebastian who loves him.

A Sebastian who is waiting for him in the living room to get the evening started.

Kurt pockets his phone, blinking light and all (as best he can considering the tight fit of his jeans) and walks out of Sebastian’s bedroom. He expects Sebastian and Julian to be talking things out, or maybe having it out, grappling on the floor, trading punches and laughs like they did that night when they both crashed his house, but the two brothers seem distant - Julian sitting on the sofa, texting furiously on his phone, a dopey but devilishly handsome smile on his lips, while Sebastian paces the floor like he’s waiting on news of a sick relative. Kurt hangs back to take in the scene, observing how they both look uncomfortably at odds in the room - how in this large space they seem crammed too close together and are going to great lengths to overlook the other’s presence. Kurt takes a step and both Smythe brothers look up. They spot Kurt at the same time, and two very different smiles greet his entrance.
Sebastian smiles at Kurt like he’s a prince walking straight out of the pages of a modern day fairytale.

Julian smiles at Kurt like he’s an appetizer.

“My, my, my,” Julian says, standing slowly and looking Kurt over, “you look fifty shades of fabulous in those grey jeans.”

“I appreciate the compliment,” Kurt says, walking straight over to Sebastian and curling up beneath his boyfriend’s arm, “but I’m not sure that I can forgive you the vile reference.”

“Just being topical,” Julian says with a shrug, his playful leer not dimming a degree.

“You mean like a rash?” Kurt comes back quickly. Sebastian kisses Kurt on the top of his head, snickering into his hair.

Julian’s grin becomes wolfish when he sets his sights on Sebastian.

“There’s the feisty Kurt we all know and love,” Julian says, eyes trained above Kurt’s head, at the boy behind him glaring daggers at Julian. Kurt feels trapped in the middle. He can’t help feeling that these two have taken a couple of steps backward when they shouldn’t have. He could be overreacting. This could be just fun and games for the two of them – more fun for Julian than Sebastian, but still.

Then again, it’s all fun and games…until it isn’t.

“Can we head out now and get this over with?” Sebastian groans, pulling Kurt in the direction of the front door. “Some of us have plans this evening that don’t include overbearing older brothers.”

*Plans for this evening.* Kurt catches those words, though it wasn’t that difficult. Sebastian lobbed it out in the open. *Plans that don’t include Julian.*

If Kurt could have cheered without being too conspicuous, he would have.

“Are you sure about that?” Julian asks with a wink and a click of his tongue, and before Kurt has time to come up with a retort, he’s practically carried out the door.

They walk down the steps to the carport, with Julian offering Kurt a hand and Kurt immediately taking Sebastian’s. Julian watches them closely. It feels like back at the beginning of his and Sebastian’s *relationship*, when Julian seemed to keep his eyes on Kurt, flirting with him and lying in wait to see what Sebastian’s reaction would be.

When they make it to the carport, Kurt has to laugh when he sees how close to Julian’s Jag Sebastian’s Mustang is parked. Had they gone out the passenger door instead of the driver’s, they would have scratched Julian’s paint. It’s a Jag, for Christ’s sake. How in the world did they miss it?

Sebastian ushers Kurt to the passenger side of his Mustang, with Julian stepping back on the way to his car to let them through.

“Where are we eating tonight?” Kurt asks, watching Sebastian open the door for him.

“We’re going to Saint Jacques,” Julian says without consulting Sebastian, even though he made mention that dinner was on his younger brother. “You’ll love it, Kurt. You can order in French.”
Saint Jacques is an unassuming and quaint little restaurant – quiet, reserved, with a policy against allowing children under the age of eight to eat there, which Kurt appreciates since he doesn’t need the distraction of a tired four-year-old smacking their silverware against their water glass to disturb his meal. It’s a restaurant the Smythes know well and where they also happen to be known. The maître d’ gushes when he sees Sebastian and Julian, and even though there are three other couples already waiting ahead of them, the straight-laced man in his crisp black suit and vague provincial accent seats them at what he pronounces to be his finest table. The boys are offered a wine selection right off the bat, no i.d.’s required. Sebastian gives the wine list a once over and orders a bottle of 1955 Cappellano Barolo.

Kurt tries not to gag when his eyes graze the list as it’s passed back to the waiter beneath his nose and he notices Sebastian’s selection is $500 a bottle.

“Do you mind?” Sebastian asks an extremely pale Kurt as the waiter hands them each a menu. “I think you’ll like it.”

Kurt’s cheeks warm at Sebastian’s impeccable manners. He’s trying to impress Kurt, not that he has to try, but Kurt appreciates the effort.

Julian doesn’t look at the menu, ordering the *tartare aller-retour*. Sebastian makes a disgusted noise. Kurt has never seen a true steak tartare, but he figures it can’t be that bad. Sebastian has to be exaggerating, needing to find something else to grouse about as far as his brother is concerned.

When it arrives at the table, Kurt wants to be ill.

“Ugh,” he groans from the depths of his sour stomach, watching Julian cut into his dinner, which bleeds profusely onto its white plate, looking more like a necropsy than a dish suitable for human consumption. “How can you eat that?”

“I think I heard it moo,” Sebastian adds from behind the rim of his wine glass, only loud enough for Kurt to hear.

“Meat this rare feeds the blood,” Julian answers, making another cut, smirking when Kurt shakes his head. “It’s also said to increase longevity and praised for its ability to *enhance* the libido.”

Sebastian rolls his eyes so hard Kurt thinks he can hear his optic nerves snap.

“Is that before or after the parasitic worms hatch and set in?” Kurt grumbles, looking down at his own nicoise and pushing it distastefully aside.

“Oh, Kurt,” Julian says with a pout, “you appreciate culture so much more than most people your age. I thought for sure you would have a taste for such a delicacy.”

“Yeah, well, forgive me for liking my food *cooked*,” Kurt says.

“Says the boy who’s eating a *salad*,” Julian replies.

It’s with a macabre fascination that Kurt continues to watch Julian daintily pick up tine-fuls of rawish meat (it’s seared somewhat on one side, like that makes much of a difference) and drop it on his tongue, pulling the fork from his mouth between his lips slowly, the suggestion of the gesture not lost on Kurt or Sebastian, making Sebastian throw his napkin down in his lap.

“Is that really necessary?” he asks, refilling his glass from the bottle on the table.

To his credit, Julian looks shocked and a little bit guilty – a combination Kurt has seen on Julian’s
face before with regard to his brother.

“Sebastian, I’m just teasing,” Julian says. “You know that I’m not serious.”

“Sure,” Sebastian says, occupied with swirling his wine in his glass, “and what makes this time any different?”

“Because Kurt’s special, isn’t he?” Julian answers without needing to think on it first, sneaking a look at Kurt and then back at Sebastian. “He makes you happy, and I’m not going to take that away from you.”

Sebastian fiddles some more with his wine, taking a sip that passes over his tongue without him tasting it.

“I promise,” Julian persists in response to Sebastian’s unspoken accusation.

Sebastian doesn’t respond. Kurt sees that same contempt manifest that reared its head at the club when Sebastian thought Julian was trying to steal Kurt (fake boyfriend Kurt) away. At the time, a mentally exhausted Sebastian backed down, and Liv intervened to an extent, wrapping an arm around Julian’s waist, keeping him from doing more damage.

Right now, Kurt feels exactly how he imagines Liv must have felt. There’s something here he wants to fix, but it’s like trying to diagnose a stalled car in the dark.

How can you start to repair something when you can’t see for sure what’s broken?

“I’m not here to step on anyone’s toes,” Julian says. Sebastian turns his face away, but Julian catches his look of disbelief. “I swear I’m not,” he insists. He sets his fork down and folds his hands on the table, looking at both boys and trying to appear as repentant as possible. “Sebastian… Kurt…I apologize.”

Kurt smiles at Julian’s attempt to broker peace, an attempt that seems sincere on all accounts to Kurt, but Sebastian doesn’t appear entirely persuaded. He turns back to his partially eaten salmon filet, picking it apart with his fork and shredding it into slivers that dissolve into the white sauce surrounding it. The silence from the beach house returns. They can’t seem to shake it. Kurt figures they could drive all the way to California and it would follow them, but he refuses to let it taint any more of their evening.

“So, when can we expect to see Cooper?” Kurt asks, changing the subject. He scoots his chair closer to Sebastian, putting a hand on his knee and resting his forehead on his shoulder, hoping that the closer proximity might help Sebastian unwind from the knot he’s tied in.

He also hopes that the mention of Cooper might be the trigger Julian needs to tone down the flirting.

“We talked it over,” Julian starts, the tone of his voice shifting, excited at the mention of his plans but gun-shy as well. Kurt can see in Julian’s flickering blue gaze how many times he’s been bitten raw by this on-again/off-again romance. “He has a few loose ends to wrap up in Ohio, but he’s planning on flying out next week…once we got your okay, that is.”

Julian winks again, but this time it’s family friendly.

“Fly?” Kurt asks, brushing a stray bang haughtily out of his face. “Boo. He should be forced to make the drive like the rest of us - be properly initiated into the whole Ohio to North Carolina experience.”
“I agree,” Julian says, doing his part to keep the conversation cordial, “but this way we can make the sixteen hour drive back to Ohio together.”

Sebastian’s head pops up, his eyelids narrowing as he peers at his brother suspiciously.

“It doesn’t take sixteen hours to get to Ohio from North Carolina,” he says. “Even if you factor in rest stops and whatnot.”

“It will when we do it,” Julian replies, winking at Kurt over another grotesque forkful of his dinner.

Julian leads the way in his Jag when they leave the restaurant and head for the karaoke bar, but Sebastian seems to know where it is well enough. The first thing that Kurt thinks when they walk through the door is that this bar is nothing like Scandals. It’s even pretty far removed from that gay bar Sebastian took him to in Columbus. This bar – The Brickhouse (the tagline beneath their name on the front of the building reading Featuring the musically inclined, not necessarily the musically gifted) - caters to the townies, but its target audience is the tourist trade, denoted by its campy seaside décor, its plethora of information on North Carolina and its surrounding must do’s, and the pennants and jerseys hung on the walls in praise of local sports teams. A counter by the front door sells dime-store souvenirs with the name The Brickhouse and North Carolina prominently displayed in white, block letters.

It’s tacky and it’s garish, and it offends Kurt on principle, but the surprising aspect of this tourist trap has to be how very unlike Sebastian or Julian it seems.

“How the heck did you guys ever end up in a place like this?” Kurt asks, looking from the neon lightbulbs bent into the shapes of guitars and keyboards, to the disco ball hanging in the karaoke lounge, the mirrored orb spinning, its reflective surface tossing fluorescent colors on the walls.

“One summer a couple of years ago, we got seriously rained out,” Sebastian explains, guiding Kurt to the lounge area with a hand to his lower back. “We were stuck in the house for about a week before we started to go ape shit.”

“Liv discovered this place, found out they were having a karaoke competition, and forced us to go,” Julian fills in.

“Did you guys compete?” Kurt asks, intrigued by the thought of the Smythe siblings performing like the Von Trapp Family Singers in some hokey singing competition.

“Yeah,” Sebastian answers with a laugh. “Yeah, we did.”

Kurt waits for the specifics, ready to be regaled with the story, but Sebastian just brings him over to the padded bar and sets him on a stool. Julian takes the seat opposite, keeping Kurt sandwiched in the middle.

“So…what happened?” Kurt asks with a whine, tired of pumping people for information.

Sebastian shoots a worried look at Julian, who adverts his eyes toward the crowd.

“We don’t talk about it,” Sebastian says, and Julian quickly agrees.

“Yup,” he says. “Not a word. Taking it to our graves.”
Kurt looks at Sebastian, then at Julian, both brothers keeping tight lipped over whatever catastrophe happened within these walls years ago. He sighs at their stubbornness, making a mental note to ask Olivia about it first chance he gets.

“Who’s going first?” Julian asks, his eyes firmly glued to Sebastian’s face, casually giving him a hint. Sebastian rolls his eyes, but turns to Kurt, tapping him lightly on the ass.

“I guess that means me,” he says. “Go pick me out something to sing, babe?”

“Sure,” Kurt says, hopping off his bar stool, getting the impression that the two brothers are getting rid of him for some reason. “But you realize that this is a dangerous decision to put into my hands.”

“Whatever,” Sebastian says, flashing Kurt one of his signature smiles. “Just make it something good.”

“Suuuuure I will,” Kurt teases, winking ostentatiously.

“You’d better,” Sebastian calls after him. “And if you pick something by Katy Perry, you’re walking back to Ohio.”

Kurt spins on his heel. Sebastian looks at him, a snarky tilt curling his lips, and Kurt starts to feel better about the situation between him and Julian.

Everything is fine as long as Sebastian can act like his old self again.

“Touchy,” Kurt huffs, walking toward a table in the center of the lounge where the book of karaoke songs sits open.

Kurt flips through the album, browsing the titles while side-eying Sebastian and Julian. He sees Sebastian watch him. When he thinks Kurt isn’t looking, he leans in to Julian and says something into his ear. He plays spy for a couple of minutes, but Kurt’s full attention returns to the book when he spots the name of a song he saw while perusing the playlists on Sebastian’s iPhone. It stuck out as unusual considering the music Sebastian gravitates to, so for Kurt’s purposes, it’s perfect. Kurt knows the song. He thinks it’ll fit Sebastian’s voice to a T, and if it doesn’t…well, it serves him right for threatening to make Kurt walk.

Kurt’s eyes dart away and he catches the two brothers embroiled in conversation, possibly an argument; it’s hard to tell with those two. Sebastian talks animatedly, gesturing with his hands, frustration set in the line of his mouth while Julian leans back against the edge of the bar and watches his brother, smirking wider and wider the longer he rants. Evoking no reaction other than Julian’s entertained expression, Sebastian stops in the middle of his sentence; Kurt can tell in the way Sebastian’s mouth hangs open a second before he clamps it shut. Sebastian sighs, gaze dropping to his shoes, and says something that makes Julian’s eyes snap right to Kurt. He laughs, slapping a palm to his forehead. When Kurt looks up to meet his gaze, Julian’s ice-blue eyes soften. Julian nods and Sebastian smiles, patting his brother on the back. Julian hugs him, but his eyes drift back to Kurt.

Watching them together, mending fences, Kurt burns with curiosity. He finishes filling out his song selection card and turns it in. He walks back to the bar, reaching it as the brothers break from their embrace.

“Hey guys,” Kurt says, stepping between them to reclaim his bar stool. “What did I miss?”

“Nothing,” Julian says, leaning back against the bar, “just planning all the pranks we’re going to pull on Liv when she gets out here.”
“Yeah, we’ll fill you in later, babe,” Sebastian says, putting an arm around Kurt’s shoulder. It feels less territorial this time around; Kurt relaxes into it.

“What makes you think I’m going to be on your side in this?” Kurt asks. “If I’m on anyone’s team, it’s going to be Liv’s when she gets your sorry asses back.”

“That’s a smart man you’ve got there, Sebby,” Julian remarks with a hint of admiration.

Sebastian pulls Kurt closer, kissing him on a sensitive spot below his right ear.

“Traitor,” Sebastian whispers, nibbling on his earlobe.

“Jane Fonda was a traitor,” Kurt says, bending his neck to entice Sebastian, “so I think I’m in pretty good company.”

Three other patrons sing before Sebastian does - an unshaven, scruffy-looking older man with a collection of thin braids knotting up his bushy beard who does a decent job singing Willie Nelson’s *Always On My Mind*; a young, perky, petite brunette waitress that Kurt assumes is a ringer sent on stage by management to encourage other people to get up and sing considering her exceptional vocal chops performs The Beatles’ *Eight Days a Week* (she reminds him of Rachel, and for a split second, the urge to call her almost wins out over his need to stay disconnected a little while longer); and a drunk blond man sings a garbled rendition of Springsteen’s *Born to Run*. He makes it to the first refrain before covering his mouth with his hand and racing to the bathroom. Nervous customers part in front of him as he swerves left and right, hitting one table with his hip, overturning a drink, then hitting another table with his thigh, and finally bolting from the lounge. Kurt hears him vomit loudly a few seconds later, not sure the man made it to the bathrooms first.

“Nice,” Kurt says, and Sebastian bursts out laughing, burying his head in Kurt’s neck.

This is a new thing – Sebastian nuzzling his nose in Kurt’s hair or hiding in the crook of Kurt’s neck. Kurt likes this – these small, familiar touches that he knows belong only to him. They’ve grown in number to include the arm forever wrapped around his waist, the hand at his lower back, the lips that kiss the nape of his neck gently, chastely.

Sebastian’s laughter against his throat turns into a soft trail of kisses, cut short when the announcer behind the bar calls Sebastian’s name.

“O-kay,” the disembodied voice chuckles through the speakers surrounding the room, “next victim up on stage…Sebastian. Sebastian…Smith?...Smy-the. Sebastian Smy-the.”

Kurt glares the man’s way when he mangles Sebastian’s last name, but the announcer apparently does double-duty as the bartender, and he goes back to mixing drinks without seeing the withering power of Kurt’s piercing glare.

But Sebastian sees, and he rounds into Kurt’s line of sight to kiss him.

“Thanks, sweetheart,” he says, “for defending the sanctity of my lineage.”

“Anytime,” Kurt says, pecking Sebastian on the lips. Sebastian takes Kurt’s hand and Kurt follows as Sebastian heads for the stage, commandeering a table closer to the front. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone, propping it upright against a tumbler left on the table, eager to record this performance for posterity…and maybe upload it for some YouTube views.

Sebastian walks on stage to the enthusiastic hooting and hollering of those people still watching the karaoke singers (interest seeming to have waned a bit after blond Springsteen guy threw up), which
include a couple of tables full of bubbly young women (from a sorority judging by their matching hot pink sweaters emblazoned with Greek symbols), some random drunk people, a few date night couples necking in booths situated in the shadowy areas of the room, and of course, Kurt, kicking his feet under his table, waiting for Sebastian to sing.

The flat-screen on the wall behind Sebastian lights up with the title of Kurt’s chosen song – *Kiss Me When I’m Down* by Gary Allan. Sebastian reads the title. He scrunches his nose and tilts his head.

“Country-western, babe?” Sebastian grimaces, addressing Kurt in the audience.

“Hey, it was on your iPhone,” Kurt calls back, and Sebastian, not able to debate the truth of those words, simply shrugs.

“Yeah, well, that was a dark time,” he says, raising his hands to hold the microphone in its cradle as the music starts. Sebastian takes a breath and Kurt subconsciously takes that same breath with him. Someday he’d need to find a way for them to sing together. He would love to hear how they sound harmonizing to a romantic ballad - something emotional, full of love and angst, maybe by John Legend or Ron Pope.

The people in the bar aren’t loud, but their voices rise as conversations continue, oblivious to the boy on stage preparing to sing. Kurt wants to scold them, tell them to quiet down, but he doesn’t need to. The first words out of Sebastian’s mouth weave their magic, not just on Kurt but on everyone, and voices around the room quiet down.

“It's been a year since last weekend when you swung by with an old friend,  
Carried out our future box by box.  
Stack of mail a tube of toothpaste,  
An empty Zeppelin three cd case,  
Still a few things here that you forgot.  
They're just a bad excuse,  
Just something I can use  
To call you…”

Sebastian doesn’t play to the audience when he sings, regardless of the whistling and the cheering, heedless of the shouts of, “Whoo, baby!” from a tipsy bleach blonde woman at a table one over from Kurt’s. Sebastian doesn’t roll his eyes, doesn’t seem to notice that they exist. He sings only to Kurt, and when Sebastian looks at him, it feels the way it should. It feels like every word out of Sebastian’s mouth belongs to him, every note is Kurt’s own; they’re sung for him. Sebastian’s eyes see no one else. This incredible boy…

No, not a boy - a man. Sebastian is a man and Kurt is going to start thinking of him that way…

This incredible man belongs with him.

No one else is there with them; there’s not a single other person in the bar. Kurt and Sebastian are together alone and Sebastian is singing to him, which is why the presence of a voice buzzing in Kurt’s ears is unexpected and extremely irritating.

“I’ve lost any chance I ever had with you - haven’t I, gorgeous?”

Kurt smiles, but not in response to the question. He sees Sebastian, hears only Sebastian, and he doesn’t catch the whole question.
“Wh---what?” he mumbles, barely an answer. It’s jumbled and gets lost in the verbal static of a bartender filling orders, two people at the table next to them laughing too loudly, the impatient drumming of fingers on wood.

Frankly, Kurt doesn’t care.

Sebastian is singing.

“Come on over,
Drink my wine,
Waste my candles,
Waste my time.
Tell me lies I won’t believe,
Just don’t wake me when you leave.
Come on over,
Kick me to the ground,
Kiss me when I’m down…”

There’s a low chuckle, soft and sad, but happy, too. The voice that asked the question tries to get Kurt’s attention again.

“And what about Bl---"

The sentence cuts off, or something drowns it, or Kurt tunes it out. He hisses a “shush”, waves his hand by his ear, and the chuckle returns a final time.

But then Kurt remembers Julian is there with them, and that voice might have sounded like him…if Kurt had actually been paying attention.

Okay, Kurt is being rude, but he can’t help it. Julian’s voice isn’t the one he wants to hear.

“The bar you’re in sounds like it’s crowded,
People laughin’ people shouting.
Where you gonna go at closing time?
Just pay your tab,
And I’ll pay your cab
If you want to…”

But Kurt should answer. He goes over Julian’s last question in his head.

“And what about…”

Julian was asking about someone.

“What about who?” Kurt asks, shifting his gaze to the side where Julian had been whispering in his ear, but the seat beside him is empty.

Julian is gone.

“Come on over,
Drink my wine,
Waste my candles,
Waste my time.
Tell me lies I won’t believe,
Just don’t wake me when you leave.
Come on over,  
Kick me to the ground,  
Kiss me when I'm down…”

A brief instrumental plays, and Sebastian smiles through the pause, becoming shy when a light round of applause travels the room. Kurt has seen Sebastian perform before – on stage with *The Warblers* – but this performance has none of the cocky veneer that those other ones had, and no ambitious dance moves to take away from the beauty of his voice, which makes this Kurt’s favorite performance.

“*Just an hour or two,*  
Is better than none of you.  
I miss you…”

Sebastian winks at Kurt, and the women around him clap and cheer until the both of them blush, but Kurt doesn’t duck his head away.

“*Come on over,*  
Drink my wine ,  
Waste my candles,  
Waste my time.  
Tell me lies I won't believe,  
Just don't wake me when you leave.  
*Come on over,*  
*Kick me to the ground,*  
*Kiss me when I'm down,*  
*Kiss me when I'm down…”*

The music fades and a louder round of applause erupts, but Kurt doesn’t clap. He doesn’t move as Sebastian walks towards him. He can’t because for a moment he is star-struck. Sebastian watches Kurt’s smile, his eyes, his face brighten when he twirls a chair around and straddles it.

“*Michael,*” the announcer calls out over the crowd still clapping for Sebastian, the bubbly sorority girls calling for an encore. “*Michael Drew, please come on up. Fifteen minutes of fame awaits you.*”

“How was that?” Sebastian asks, his cheeks flushed and a touch out-of-breath.

“That was…amazing,” Kurt says, reaching out to hold Sebastian’s hand. “You have a wonderful voice.”

Sebastian curls his lips over his teeth and bites down to keep from smiling too hard.

“Are you going to keep singing in college?”

“I might,” Sebastian says, looking at their hands together. Sebastian spreads his fingers to lace Kurt’s through. “I haven’t decided yet. I haven’t really thought about it.”

“Well, you should,” Kurt says, astonished that it would be a question that could go unanswered. Of course Sebastian should continue singing. A thousand times yes.

“Really?” Sebastian laughs in a self-deprecating way, standing from his seat and tugging on Kurt’s hand. “I didn’t think you felt so strongly about it.”

“I do,” Kurt says, absentmindedly picking up his phone and stopping the recording. “I can’t be the
only fabulous one in this relationship. You have to pull your own weight.”

“I thought I was doing just fine.” Sebastian walks away backward through the crowd as the man Kurt concludes must be Michael hops up on stage and takes Sebastian’s place.

“Where are we going?” Kurt asks as they cut through the tables. People tap Sebastian on the arm as they pass, complimenting him on his voice. Some even ask him if he sings professionally. Sebastian is polite, giving everyone short, to-the-point answers, but he keeps his eyes on Kurt’s face, except for when he glances at their clasped hands. They continue walking until they reach an area at the back of the room where other couples are dancing, swaying to the rhythm of whatever song is being sung. Kurt wouldn’t have seen this small square of dance floor from where he sat, so Sebastian must have seen it from stage.

“Dance with me?” Sebastian asks, not really giving Kurt the chance to answer, wrapping his arms around Kurt’s waist as the music begins, which is alright with Kurt since he wasn’t planning on saying no.

The man on stage sings, his voice scratchy with rough edges where Sebastian’s voice had been smooth as silk, but it’s easy for Kurt to put this man (and his off-key singing) out of his mind where only thoughts of Sebastian belong.

Sebastian looks at Kurt while they dance, reading the expression on his face with a glimmer in his eyes that Kurt can’t place. He’s going to question Sebastian about it when Sebastian asks, “Will you do something for me?”

“Hmmm, what?” Kurt asks, adrift in Sebastian’s arms, feeling lazy from the music and drunk from Sebastian’s body against his, the sweet smell of that rosy wine from dinner a mirage on Sebastian’s warm breath.

“Talk to me,” Sebastian whispers, nosing up and down Kurt’s neck, “the way you did at the party…playing truth or dare. Tell me that you want me. Tell me how you want me…”

Kurt remembers the things he said, remembers the alcohol-fueled confessions he made, in front of witnesses, no less. But those tawdry comments don’t seem to fit right now. Now is for something different, for fantasies that speak to the truth in Kurt’s heart.

“I want you to make love to me, Sebastian,” Kurt says, trailing a hand over Sebastian’s shoulder, watching his fingers slide over the deep green fabric. “I want to feel you touch me, and not just your hands, but your skin against my skin down the length of your body.” Kurt runs his fingers up Sebastian’s cheek and into his hair. “I want your mouth on me…”

Sebastian’s breath hitches, his grip on Kurt’s waist tightening, pressing his arousal into Kurt’s hip, and Kurt almost forgets to keep talking.

“I want you to mark me up, Sebastian,” Kurt continues with a tremor in his voice, “and I want to leave you with a few marks, too. This way the Maxes and the Jedidiahs…” Kurt pauses when Sebastian snickers, sharing the memory of that time at the club when Kurt showed up and good with one kiss Junior-fucking-Manager Jeremiah, formerly of the GAP. Kurt catches Sebastian’s eyes as his laughter cools.

“…and the Blaines of the world that they can’t take us apart. They can’t take pieces of us anymore.”

Sebastian nods, letting his head fall forward, their foreheads resting together.
“Is that…is that all?” he asks.

“No,” Kurt says, breathing in, filling his head with the scent of strawberry and cinnamon from the wine along with pepper and anise from Sebastian’s cologne.

It’s a heady concoction. Kurt inhales it twice to get his fill of it.

“I want to open up for you, Bas. I want to feel you inside me. I want to be so full of you that I don’t know the difference between your skin and mine, your lips and mine.” Kurt’s fingers curl into Sebastian’s hair and anchor themselves there. “I want to end where you begin.”

Sebastian holds Kurt, looks at him, lets himself get caught up in only him, and Kurt feels safe in Sebastian’s arms. Sebastian knows who he is and he knows what he wants. He doesn’t care who sees them together; he’s not worried that someone will start something. Maybe it’s easier here than in Ohio, but that’s not the most fantastic part about it.

Together like this, they feel like a couple.

It feels wonderfully normal.

“So many times,” Sebastian says, talking into Kurt’s hair, speaking to him in a sort of round-about way, “I saw you with…” He takes a breath and swallows. It seems that Sebastian also made a vow not to mention the-boy-who-will-not-be-named. “I saw the way you looked at him, the way you guys looked at each other, and I hated it…” Sebastian pauses, and Kurt doesn’t know why, but that comment offends him. Sebastian had admitted early on that he didn’t go after Blaine because he didn’t seem to be interested in getting into Blaine’s pants and destroying what Kurt had…not that that matters now, but a ghost of that resentment haunts him.

“I hated it,” Sebastian starts again, “because I wanted someone to look at me that way.”

Kurt peeks up at Sebastian through watery eyes and long lashes.

“How about the way I look at you?” Kurt asks, his heart aching as if he had somehow failed Sebastian without knowing it, that he should have known they would come to this point, and that every time he gazed lovingly into his then-boyfriend’s eyes, he was breaking Sebastian’s heart.

“It’s not the same…” Sebastian admits.

Kurt’s gaze drops to the floor, but Sebastian brings it back up with a finger beneath his chin.

“It’s better.”

New people get up to sing as Kurt and Sebastian dance, and though some of those songs are not meant for slow dancing, the two haven’t noticed. Nothing penetrates their bubble of gentle touches and occasional kisses until a line from a familiar song, sung atrociously, hits Kurt’s ears.

“Oof,” Kurt says, wrinkling his nose at the man’s foul note, “whoever told this guy he could sing?”

“Too bad, too, since this is one of my favorite songs,” Sebastian agrees, wincing at another string of horrible pitches.

“That’s right. You’re an Ed Sheeran fan,” Kurt says triumphantly, since this is something about Sebastian that he knows on his own.

“Yup,” Sebastian answers with a similar smile on his lips.
Kurt’s smile disappears after the next verse.

“I can’t un-hear this,” Kurt complains. “This song will be ruined for me forever.”

Sebastian smiles, cupping a hand over Kurt’s right ear and singing the next verse into his left, drowning out the voice of the man on stage.

“I’m gonna paint you by numbers and color you in
If things go right we can frame it and put you on a wall
And it’s so hard to say it but I’ve been here before
Now I’ll surrender up my heart and swap it for yours…”

“Mmm,” Kurt hums at Sebastian’s voice ringing in his ear, “are you going to serenade me all night?”

“If you want me to,” Sebastian says, brushing his lips lightly over the shell of Kurt’s ear.

“I think I can handle that,” Kurt says. “And incidentally, you’re right.”

“Well, yeah, that’s a given,” Sebastian says, standing straighter to see Kurt’s face, “but what about specifically?”

Kurt fixes Sebastian with dark, steely eyes.

“You are romantic as fuck.”

Sebastian laughs, throwing his head back.

“Make sure you tell Julian that,” Sebastian says. “My brother seems to think he’s the romantic in the family.”

“Well, you are the Whore of Babylon, remember?”

“Yeah,” Sebastian says with the tail end of his laugh on his lips, “like he’s one to talk.”

With the mention of his name, Kurt recalls a murmur, the words captured somewhere within his short-term memory.

“And what about…”

Kurt looks around, peering at the occupants of tables and at the faces of people crowded together in search of Sebastian’s brother.

“Did Julian leave?” Kurt asks, ashamed that he hadn’t noticed.

“How very perceptive of you,” Sebastian jokes.

“He didn’t stay to hear you sing?” Kurt gasps. “Rude much…”

“Oh, don’t be so hard on him, babe.”

Kurt draws his head back to look at Sebastian fully, raising a judgmental eyebrow.

“When did you become so forgiving?” Kurt asks, squinting up at Sebastian as if to say Who are you, and what have you done with my boyfriend? “If I recall, a couple of hours ago you wanted to pummel him into the floor for interrupting us.”
“True,” Sebastian says, massaging the small of Kurt’s back, “but he’s kind of helping me with something, so I thought I should talk nicely about him…at least behind his back.”

“Is there a time limit on the talking nicely thing?” Kurt asks, fishing for some clue as to how long they would be without Julian’s company.

“About twenty-four hours.”

Kurt nods, thrilled to have his boyfriend to himself again.

“Is it another surprise?” Kurt asks with an excited giggle.

“Yup.”

Kurt hears muffled music, contrary to the song being sung, and Sebastian’s head perks up. He releases Kurt with one arm and digs a hand into his pocket for his phone. “Speak of the devil…” he mutters when he sees the name Julian pop up on his screen. He swipes the screen lock with his thumb. In the dark of the bar, Kurt has no trouble reading the message.

To Sebastian (11:13 pm): Everything’s all set, bro. I’ll head out and leave you guys alone. Give your man a kiss for me.

“What’s all set?” Kurt asks, hoping that this message means what he thinks it means.

“Do you want to go and see?” Sebastian asks, kissing Kurt on the forehead, then on the tip of his nose, ending on the bow of Kurt’s upper lip.

Kurt smiles.

“Yes,” he says. “Yes, I do.”
An underscore of symphonic music accompanies Kurt and Sebastian on the ride back to the beach house. The night is quiet, the saturation of black-blue-purple in the sky deep and clear, all traces of clouds wiped away by the previous day of rain. While Sebastian drives, Kurt stares up at the pinprick stars and orbiting satellites shining brighter than he ever remembers seeing them in Ohio. It's like Kurt and Sebastian have come closer to the heavens out here. Or maybe it's that everything just seems brighter as the haze of uncertainty lifts completely away.

A thread of excitement stitches them together, but it's subdued. It lies in wait, doesn't well up to overwhelm them. It's heavy and its meaning not word-for-word spelled out, but they both understand. It spirals between them, weaving in and out as the Mustang drives down the vacant highway. They suck it into their lungs as they breathe, mixed with the warm evening air and the honeyed scent of the wildflowers that spring up in the grass along the road. Kurt sees them in the miles of meadow outside his window – Spotted Beebalm, American Lotus, Bitter-bloom – their pink, purple, and yellow petals closed over faces tilted in the direction of the long forgotten sunset.

Both boys sit on the crest of anticipation with nothing, for the moment, left to say. Kurt makes the comment that Julian has excellent taste in restaurants, but lousy taste in food, and with a short, nervous laugh, Sebastian agrees. Sebastian chooses the music for the drive – Mozart's Concerto in C for Flute and Harp - but twelve bars into the opening he asks Kurt if he wants to listen to something different, and Kurt politely says, "No, this is fine."

Kurt barely hears the music with his heart hammering in his chest, sending the sound of his blood pulsing through his ears. He tries to concentrate on the airy melody anyway, using it as a diversion to keep the knot of agitated butterflies in his stomach from rising up and conspiring to suffocate him.

Kurt watches Sebastian from the corner of his vision. Sebastian keeps his eyes pinned to the road ahead. He lightly drums his fingers on the steering wheel in time to the music, but occasionally runs a hand through his hair. It's a tell, and Kurt knows this calm exterior of his is nothing but a façade. Kurt watches Sebastian do it again and wonders if he is afflicted with a swarm of butterflies of his own.

The road has few dips or turns so the Mustang rolls smoothly. During the times when the highway merges temporarily with the main road, they manage to hit every green light, but as Kurt stares ahead at the featureless horizon, the sky melding into the asphalt, the ride to the coast seems to stretch on and on. He's sure that his heart, pounding out a constant rhythm, will break every one of his ribs if they drive for much longer, but the road rises, then falls, and finally Kurt can distinguish the Smythe family's bungalow against a background of sand and ocean. As they approach the house - the quiet structure sitting alone on its dune - Kurt can see a flickering in the darkened windows. He blinks a few times to see if it's an illusion made by starlight reflecting off the glass, but it doesn't look cold and silvery the way starlight does. The glow looks warm and inviting, as if someone had lit a fire somewhere within the house. Kurt doesn't remember seeing a fireplace so far. Besides, the glow comes from every window. There would have to be a fireplace in each room to make that possible.

Kurt side-eyes Sebastian and sees a smile soften the set of his jaw, but Kurt doesn't comment. This is Sebastian's surprise and Kurt will let it unfold the way Sebastian wants it to.
They pull into the carport and Sebastian shuts off the engine. Kurt reaches for the door handle on his side, but Sebastian puts out a hand and stops him. With a giddy twist to his lips, Kurt sits in his seat and waits as Sebastian comes around to his side of the car to open his door. This time Kurt takes notice that a certain blue Jag is (thankfully) absent.

Kurt takes Sebastian's offered hand and climbs out of the car. He expects Sebastian to kiss him, but instead Sebastian tucks Kurt's hand into the crook of his arm and walks him up the stairs to the house, a hand covering Kurt's where his fingers curl over Sebastian's bicep.

"So, the surprise is here at the house?" Kurt asks. The answer to that is hard to miss, but he needs to break a bit of the tension, and he chooses idle chitchat as his weapon.

"Yup," Sebastian says, his single word response not helping in the chitchat arena.

"A surprise that doesn't include Julian?" Kurt asks as Sebastian pulls his keys out of his pocket and fiddles with the lock. The lock clicks open and Sebastian turns the knob.

"Why don't you see for yourself?" Sebastian pushes the door open, letting it swing in and come to a stop on its own. Kurt enjoys observing the ways of his elusive boyfriend – the expressions on his face, the sparkle in his eyes, his charming, genuine smile – but Sebastian's surprise inside the house calls to him. Kurt takes a tentative step inside, not because he's apprehensive, but because he wants to stretch this out longer, linger in the suspense before Sebastian's big reveal.

He wishes that Sebastian had thought to bring the blindfold. Oh well - perhaps another time.

Kurt doesn't have to walk far before he finds the source of the vermillion glow. The first thing Kurt sees (can't avoid seeing, actually) is a veritable profusion of candles. They are literally everywhere, on every surface, seated in clear glass votive jars, situated on anything that won't move. They flicker and blink like little dancing spirits, lending their light to the room. The whole house exudes a scent of comfort, like warm baked goods fresh from the oven. The smell hangs in the air as if it simply exists there. Kurt looks at the candles again, arranged in clusters and rows, and notices that some of them are boutique, labels advertising the same store and bearing the name of the same scent – Madagascar Vanilla. The wax on these candles, generously melted and pooling inside their thick glass jars, indicates that these must have been burning the longest, purposefully to fill the air with that extraordinary smell.

Kurt glances over his shoulder at Sebastian, who's staring at him with a wary smile and eyes that watch attentively, gauging his reaction. They walk through the kitchen and into the living room with the candles lighting their way.

Kurt sees the next portion of the surprise and his mouth falls open.

"What the…" Kurt mutters.

At his feet, where the two rooms meet, petals lay scattered – red rose petals forming a trail throughout the house.

Kurt stares at the petals, stares at the candles, his heart swelling in his chest at the thought that went in to this. He wants to take a picture, but that seems adolescent. He'll have to rely on his memory, and his memory is becoming very full on this trip.

"Did you plan all of this?" Kurt asks in awe of this romantic spectacle.

"Yeah," Sebastian answers, keeping his tone neutral so he doesn't explode out of his skin. "I bought the candles the other day when I went to the market, and hid them in the mud room. Julian picked
up the roses for me and set it up while we were at the bar."

Suddenly, the way the two brothers had been huddled together, conferring in secret while Kurt picked out a song for Sebastian to sing, made sense. Sebastian must have sucked it up and confessed, which explained Julian's laughter and his face palm...and why he was lodging elsewhere for the evening.

"I wanted to surprise you," Sebastian finishes. "To be honest, uh..." Sebastian scrubs the back of his neck with his hand, his face blushing furiously. "I've kind of always wanted to do this." Sebastian raises his brow. "Is it...too much?"

"No," Kurt says, shaking his head. "No, it's not too much. It's..."

Kurt opens his hands in front of him, searching for something to say, but he can't come up with a way of expressing himself that would do justice to this. It's unlike anything anyone has ever done for him, even if he takes into account the many times he's been sung to in public...tonight's karaoke notwithstanding.

Kurt struggles a second longer and Sebastian laughs.

"I get it, I get it," he says, taking Kurt by the shoulders and giving him a shove to get him started walking again.

Kurt leads the way and Sebastian follows, guided by the trail of petals through the living room, down the hallway, and into Sebastian's bedroom. The petals don't stop there. They travel over the threshold and continue past the bed, all the way to the door of the porch. Kurt has to stop himself from rushing the door when he sees a tent set up outside with a circle of candles and petals surrounding it.

"I saw on your list..." Sebastian admits, and again, he has the sense to look guilty. "I know you want to have sex on the beach, but I think this might be better," he explains. "Not to say that we won't do that someday if you really want, but this time, I just thought..."

Kurt puts his fingers over Sebastian's mouth to silence him, watching his eyes morph through stages from fear to excitement, and then back to fear.

The same way Kurt sometimes expects Sebastian to throw a hurtful barb his way, Sebastian is waiting for Kurt's claws to come out.

"Sebastian..." Kurt says, grinning, "it's perfect."

Sebastian smiles behind Kurt's fingertips.

Kurt turns back to the sliding glass door and Sebastian puts his hands on Kurt's shoulders, massaging gently.

"You know, Kurt," Sebastian says, "nothing has to happen tonight if..."

Kurt looks back at Sebastian. He doesn't glare at him, doesn't lift an eyebrow, doesn't make a snide remark. He just gives Sebastian a look that lets him know there's no turning back from this – not for him.

"Okay," Sebastian says at the steel of resolve in Kurt's eyes. "Okay. Did you want to...you know...shower first?"
That question echoes of déjà vu, but only distantly, and Kurt nods.

"Yes, but..." Kurt bites his lip, "would it be alright with you if we showered in different bathrooms this time?"

Sebastian raises an eyebrow, but the expression that accompanies it is more amusedly curious than rejected in any way.

"It's just..." Kurt tries to explain, "every time we're in the shower together, we're in there for hours, and...I don't want to wait."

Sebastian chuckles, his cocky smile making an appearance as he leans forward and places a kiss to Kurt's forehead.

"Whatever you want, babe," he says, lips traveling down the bridge of his nose to place a kiss on his mouth. "I won't take too long. Meet you outside." He turns and heads off to wherever the second bathroom is. Kurt assumes it's in the master bedroom, but he doesn't know for sure. Maybe Sebastian has gone to the outdoor shower to bathe naked under the starlit sky.

With that tantalizing image in his head, Kurt considers changing his mind and going after him. But he knows he's right. If he finds Sebastian in the shower, they'll be in there forever – kissing, touching, fondling – and they won't need the tent outside. Then everything Sebastian so carefully planned will go to waste.

Well, it won't go to waste exactly, but its intended purpose will not be fully realized.

Kurt starts his shower, but it feels emptier without Sebastian there with him. Was the tub always this big? Or did he not remember the lone showers he had taken before? Now that he takes his showers with Sebastian, he's been spoiled by Sebastian's body against his, strong arms encircling his waist, fingers massaging his scalp, lips on his wet skin...

Kurt doesn't dwell because somewhere in the house is a young man showering the same as he, or perhaps waiting for him already in that tent out on the porch. He soaps up his body, then washes and rinses his hair, groaning at his own fingers working the rinse through the strands because Sebastian should be there. Sebastian should be helping him lather up while he kisses him, tongue trailing up his neck to his jawbone, teeth nibbling at his earlobe, making his knees weak, making it impossible for Kurt to stand...

There is still plenty of hot water left when Kurt is done, and it seems like such a shame. He blows through his moisturizing routine, not as thorough with some of the lotions and skipping one or two steps. He hurries back to Sebastian's bedroom, wrapped in a towel, keeping an eye out on the off chance Julian is there, hiding in the shadows. But as entertaining (and creepy) as that image is, Kurt knows Julian won't be, not when he knows how important this night is to Sebastian.

Kurt finds a plain, white t-shirt and the pair of Sebastian's sweatpants that he's worn before lying on the bed, waiting for him. He slips them on, conveniently neglecting to put on any underwear, smiling when he's struck by the fact that Sebastian chose the clothes he's going to peel off him. It seems superfluous to get dressed, if that's the case, but the thought behind it is kind of nice, too.

After all, Sebastian likes Kurt in his clothes.

Kurt wanders out - barefoot and freshly showered, wearing Sebastian's clothes - onto the porch. The space seems almost too small for the swing, the tent, the rose petals, and the candles, but it all fits. Someone has put a metal pin in the swing to keep it from rocking back and forth. Kurt assumes it
was Julian. The thing's been swinging freely since they arrived. If Sebastian knew how to stop it, he probably would have. Or maybe he just didn't because he's not too fond of this porch or the swing. Bearing that in mind, Kurt has to find a way to make this up to him. The only reason why he's out here is because of Kurt - to fulfill this fantasy for Kurt.

Yes, this night together will be for the both of them, but this picture-perfect outdoor paradise on the porch, within a stone's throw of the beach that Kurt has become so attached to, where they can hear the waves crash and smell the salty sea air, this Kurt knows is mainly for him. He looks it over again, at every red petal fighting the ocean breeze not to blow away, every lick of flame in its small, glass cove, and counts the many blessings he's received ever since Sebastian Smythe started opening up to him. This is amazing, as was the balloon ride and the party, and even that awful bee farm, but it would have been nothing without Sebastian, without his thought behind it, without his attempt to woo Kurt as his motivation.

Kurt sees a silhouette cast against the side of the tent. A head pops up and looks his way as he takes another step and the board beneath his foot creaks. Sebastian unzips the front of the tent for Kurt as Kurt approaches. He reaches out a hand to beckon Kurt inside as the wind whips up and swirls the rose petals around. Kurt bends over on instinct to enter the tent but he doesn't really have to. This isn't like the pop-up tent Kurt's father had bought so they could go on father/son fishing trips and weekend campouts after his mother died. This tent is huge on the inside, and can easily accommodate the whole Smythe family, including Brian…and Kurt, if Kurt is ever invited to go camping with them. The tent has a clear plastic front panel that gives them a perfect view of the ocean, as well as a sky light so that they can see the stars above. A thick blanket has been spread out on the floor of the tent, with two pillows set on the far end. Kurt sits down on the blanket while Sebastian re-zips the front panel.

"This is incredible," Kurt says, stretching out on his back to look up at the sky, the blanket beneath him soft and down, made for the outdoors but definitely nicer than anything he's ever had on his bed. "I can't believe you did all of this. You've absolutely outdone yourself this time."

"You're worth it," Sebastian says, laying down beside Kurt with a heavy sigh and staring up through the sky light.

Kurt turns his face and waits for Sebastian to look his way.

"So are you," Kurt replies. Sebastian doesn't exactly smile, but Kurt can see his expression change as he looks back up at the sky. His hand finds Kurt's and holds it tight, locking their fingers together. They lay like this, side-by-side on their backs, staring up at the sky through the rectangular strip of clear plastic. The whistling wind shakes the tent slightly, and the rhythm of the waves sounds so close they might as well be camped out on the sand further down the beach.

"What are you thinking?" Sebastian asks, running his thumb along Kurt's knuckles, asking the question with a sudden small gasp, as if he had been holding his breath this whole time.

"I'm thinking…" Kurt turns from the stars in the sky to gaze at the stars in Sebastian's eyes, "that this is one of the biggest leaps I'm going to take in my life, and I don't know how to start."

Kurt thinks that Sebastian will ask him why, since Kurt was in a monogamous, long-standing relationship, and has made love to someone before, but he doesn't. All he says is, "Biggest leap because…" and then leaves it for Kurt to fill in the blank.

"Biggest leap because I want what we have to last," Kurt answers, feeling the weight of that revelation press inside his chest. "I don't want this to be a summer fling. I know we've gotten closer, gone through the steps and stages, but this one – it means so much more."
Sebastian nods, looking Kurt's face over – his eyebrows, his eyes, his nose, his chin, his lips - setting his features, all those details, to memory.

"Well, how about we start here..." Sebastian says, bringing Kurt's hand up to his mouth and kissing across his knuckles, one by one. "And then we can continue here..." He turns Kurt's hand over and softly kisses his inner wrist, his thumb massaging the inside of Kurt's palm, manipulating a bundle of nerves that seem to fire up Kurt's arm and surprisingly makes his lips tingle. "And here..." Sebastian whispers, moving up Kurt's arm, pausing to lick the bend of his elbow, the sweep of his tongue over that sensitive skin shooting heat straight to Kurt's stomach this time, and Kurt can't quell the way he moans. "And here..." Sebastian moves closer, kissing his way up Kurt's skin till he reaches the sleeve of the white shirt, continuing his line of kisses over the fabric until he reaches the collar, which he pulls down so he can suck marks into Kurt's neck. Kurt raises a hand to the back of Sebastian's head to keep him there, keep his mouth moving against the column of his neck, nipping along the long line of his throat, teasing over the pulse point beneath his jaw with the tip of his tongue. "And here..." Sebastian stops to take one last look in Kurt's eyes, which gaze back at him with a trust and admiration built up despite a summer of fights and insults, and lies to almost everyone they know, including themselves. But these past few days have been the truest Sebastian has ever known, and that's because of Kurt. He looks a breath longer before he brushes his lips against Kurt's and claims them slowly.

Kurt looks into Sebastian's eyes up until the moment he closes them, and then Kurt closes his eyes, too, abandoning everything else around him for this reality – a reality of Sebastian kissing him, of Sebastian reaching for him, of Sebastian's touch, which Kurt can't get enough of. Sebastian's hands find Kurt's face and trace a path over Kurt's cheeks with his fingertips down to his jawline, following the contours of Kurt's neck and his chest, not moving to climb on top of him just yet even though Kurt longs to feel Sebastian's body on his.

Sebastian bunches the hem of Kurt's shirt in his fist, twisting it as they kiss. He slides the shirt up Kurt's skin, brushing along it with the faintest touch. They separate for only a moment so Sebastian can pull the shirt over Kurt's head, and then they kiss again. Kurt feels the sweatpants being tugged down his legs and he helps them along, hooking his toe into the fabric to push them off. With a couple of stomps and a kick, those are gone, too.

Sebastian pulls away from Kurt's lips and kneels between his legs. Kurt pouts playfully when he sees his boyfriend still fully clothed, but that pout disappears when Sebastian's piercing green eyes gaze fully at him. There's a slight hesitation in Sebastian's movements before he reaches out for Kurt again, hands cupping the sides of his face, sweeping the hair off his forehead. He brushes over Kurt's cheekbones with his thumbs then drags them lightly over his skin, and Kurt turns his head an inch to kiss the digit closest to his mouth.

Sebastian continues touching him, down his neck, and then his chest with the flat of his palm. Kurt sucks in when Sebastian's hands reach his stomach, his breath speeding up as they boldly travel lower. Here the path of Sebastian's hands diverge. He makes no attempt to touch Kurt's cock, which has gotten harder with each pass of Sebastian's hands over his skin. Instead, Sebastian's hands slide over Kurt's thighs, rounding his knees, lifting them up to bend so he can caress Kurt's calves.

Sebastian leans forward, hovering over him.

"My God, Kurt," Sebastian whispers, "you're..."

"I'm...what?" Kurt asks with a tilt of his head, wishing he could touch Sebastian's mind and see what he sees. It would be interesting to see himself through Sebastian's eyes, considering how
much grief Sebastian used to give him about his appearance, but now…

"I want to say you're gorgeous," Sebastian admits with a sheepish smile, "but I'd rather not say something you've heard a million times before."

Kurt returns Sebastian's sheepish smile. A million times might be a bit of an over-exaggeration, but it's nice if Sebastian thinks so.

"Would it be stupid to say that it sounds different coming from you?" Kurt asks.

"No," Sebastian says, leaning closer, eyes flicking down to look at Kurt's mouth. "No, it's not stupid."

Sebastian runs the tip of his nose over Kurt's, then leans in further to kiss Kurt's eyelids one at a time, each time muttering something against Kurt's skin that Kurt doesn't quite make out. He doesn't ask. Kurt knows Sebastian is still resolving things within him, so he decides to help him along. Kurt grabs at the hem of Sebastian's shirt and pulls it up his torso, dragging the material slowly over his skin, not touching Sebastian's body with his own fingers while he does. Sebastian groans and gets the hint, taking over and yanking his t-shirt off, followed by his pants, which he tosses to the side, tripping over one leg in his eagerness to be free of them.

Kurt sits up when Sebastian does, scooting out from beneath him to avoid accidentally getting kicked. He would have laughed at Sebastian's fumble if not for his beautiful body, which never fails to steal his breath, but especially the glorious erection not too far from his face.

Kurt is dying to make love to Sebastian, but he's going to delay for just a bit.

He has a debt to repay.

Kurt bends over Sebastian's cock and, without saying a thing, takes him in his mouth. If time has stopped for Kurt a hundred times on this trip, this makes a hundred and one. There's a single word of protest (Kurt!) from Sebastian's lips, then a catch of breath followed by the longest, most soul-searing moan Kurt has ever heard pass through a human's lips in his entire life.

"Oh, God, Kurt," Sebastian groans, placing his hands shy of Kurt's head, then opting at the last minute to put one hand in his hair and another down to his face, caressing beneath his chin. "Oh, bébé," he hisses when Kurt's tongue sweeps underneath the ridge below his head. Kurt feels Sebastian's hand tighten in his hair, as if he's about to push him down, but he stops and runs his fingers through. He's not going to force him. He's not going to be that guy. "C'est ça…arrête pas…je t'en prie…arrête pas…"

Sebastian starts begging, begging Kurt not to stop…in French, no less, because he knows Kurt will understand, or because Kurt has pushed him to a place where words split and become meaningless - the intent all that matters - because even if Kurt didn't understand a word of it, the way Sebastian gasps, how he stutters around pleading with Kurt don't stop…I beg you, don't stop…comes through loud and clear. Kurt sucks down harder. He takes Sebastian all the way to the back of his throat, swallowing around his head, and feels Sebastian's legs shake.

"Yes," Sebastian moans. "Yes…do that again…God, Kurt…yes…s'il te plaît…Kurt…mon bien-aimé…"

Kurt's heart skips.

My beloved.
Sebastian called him *my beloved.*

Kurt doesn't think he can be happier than he is at this moment, as his mouth pulls these endearments from Sebastian's lips with every suck and sweep of his tongue.

But then Kurt has a thought - a thought he never meant to let enter his brain - about how many other boys have done this to Sebastian, how many others have made him feel this way.

Did Jeremiah? Did Max? Did the nameless college guy in the back of that car?

Has any other boy's mouth made Sebastian slip the boundary between languages before?

Kurt must have stopped, or slowed down - something has changed because Sebastian sighs with a hint of frustration, grabs him by his upper arms, and pulls Kurt up to face him.

"Don't," Sebastian says, jumping to a conclusion that happens to be right so Kurt doesn't insult Sebastian's intelligence by trying to argue.

"I'm sorry," Kurt says regretfully, shifting his eyes away. He can't look at Sebastian with shame in his eyes, not over this. He feels his own erection wither a bit as Sebastian stares into him with a fierce fire in his blacker than green eyes. "I didn't mean to…"

"This is about us, remember?" Sebastian reminds him, folding Kurt up in his arms while still looking in his eyes. "I mean, whether you realize it or not, I'm standing in a pretty big shadow, one that's kinda hard to forget sometimes…"

Kurt opens his mouth to object, but Sebastian kisses him quickly to keep him from interrupting.

"…but you have to realize that this is different," Sebastian continues. "This is special because…"

Sebastian stops, catching Kurt's eyes again, as dark as his own.

"Because…" Kurt says, wanting Sebastian to finish.

"Because you're a person I've fantasized doing this with," Sebastian admits, "and I'm not a big one for daydreaming."

Kurt smiles, wondering when these dreams started, how long have they been going on…

"A person?" Kurt kids. "You mean there's been more than one fantasy guy?"

Sebastian looks up at the skylight over his head and quietly debates how badly he wants to be teased before he answers.

"Well, Chris Evans is a given…"

"Chris Evans?" Kurt asks with an eyebrow raised. "Really? You have a thing for superheroes?"

"Uh…maybe," Sebastian stutters, looking so young with the scarlet blush that rises to his cheeks.

"So, are we talking Human Torch Chris Evans, or Captain America Chris Evans?" Kurt pursues, seeing this opportunity to rib Sebastian and unable to let it go unexploited.

"Can we stop talking about this?" Sebastian asks with darting eyes and nervous laughter. Kurt can't help but remember the way they had giggled nervously into each other's necks that day they had staged an *interruption* so that Sebastian's mom would be convinced they were truly dating. Kurt
would have never predicted that this is the way sex would be for them – light and fun and full of
good-natured teasing, not always a need for heavy, serious romance, though they obviously have
that, too. They have a balance, with no feeling off limits.

And Kurt prefers it that way.

"Alright then…how about we talk about your fantasy," Kurt says, looping his arms around
Sebastian's neck. "How did you see me?"

Sebastian stares at Kurt, and Kurt can see in his eyes that he's looking for words to explain. Kurt
smiles. Speechless Sebastian is fast becoming Kurt's favorite version Sebastian – a Sebastian who,
with all his myriad experience, is completely blown away by this thing they have between them.

"Sit in my lap?" Sebastian asks. He stretches his legs out in front of him and Kurt climbs on top of
him. Kurt sits on Sebastian's thighs, his cock resting alongside Sebastian's, the thrill of being
completely naked and so close to him fantastically overwhelming.

"Why like this?" Kurt asks in a whisper.

"So, I can kiss you…so I can look in your eyes…so I can touch you. I just want you close to me.
This seems like the best way. And you said…" Sebastian looks down and a shy smile touches his
lips. "You said you wanted me inside of you…but if you want something else…"

"No," Kurt says. "I like this."

"Yeah?" Sebastian pauses a moment to give Kurt time to change his mind, but he doesn't. "Okay."
Sebastian reaches around behind him, under his pillow for a condom (several condoms strung
together come up and Kurt looks away so as not to laugh, wondering if it was Julian or Sebastian
who was so excited that they busted out the economy pack) and a bottle of lube. Sebastian tears
open the packet, but Kurt takes the condom from Sebastian's fingers and carefully rolls it down
Sebastian's length, with Sebastian watching on as if Kurt had just transformed in front of his eyes
into some magical creature.

"That's…that's really hot," Sebastian says, letting Kurt take the lube from his hand, watching him
squirt a dollop into his palm and coat his cock with it. "My fingers, too, babe?" Sebastian asks,
holding up his right hand. "So I can open you up…"

"Right," Kurt says, feeling a little silly for forgetting. He hasn't bottomed in…God, he doesn't want
to think how long. It would really suck if his first time with Sebastian hurt. Kurt squirts a good deal
of the lube on Sebastian's fingers and spreads it around. Then he raises an eyebrow, and puts quite
a bit more, which makes Sebastian laugh. He swats the bottle out of Kurt's hand when it doesn't
look like Kurt is going to stop.

"I think that's enough," he says, putting his un-lubed hand on Kurt's cheek and spreading him apart.

"Are you sure?" Kurt asks, coyly. "Because I've seen what you're bringing to this party, and I want
to be prepared if I ooooh…"

Sebastian circles Kurt's entrance with his finger and then finds an unmarked spot on Kurt's neck to
suck. The sensations connect somewhere in the middle of Kurt's body, bringing dormant nerves to
life.

"How does that feel?" Sebastian asks as he starts a new mark on Kurt's shoulder.

"That…that feels…ooooh…" Kurt stutters.
God, it has been a long time.

"Does that feel good, babe?" Sebastian mutters between kisses, sucking the words into Kurt's skin in the form of purple bruises. "Do you like that?"

"Yes," Kurt whimpers, waiting for Sebastian to push his finger inside, up to the first knuckle, before sliding himself down over it. "Oh, yes…Sebastian…" Kurt moans and Sebastian sucks, kissing his way across Kurt's collarbone to the hollow of his throat.

"What is it, love?" Sebastian asks, searching inside Kurt's body for that one special place that will…

"Sebastian!" Kurt squeals, tightening his arms around Sebastian's neck, pulling in closer in search of more while trying to get friction for his aching cock somewhere, anywhere on Sebastian's body. "Oh, God! Do that again!"

"You mean this…" Sebastian finds the spot again and rubs it lightly with the pad of his finger, biting his lower lip when Kurt nearly jumps out of his lap.

"Oh, yes!" Kurt moans, pushing his body down on Sebastian's finger in hopes that he'll do that again, repeatedly, if possible. "God, do that! Do that and don't stop!"

Sebastian adds another finger, fucking Kurt slowly with them, finding that spot again and brushing over it, but only once out of every three strokes, until Kurt's eyes have rolled to the back of his skull and he's the one begging – for more, for Sebastian, for now.

"Okay, darling," Sebastian says, removing his fingers and replacing them with his cock quickly when the cry that comes from Kurt's mouth sounds needy and desperate – a sound mirrored in his voice as well.

Sebastian holds Kurt's hips and moves into him, inching slowly, because even though he's fairly open, Kurt is still tight as hell.

"Oh…" Kurt moans, his first instinct to close his eyes and let his body absorb the sensation of Sebastian filling him up, but Sebastian wants to look in his eyes, and Kurt doesn't want to deprive him of that.

"Is that…are you…"

Kurt chuckles softly at how flummoxed Sebastian sounds. He knows Sebastian. He's seen him with other boys, seen him play with them like toys. He's seen Sebastian treat men he's slept with like he didn't even remember their names the next day. In fact, the nonchalant attitude Sebastian seemed to have about sex overall made Kurt cringe, made him believe there was no way he could ever enter into a physical relationship with Sebastian Smythe. That was before Kurt knew better, even if he doesn't know it all.

So watching Sebastian fumble over words while he's inside Kurt's body, feeling the way his hands shake as they try to find a place to grab hold, is endearing. Kurt had assumed Sebastian would be a virtuoso between the sheets. But this sweet, anxious teenaged boy – this is the side of Sebastian that Kurt really wants for their first time.

"Oh, God, Sebastian," Kurt moans, moving up over his cock and sliding down swiftly again, "you feel incredible…"

That statement seems to bring some of Sebastian's bravado back, reminding him that he knows
what he's doing beyond biting his own tongue, and he drags his fingertips lightly down Kurt's spine, gifting Kurt with kisses, sensual and powerful kisses, every time Kurt's mouth comes within reach. Kurt finds himself stopping, sitting in Sebastian's lap and surrendering to his mouth for nearly a full minute between.

Which is fine with Kurt. He's in no hurry for this to be over.

"Is this anything like the fantasy?" Kurt breathes against Sebastian's mouth.

"God, no," Sebastian moans when Kurt rises up again and sinks back down. "It's better. Just like everything with you here with me. It's so much better."

Sebastian's gaze locked on Kurt's is intense, overpowering. It's a tangible thing, bringing color to Kurt's cheeks and making him feel somewhat conquered…but more than anything, loved. The newness of this experience amazes Kurt. He gets to have a first time all over again, and he's fortunate because it's not some kind of revenge fuck or one night stand.

It's with a man he loves.

Kurt moves quicker when Sebastian reaches for his cock and wraps his fingers around it, stroking him slowly no matter how fast he moves, keeping Kurt on the beveled edge of cumming by holding him tight when he tries to fuck up into the tight channel of Sebastian's fist. It's aggravating to be kept wanting like this, but Kurt is grateful, too, because he doesn't want this to end. He wants this feeling of being full of Sebastian, surrounded by Sebastian, made complete because of Sebastian, to linger on and on and on. They reach for each other, free hands finding each other the way they always seem to, like they were meant to. They clasp together, fingers lacing, held down at Kurt's side. Sebastian kisses Kurt's chest, his hot breath ghosting over his nipple, and Kurt arches his back, squeezing his eyes shut.

"Look at me, Kurt," Sebastian whispers. "Please, look at me."

Kurt opens his eyes and words fail him. Sebastian's eyes stare into him, seeing Kurt for who he is. They look him raw, full of love, full of pain, full of hope and want, giving him everything – Sebastian giving him everything. Kurt wants to say something, wants to tell Sebastian what he feels in the now, before it slips away too far and he can't put words to it. This is a moment for declarations, for confessions, for promises he'll fight tooth and nail to keep. He opens his mouth, but outside of soft, muffled moans, he can't remember how to speak, so he raises a hand to his lips, kisses two fingers, and then presses those fingers to Sebastian's chest above his heart. Sebastian does the same, pulling Kurt close and kissing his chest, right where Kurt's heart beats against his lips.

Kurt feels his entire self fall into Sebastian with every drop over him, and it's everything Kurt wanted from this – being open, being vulnerable, belonging to someone he loves, who loves him in return. At the last second, right before he comes, before this magical bond between them crescendos and then lifts away, Sebastian holds him in his arms, rocking their bodies together so that when they cum, they cum as close to together as humanly possible, and Sebastian can feel it reverberate inside him.

"God," Sebastian mutters, cumming inside Kurt's body – with a condom between them but still. The word, with more to follow, comes out in half breaths, not fully spoken. "Jesus fucking Christ…"

Kurt chirps out a laugh into Sebastian's shoulder.
"Is that...is that all you can say?" he asks, waiting for Sebastian to unleash more expletives and a witty comeback, but he doesn't. Kurt feels Sebastian draw in a long breath that shudders, then hears a sniffle by his ear. He leans back to look into Sebastian's face just as he tries to turn away, but Kurt catches his face in his hands before he can duck his eyes. Kurt swipes his thumb across Sebastian's cheekbone, over a spot that glistens slightly in the gentle flicker of honey-colored candlelight. Sebastian lifts his face as Kurt brings his thumb to his eyes.

His thumb is wet, a single tear drying into his skin.

"Sebastian..." Kurt says, candlelight from outside reflecting in his eyes, making them glow, "are you...are you crying?"

Sebastian looks at Kurt's thumb, almost with hatred at the absorbed tear, but most definitely with embarrassment.

"It's one tear," Sebastian grumbles, wiping his cheek. "I must have sand in my eyes...or something. It doesn't mean I'm crying. It doesn't mean anything...and even if I was, you don't have to make fun of me."

Kurt looks into Sebastian's face, erasing any semblance of humor from his expression.

"I'm not making fun of you," Kurt says, shaking his head. "I'm not. And even if you were crying, I wouldn't make fun of you for that. Never."

Sebastian kisses Kurt again, kisses that are warm and beg for comfort, and Kurt gives them up freely. Sebastian lays Kurt down carefully on the blanket, pulling out and fussing with the condom quickly so he can return to his boyfriend. Kurt feels the soft slide of fabric against his skin as Sebastian grabs his shirt and wipes down Kurt's abs and his chest.

Sebastian kisses the back of Kurt's neck and Kurt expects to hear an I love you follow from Sebastian's lips, but what he says is very different, and somewhat confusing.

"You are a good thing," Sebastian says, cleaning away every last bit of Kurt's cum, then balling up the tee and pitching it in the corner.

Kurt looks at him and frowns, not comprehending the statement.

"In the Mustang, on the beach, you asked me if you're a good thing," Sebastian explains, wrapping his arms around Kurt's waist and fitting his body behind his. "I didn't answer you then. I had an answer, but I...I couldn't say it at the time." Sebastian makes a noise, six steps from a scoff and slightly above a laugh. "I was stupid. But you are, Kurt. You are a good thing."

After feeling, at least a little bit, that there must be something wrong with him if the person he was so used to hearing I love you from could simply let him go, listening to Sebastian repeat, "You are a good thing, Kurt Hummel," is almost as good as an I love you.

Almost.

"Thank you," Kurt whispers, pulling Sebastian down to kiss him, which he does, again and again until Kurt doesn't breathe comfortably unless Sebastian is kissing him.

Then Sebastian whispers I love you, and Kurt's perfect evening is complete.

Sebastian turns Kurt gently away from him and kisses along his shoulders. Kurt lies with his hands wedged under his head, the warmth of Sebastian's body surrounding him. He feels a chill but it
can't seem to touch him. There is no cold as long as Sebastian is with him.

"Should we move back inside for the night?" Sebastian asks, his hands locked around Kurt's waist like he never wants to let him go.

"You know, I think I'm comfortable right where I am," Kurt says, leaning back to kiss Sebastian on the cheek. Sebastian wraps the blanket over Kurt's body as a fork of lightning brightens the night sky. "Yeah," Kurt hums, turning in Sebastian's arms and pressing his smiling lips to his boyfriend's skin, "I think I could stay like this for a while."
Coffee, Conversation, and Whatever Else Comes Next

Chapter by fhartz91

Chapter Summary

I've taken a page from Cacophony's original story and added this interim Juliper chapter, reminiscent of Porch Light Confessions. This explains what happened during the coffee date Cooper and Julian made when Julian went to see Cooper after the gala. I've written in a lot of throwbacks to the original story and to that Juliper chapter so it's not required to look up details to understand anything.

Julian pulls his car up to The Lima Bean twenty minutes early. He parks in a spot as far away as he can find, but the parking lot isn’t that big to begin with, making his car noticeable from pretty much everywhere. Besides, a Jaguar? In Lima? He might as well be driving the Oscar Mayer Weinermobile. He’d stick out less.

Julian intentionally showed up early to give himself a chance to sit in his car and mentally prepare for this coffee date, but Cooper’s already there, sitting at a table by a front-facing window, twirling a paper cup in his hands, eyes staring off into space. Cooper’s eyes have always fascinated Julian – their inescapable lure, their piercing depths. How transparent and clear they are, but in no way shallow. Intelligent. Mesmerizing. Shrouding pain and so many secrets – secrets he’s collected during their time apart. Secrets that Julian desperately wants to know.

Julian wonders how long Cooper’s been sitting there, waiting for him. Did he just get there a few minutes before, or has he been there a while, preparing himself, too? Julian had been satisfied to let Cooper sweat, but there’s a particular sorrow in his eyes – a mixture of heartache and loss and regret. It pulls at Julian, adding a kick of speed to the rapid thud of his heart. He wants to obey the pull. He wants to go inside and be closer to its source, but Julian doesn’t leave his car and join Cooper right away. He resists a moment and watches Cooper, trying to pinpoint exactly how he’s changed. He’s had a chance to study Cooper twice already, but not like this – alone in the sunlight, lost in his thoughts. Cooper looks remarkably put together considering, enviably so. His hair, which had been fairly disheveled when Julian last saw him, has been combed and smoothed into place. He wears it differently now than he used to. Julian loved the way Cooper styled his hair back in high school. He loved the way it felt sliding between his fingers, or brushing against his cheek when Cooper kissed his neck. But it looks better this way. It suits him, brings out his maturity. His chin has gotten sharper, his cheekbones more defined with every shred of adolescent chubbiness gone (if there ever was any), and his mouth…

Well, his mouth is still as irresistible, still as tempting as ever.

Julian sucks a breath in and curses how it shudders. He should know better than to fall victim to this foolish tendency he has of plunging head-over-heels where Cooper is concerned. He wants to maintain the control he built between them last night. He needs to be the one in charge.

He can’t simply fold because Cooper flashes one of his disarming, pant-dropping smiles Julian’s way.

Julian watches Cooper take a sip from his cup, head tilting back and exposing his neck, Adam’s
apple bobbing as he swallows, and Julian’s whole body aches.

It remembers, and it doesn’t want that memory ignored.

_God fucking damn_, Julian thinks while his traitorous body moans. He should have opted for that stiff drink he mentioned before he showed up. If his mind had been less topsy-turvy, less controlled by his heart and, to a degree, his dick, he would have brought a flask of something with him.

Julian opens his car door and steps out onto the asphalt, and immediately Cooper’s eyes flick his way. The man behind the glass smiles with a hesitant slow burn – anxious at seeing Julian, wary at what he has to say, yet sexy as hell. Those eyes of his – gorgeous and impatient, with shameless love pouring from the seams – track Julian’s steps as he walks through the front door.

“You came,” Cooper says.

_Not yet_. The comment pops quickly to Julian’s mind because it’s easy to flirt with Cooper, but Julian’s not sure a joke like that would set the right tone. Though neither did nearly ripping Cooper’s clothes off, ready to fuck him into the grass of the Anderson lawn last night, but that’s neither here nor there.

Cooper stutters to stand, moving to give Julian a hug, but he only makes it halfway before Julian swoops in and sits in the chair opposite him instead. The move makes Cooper’s shoulders slump, but the last thing Julian needs right now is to have his brain short circuit because Cooper wrapped his arms around him, regardless of the fact that he’s dreamt of lying tangled up in Cooper’s arms every night since they parted.

“So did you,” Julian says, adding a reassuring smile to make up for sidestepping Cooper’s hug.

“I think we both knew I would,” Cooper says with a wink. “Can I get you something?”

Cooper motions over Julian’s shoulder with his chin. Julian turns his head sideways and looks toward the counter, at a chalkboard sign mounted up behind the register, displaying The Lima Bean’s limited fare. Julian’s gaze banks several times around an unnaturally energetic barista racing back and forth serving drinks, her blonde ponytail bouncing behind her with equal exuberance, her very existence an offense to the exhaustion pounding like a runaway jack hammer in his skull. He reads the name of each item on the board and licks his lips at the thought of a somewhat decent cup of java. The barista catches him staring. She misreads his gesture, misunderstands his wide-eyed stare of longing. Her cheeks turn pink and she giggles, hiding her face behind the next customer when she takes their order.

Julian doesn’t notice, his eyes glued to the words _Fair Trade Italian Roast_. He _should_ order something considering the drama of the past twelve plus hours.

The explosion at last night’s gala, which, if it hadn’t been at Kurt’s expense, would have been the highlight of Julian’s time in Ohio.

Stopping by the Anderson’s house to talk to Cooper and being confronted by the unforgiving specters of their past – one of whom has blonde hair and expensive taste in jewelry.

The long drive back from Westerville to Lima with his heater on full blast to dry out his soaked clothes, with only his masochistic brain for company.

Listening to Sebastian go on and on about flying out to Cali to punch Blaine in the face, then tackling Seb to the ground for his wallet, ensuring that he couldn’t actually leave.
It hurt in too many familiar ways to watch his little brother pace and pace, stuck in his turmoil - helpless to comfort Kurt, unable to kill Blaine - until he simply passed out. Julian had taken up on the floor at his brother’s feet, too tired to sleep, staring at the pictures on the walls. He looked them over with tainted eyes, applying what he had discovered to be the truth – that Kurt and Blaine had been dating, that the two of them and his brother have some “history”...that Cooper had been here in Ohio all this time, hoping to see him again. He smirked and shook his head. Quite a lot of secrets revealed in the space of one night.

He glanced over to his brother sadly. A lot of secrets revealed, and yet a few big ones left to tell.

It was about that time when Julian heard Kurt upstairs in his room, whimpering. His first instinct was to wake Sebastian, but he couldn’t. Not when Seb had literally knocked out on his feet. Julian left Sebastian to sleep and retired to Kurt’s room instead, lying by his side till Kurt settled down and fell back to resting comfortably. Julian stayed mostly awake in bed watching Kurt sleep, thinking about what a lucky bastard Sebastian is (and to a point Blaine, even though he doesn’t deserve to be that lucky). Julian spent most of those early morning hours trying to figure out what the hell he was going to say to Kurt to convince him to give his brother a chance - completely unnecessary, as it turned out, which is one of the reasons he likes Kurt for his brother.

Skip ahead to this morning’s culinary fiasco, fumbling to make breakfast with Sebastian and nearly burning down Kurt’s kitchen.

That was a hoot. Julian regrets not getting any pictures.

When Julian left the boys to their own devices, he raced to The Lima Mall to buy a new outfit (since he’s already used and abused his emergency change of clothes from his car’s trunk), and then actually rented a hotel room to shower and change so he wouldn’t show up looking like a hobo - unwashed, unshaven, in clothes that he slept in.

Luckily, he seems to be pulling off cool, calm, and collected, but emotionally, he’s wrung dry. Physically, he’s running on a shit-ton of adrenaline, so much that there’s a ringing in his ears that won’t stop. Bearing that in mind, he should order the five gallon drum of caffeine.

But he doesn’t want to leave Cooper, and he doesn’t want Cooper to leave him.

“No,” he says, shaking his head. “I’m cool.”

Cooper nods and pushes his own cup aside. Julian follows it with a covert dart of his eyes, curious if it’s actually empty, recollecting on the lame half cup of coffee he brought Cooper the day they first met – the day Julian caught him fucking the infamous Sheila.

The day Julian started falling for him.

Julian stops himself before he thinks love. Even though it’s ever-present - obviously for Cooper, too - he’s not ready to go there yet.

“Thank you, again,” Julian remarks. “You know, for what you’re doing for my brother and for Kurt.”

Cooper’s smile fails, and suddenly he looks more uncomfortable in Julian’s presence than eager.

“I’m still not really kosher about lying to my brother about this,” he admits.

“Are you thinking of reneging?” Julian asks in a hurry, his brain whirling to devise a contingency plan, for the boys at the beach house as well as for himself.
“No, no,” Cooper says, sweeping the idea away with open hands. “My brother made his bed, so to speak. Now he has to suffer the consequences.” Julian breathes a subtle sigh of relief, not wanting to act obnoxious that Cooper seems to side with them on this. He also avoids chuckling at the adorable way Cooper mixes his metaphors. “How are they doing, by the way? How is Kurt after all that mess?”

“They’re good,” Julian says, thinking back to this morning when Kurt came down the stairs and caught them - that charmed look in his eyes when he saw Sebastian, the one he usually gets when he thinks no one’s watching. “They’re kind of running away together for a few weeks, to the family beach house in North Carolina, to get some time alone.”

Cooper’s expression morphs from uncomfortable to minorly sick, but Julian knows it’s not because he’s personally upset by the idea of Kurt and Sebastian vacationing alone together, but on his brother’s behalf.

“My brother really fucked up a good thing,” Cooper says, speaking with a voice colored by experience. “He called me earlier and I talked to him some more, so I have a little better idea why he did what he did. He said…”

“Don’t know, don’t care,” Julian cuts him off roughly.

Cooper stops short, savvy that regardless of the kiss from earlier, he’s treading on thin ice – paper thin ice above a lake miles deep, ready to drag him down and devour him if he falls in.

“I’m just saying that I can sort of see his side of things…”

“Can you?” Julian snaps, sliding to the edge of his seat, feeling more defensive of his brother and Kurt than ever.

“Give me a break, Jules,” Cooper says playfully, grateful for the levity. “Great-grandpa Anderson - epic failure. And Grandpa Anderson? Well, let’s just say we’re all lucky the Anderson line didn’t end with him.” Julian laughs out loud, missing when Cooper’s voice loses its humorous edge. “And my father, well, he…he’s the worst.” Cooper swallows hard. “I’m hoping Blaine gets far away before my dad can do too much damage.”

Julian’s laughter skids to a halt, and his brow furrows, confused by what that means. Julian knows Cooper’s father is an ignorant bigot. He knows Cooper’s father can be cruel. But maybe Julian has underestimated the lengths Mr. Anderson is willing to go to secure his youngest son’s future.

Julian’s about to ask but a new conundrum has settled onto Cooper’s face, his eyes fixed on his hands, fingers tightening into fists and then stretching out again. “Julian, I need to explain. About Emily, about the ring…”

“Don’t,” Julian sighs, exhaustion accentuating the lines that lack of sleep has already etched on his
“But…” Cooper sounds distraught, like he thinks this is the path to getting Julian back, part of an apology too long in coming, but Julian can’t listen. Not yet.

“Look,” Julian says, dropping his head in his hands, rubbing his eyes till they sting, stealing the time necessary to sort things out, “I’ll let you explain, but not now. I can’t hear it right now. I should be able to. I know it all happened a relatively long time ago, but it feels…”

“Yeah,” Cooper agrees. “I know how it feels.”

A bitter silence falls between them, swallowed up in the mud of people talking, the whirring of machines, the bell over the door clanging as customers walk in and out.

Julian laughs. “You know, I pictured this going differently.”

“God, Julian,” Cooper says. “Don’t you have anything else to say?”

Julian opens his mouth, a witty remark at the ready, but he closes it again. He knows what Cooper is hoping he’ll say. Anything else, even in fun, would sound insensitive. He shakes his head.

“I don’t want to say something I’m going to regret.”

And even with Julian being careful of Cooper’s feelings, Cooper looks absolutely crushed by Julian’s answer.

“I should be heading back,” Cooper says flatly. “I have…there are some things I have to do. I don’t want to be late.”

“Wow! You invited me out for coffee, and then you made other plans?” Julian laughs sarcastically. “You arrogant ass!”

Cooper looks confused and hurt by Julian’s ridicule.

“No, I…it’s…I have this lunch thing with my folks,” Cooper defends. “They planned it last minute, and…”

“No,” Julian says, standing from the table, “I understand. I understand completely.”

“No, you don’t understand,” Cooper says loudly. The elderly couple at the table next to them shoots him a dirty look. “They haven’t changed. Eight fucking years, and they haven’t changed. If anything, they’ve gotten worse.” Cooper’s angry yelling becomes a hollow laugh he can’t seem to control. “But I’ve changed. I swear to God I’ve changed. But there’s more people at stake here than just me, Jules, and…there’re some things I have to fix. But, I promise, I’m ready to do this with you. I’m ready to start over, and have it be totally about us.”

Cooper’s outburst throws Julian off, but he doesn’t let it show. He had expected pleading, a copious amount of inappropriate flirting, but not this level of anger. And directed at his own parents? God. What was going on that Julian didn’t know?

Julian’s heart tells him this is a time for compassion and not avenging his singed ego, but he can’t help throwing in one dig.

“Yeah, well…” Julian rolls his eyes. “I guess we’ll see, won’t we?”

Cooper sighs, standing slowly, eyes begging for an exception. “Will you at least give me the
chance to prove it to you?’

Julian shrugs. “Maybe.”

“Maybe,” Cooper repeats, shaking his head, and Julian feels a little guilty. Guilty that he can’t just put the past behind them and throw himself into Cooper’s arms the way his heart and his body are begging him to. But there’s too much in between them for that. Thirty minutes of barely conversation doesn’t wipe that all away.

Cooper tosses out his coffee cup and Julian heads for the door, drawing out his steps to give Cooper a chance to catch up. Cooper rushes forward when he sees Julian reach for the door and pushes it open for him.

“Thank you,” Julian says, slightly mocking, bringing a hand up coquettishly to cover his mouth. “That’s very gallant of you.” It’s another dig. They’ve never exactly been gentlemen, not with one another. Cooper doesn’t rise to the challenge.

“Will I get to see you again?” Cooper asks, following Julian out to his car. He doesn’t touch Julian – doesn’t rest a hand on his shoulder or take him by the arm – but Julian can still feel Cooper’s warmth, like it’s a part of him. “I mean, you’re not going anywhere anytime soon – New York or France…are you?”

Julian pulls his keys from his pocket and stops in front of the driver’s side door.

“I’m not going anywhere for a bit,” he says, leaning lightly against his Jag. “And how about you? You winging your way to the coast or something?”

Cooper’s smile comes back, but only by a third. “I’ve got nowhere else to be.”

“That’s good to know,” Julian teases, fiddling with his keys, needing to occupy his hands. Cooper nods, shifting on his feet, stuck between standing pathetically in this one spot, praying that Julian will give him something before he leaves, or going back to his car, sitting in the driver’s seat, and falling apart. Julian can’t stand it. He can’t stand Cooper with his puppy dog eyes looking like he’s staying obediently at heel, waiting to have his heart ripped out. He breaks down and takes Cooper in his arms, their bodies coming together like two magnets breaking the tension of being almost close enough to touch but too far to make a connection.

“I missed you,” Cooper says, whispering against the shell of Julian’s ear. It’s three words, representing the three words Cooper wants permission to say, but he’s respecting Julian’s wishes. And dammit if that doesn’t make Julian want him more.

“I missed you, too, Coop,” Julian says softly. Cooper squeezes Julian tight, one hand finding the small of his back, the other the mid-section between his shoulder blades. Julian exhales into Cooper’s shoulder at his touch, giving Cooper room to hold on tighter.

Julian wants Cooper, but he needs this. Just this. Julian’s head melts against Cooper’s shoulder and he sighs. He can stay here with Cooper forever – in the parking lot of The Lima Bean, or in the posh and immaculate living room of the Anderson house, or on a deserted island somewhere in the South Pacific. It wouldn’t matter, as long as they’re together.

Cooper has always been an amazing hugger, but he’s definitely gotten better with age…and probably practice. Not that Julian has room to argue. It’s not like he’s been carnally faithful to their tragic love story, but that thought that has Julian pushing Cooper away.
“I’ll call you,” Julian promises. “Tonight. And we can make arrangements to spend some more time together.”

“Yeah,” Cooper says tentatively. “O-okay.”

Julian doesn’t want to leave Cooper disappointed, but Julian tells himself it’s what’s best. There’s so much he needs to do anyway, plans he needs to make. It’s probably a good thing that they called it quits early. Who knows what would have happened if they fell back into old routines. No. Julian wants slow, and this is slow. He pats Cooper lamely on the shoulder before he turns away; he doesn’t know why.

Yes, he does. Because they shouldn’t be leaving things like this. They should be kissing each other unconscious. They should be driving back to Julian’s hotel room and fucking till they break the bed. He thought it would be simple to reignite something that never completely burned out. He kind of knows the truth about Emily. He knows that Cooper loves him. So, where’s the divide? What gap hasn’t he crossed over? When did this become so complicated?

Julian unlocks his car and slides into the driver’s seat. He doesn’t see Cooper standing where he left him, and Julian frowns. He didn’t figure it would be that easy for Cooper to walk away.

Julian has his key in the ignition when he hears a knock on the passenger side window. He unlocks the door and Cooper opens it, climbing quickly inside.

“Jules…” Cooper shuts the door, turns his head, and Julian’s on him, climbing over the center console and into his lap in the passenger seat, kissing him feverishly, all pretense of waiting be damned. He belongs with Cooper. He’s always belonged with Cooper, and no amount of distance or time or other people’s hands tearing them apart can change that. There’s an empty place for him – not only in Julian’s heart, but in his entire being, so immense that it’s left Julian hollow for too long.

He’s never quite gotten used to being empty. He wants to be whole.

“Oh…oh, Julian,” Cooper moans, kissing back, stunned by the feeling of him, how they fit together perfectly, as if they’d never spent a second apart. “I thought for a minute…I didn’t think you wanted…”

“I need you,” Julian says. The words had been tickling his conscience for hours. It’s a fucking relief to finally say them out loud.

“Yes,” Cooper moans, reaching for the buttons on Julian’s jeans. “God, yes.”

“Not here,” Julian laughs, and it feels good to laugh because of Cooper. “Not now.”

“Then when?” Cooper asks, a tiny, immature whine sneaking into his otherwise sultry voice.

The idea comes to Julian like a thunderbolt – the same way it did when he was talking things over with Sebastian at Kurt’s house last night.

“I’m going to the family beach house in a week,” Julian says, breathing the words against Cooper’s neck. “Come with me?”

Cooper’s heavy pants stop moving his chest. “Aren’t…aren’t Kurt and Sebastian going to be there? Will it be okay? I don’t want Kurt to get upset.”

“He’s not upset with you,” Julian reassures him, though Julian’s not a hundred percent sure. He
figures if Kurt does harbor any resentment, Julian can find a way to sweet talk it out of him. “But I’ll make sure it is.” Julian sits up to see Cooper’s eyes, dark with raw desire, but soft, boyish and uncertain. “If it is…will you come with me?”

Cooper’s jaw drops. He starts to shake his head, which sends a cold shock down Julian’s spine. But Cooper chuckles, hands coming up to wrap around Julian’s wrists where his hands press Cooper’s shoulders into the leather seat.

“Julian, I’d…I’d love to.”

Julian raises an eyebrow.

“Are you sure?” he asks, slipping unintentionally into a derisive tone culled from years of believing in the apparent fairy tale of Cooper and Emily - years of trying to drink, toke, and fuck the image of their make-believe happily-ever-after away. “Are you sure it’s going to be okay with Emily and everything?”

“Stop it,” Cooper says, tapping Julian on the hip though the smack was meant for his ass. “I told you, she and I are just friends.”

“Yeah, well, she did come out here to be with you in your hour of need.”

Cooper takes Julian’s head between his hands and meets his eyes with as sincere an expression as Cooper Anderson has ever worn in his life.

“Julian, I don’t care if it is or if it isn’t okay – with Emily, or my parents, or anyone.” Cooper runs a thumb over Julian’s eyebrow, traveling down his cheekbones to his lips – parted and swollen and hungry to be kissed. “I just want to be with you.”

“I’m holding you to that,” Julian says. He bends low and gives Cooper one last kiss – one that he takes his time with, one that’s not quite as urgent. One that’s willing to wait. One that’s about to give up the glory of dirty front seat car sex if it means he gets to keep have Cooper and keep Cooper this time around.

“I promise,” Cooper repeats, following Julian’s kiss with his own. Julian doesn’t fully relinquish Cooper’s lips as he slides back to his seat, but inevitably they do break apart. With a blissed-out expression and the impressive outline of an erection pressing against his jeans, Cooper climbs out of the car. He closes the door, his fingertips lingering shy of the glass with a wave good-bye, and then he walks away.

Julian watches Cooper walk to his car, the man sauntering in that insufferable way he does when he thinks he’s won – his own cleverly subdued version of an end zone victory dance. Julian waits until Cooper gets into his cherry red sports car before he turns the key in his ignition, but he can’t make himself pull away before Cooper does. Julian watches him drop down into the driver’s seat, buckle his seat belt, and then start his engine. Cooper catches Julian’s gaze. He crooks a brow and grins – less discouraged, more serene, that shit-eating Cooper Anderson grin that he perfected at Dalton. He peels out of his spot, showing off for Julian, and speeds away.

Back to her, Julian can’t help thinking with venom in his lust-blown eyes. Even if they are just friends.

But Julian will have his chance. In a few short days, he’ll have Cooper to himself, then they can pick up where they shouldn’t have had to leave off.
Chapter 27

Chapter by fhartz91

Chapter Summary

So this is the entire chapter 27 - shocking, I know. It's short. I consider it a segue chapter. This leads us to the next chapter when the Smythe family shows up, and things change. I hope you enjoy. <3 This chapter also includes a prompt sent to me by several people on tumblr, hoping to see Sebastian's reaction when he finds that #47 has been crossed off Kurt's bucket list, thinking that Kurt and Blaine had done it before he and Kurt did.

Over the course of the night and into the early morning, most of the candles in the house burn themselves out, and the ones on the porch get extinguished by the wind. But inside the tent, a different, stronger fire simmers. It smolders at all points where Kurt and Sebastian touch, where their bodies press together or their limbs intertwine. They sleep at peace this way, sharing one another’s warmth, the beating of their hearts keeping close pace – sometimes together, sometimes with one an echo behind.

Sebastian sleeps deeply, his mind wandering to a place where truth muddies and reality becomes unclear. A place where even his own brain betrays him. Before dawn, Sebastian’s eyes snap open and he wakes with a start, his breath racing along with his pulse.

Trapped in the darkness, his eyes and ears struggling to wake seconds after he does, he thinks it was a dream – all of it. Hungover from excitement and adrenaline, he’s sure he’s woken up God knows where, sleeping beside God knows who, and his night with Kurt – his amazing, romantic first time with Kurt - will turn out to be just a figment of alcohol and weed (or maybe something stronger). It will dissolve into the ether, the way those dreams of Kurt always do. He blinks his eyes and looks around, trying to figure out why he’s sleeping in a tent, and who the person is wrapped around him, whose hair against his cheek feels like silk, and whose skin smells like vanilla. He hears a tiny whimper as the body twines itself tighter, and Sebastian’s heart begins to relax.

Because maybe Sebastian’s brain hasn’t added up the pieces yet, but his heart knows that voice. Its vocal signature is written on Sebastian’s skin, straight through the layers of muscle and tissue, imprinting on the bones underneath.

It’s Kurt, Sebastian realizes. He’s here.

“Kurt?” Sebastian whispers. He feels like a heel for waking him up, but he needs to hear Kurt’s voice. He needs to hear Kurt say his name just once, so he can be sure.

The voice hums in response, and Sebastian’s body calms further, bringing his breathing under control.

“Mmm, Sebastian?” Kurt murmurs, placing a small peck on Sebastian’s chest over his heart. “Sebastian, baby, what is it? Are you okay?”
“Yeah,” Sebastian says, running shaky fingers through Kurt’s hair. “Yeah, I…”

“Did you have a bad dream?” Kurt lifts his head, blinking eyelids so heavy they don’t even open.

“Yeah,” Sebastian answers. “I think I did, but…it’s over now. I’m…I’m okay.”

“Do you (yawn)…do you want to talk about it?”

“I…” Sebastian considers it, but what is he really going to say? I’ve dreamt of making love to you many times? And all those times, when it turned out to be only a dream, I’d find myself alone, or high, or with someone else, and it broke pieces of me?

Would Kurt believe him? Could Kurt believe that, after everything Sebastian’s done to him?

Maybe Sebastian can come up with something close – touch on the truth without venturing too far into it, describe the emotion without pinpointing a source. He knows Kurt wouldn’t judge him. He knows that Kurt would sympathize but…it’s too big a secret for Sebastian to admit. Sometimes it sounds farfetched even to himself.

Does he confess here, now, what holds him back from being the person he is when he’s around Kurt? What his mother meant by his sleeping around being ‘emotionally damaging’?

Or that asking Kurt to pretend to be his boyfriend wasn’t exactly necessary? That he had other options?

Sebastian cards Kurt’s hair, thinking of all the ways this might play out if he owned up to any of it.

“Sebastian?” Kurt says, sounding more awake, and a voice in Sebastian’s head says don’t. Not now.

“Maybe later?” Sebastian answers. “I’m still really tired.”

Sebastian feels Kurt breathe in, and then it hitch as he prepares to argue, but he lets it go.

“M’kay,” Kurt says. “Go back to sleep.”

Sebastian nods with a choked off laugh of relief that hides what had started as a sob.

“I will,” Sebastian sniffs. “I’m sorry I woke you, babe.”

“Mmm…” Kurt nods, muttering, words getting lost in the translation from sleep to awake, “it’s okay, ‘bastian. I’m here. (yawn) I love you. I’m…” Kurt snores softly, returning to sleep, and Sebastian sighs. Here, with Kurt in his arms, Sebastian doesn’t feel quite so wrong anymore. He doesn’t feel aimless, like he’s being carried away beyond his control. He settles beneath Kurt’s body, pulling the blanket tight around them. He buries his nose in Kurt’s hair and breathes in deep. He has him. Sebastian finally has Kurt.

Now all he has to do is figure out a way to never lose him.

When the sun rises hours later, it brings with it a light veil of morning mist, which, drop by drop over the ocean, turns into another summer storm – only this one sings against the beach house instead of wails, spattering the tent set up on the porch with gentle taps and shoves. Kurt and Sebastian greet the rain with moans, and whispered sentiments of love and affection.

Kurt wakes Sebastian this time around with a second attempt at a blow job. He doesn’t falter again, doesn’t let ancient history get in the way of enjoying this. When he slips down Sebastian’s body
and wraps his lips around his cock, he spares not a single thought for the boys of Sebastian Smythe’s past. Kurt sees only his boyfriend’s beautiful body, which Kurt has permission to touch and bite and kiss any way he pleases.

Sebastian rambles as he wakes, moaning Kurt’s name more than anything, running trembling fingers through Kurt’s hair, hooking his fingers in when Kurt sucks particularly hard. Sebastian’s skin tastes like sweat and he smells like sex. It’s an electrifying combination.

Kurt’s hands crawl up Sebastian’s torso to his chest and Sebastian grabs hold. Kurt loves this, loves that this is a thing for them. He loves that no matter what they’re doing, no matter where they are, Sebastian always searches for his hand to hold.

If Sebastian needs him, if Sebastian looks for him, he’ll find him.

Taking Sebastian’s hands is an unspoken promise that Kurt will be there.

Kurt sucks slowly, pulls gently, until his boyfriend writhes against the blanket, digging his heels into the floor of the tent and carefully bucking his hips, only shallowly fucking Kurt’s mouth.

“Kurt…my God, Kurt…” he moans. “Viens…viens ici…j’ai besoin de toi…Kurt…please…I need you now…”

Kurt doesn’t let him go easily, and Sebastian doesn’t push him away. How can he, when this is the realization of so many fantasies?

Sebastian begs a little harder, and Kurt finally pulls off him, looking up into Sebastian’s eyes. They’re almost unrecognizable in the dawning light, but Kurt would know them anywhere.

“But I want to know how you taste,” Kurt pouts, and Sebastian moans at the delicious thought of cumming down the tight, warm sheath of Kurt’s throat, coaxed there by his talented tongue.

“Oh, God…” Sebastian thinks about it a second more, then shakes his head. “A-another time. Please, Kurt. I want you.”

Kurt makes Sebastian suffer a few seconds more before he relents, rising to his hands and knees. Sebastian grabs him by the waist, spinning him around and pinning him down to the blanket. Kurt yelps in surprise, but Sebastian kisses that squeak away, padding down the pillows frantically in search of the bottle of lube. Finding it, opening it, and coating his fingers all happens with his mouth on Kurt’s, kissing him breathless. Kurt feels Sebastian’s hand reach between his legs and he opens up for him, spreading his knees wide and rising up an inch so Sebastian’s fingers can find his entrance. Sebastian is not quite as gentle as he was earlier, but that suits Kurt fine. Kurt is beyond foreplay at this point, the build-up between them having developed over hours with their naked bodies pressed against each other.

That bliss was broken momentarily when Sebastian startled Kurt awake; when he woke up calling out Kurt’s name. Kurt knew Sebastian had to have had a nightmare the way he was whimpering and sniffing. Kurt didn’t make a big deal of it at the time. He didn’t want to embarrass Sebastian. He wanted to help his boyfriend, but he was willing to wait for Sebastian to come to him, to ask for help on his own terms. So Kurt held Sebastian tight and let him know he was there.

No matter what, Kurt would be there.

After Kurt managed to fall back to sleep, all he could think of was Sebastian making love to him, laying him bare beneath him and having him until he got his fill of him.
So he’ll let Sebastian open him up again, but this time, Sebastian knows Kurt’s secrets. He knows where to touch, and how hard to touch to make Kurt’s eyes roll and his toes curl.

He knows how to make Kurt cum, crying his name.

Sebastian kisses Kurt, slower now that he has his fingers inside him, brushing over him gently and swallowing every whimper that slips past his lips.

“Tell me you want me,” Sebastian whispers, taking Kurt’s lower lip into his mouth and nibbling on it.

“I want you,” Kurt sighs.

Kurt looks up into Sebastian’s eyes, the smile on Sebastian’s face twisting into a playful smirk.

“Tell me…you want me…” Sebastian says again, more commanding, his smirk morphing from playful to positively wicked. Kurt opens his mouth to repeat what he said, exactly the way he said it, but Sebastian shakes his head, and Kurt doesn’t understand. Then Sebastian does something underhanded. With two fingers together, he finds that spot that makes Kurt whimper and rubs it, massaging in fast, small circles until Kurt’s body threatens to implode.

“Sebastian! I…uh…” Kurt squeals as Sebastian moves his fingers faster, bringing Kurt so close to cumming that his stomach begins to whorl and his fingers start to curl in on themselves. He reaches for his cock, but Sebastian grabs his wrist and holds his arm over his head, not allowing him any relief. Kurt throws his head back and groans loudly in frustration. “Sebastian…I…” Kurt mutters fragments of threats and curses until he finally gets it. “J-je te veux, Sebastian! Je te veux!”

“Bien,” Sebastian says, removing his fingers slowly and releasing Kurt’s hand. “I can’t be the only one here speaking in tongues. But why don’t we try j’ai envie de toi.”

Kurt grins at Sebastian having the gall to correct him. “Je veux te faire l’amour.”

Sebastian looks momentarily shocked, but then he chuckles. “Better,” he says, leaning in for a kiss. “Much better.”

Another condom is found, the wrapper torn open, and the latex rolled down Sebastian’s erection. Kurt kisses him, then takes the initiative, choosing to turn on his side. With kisses to Kurt’s shoulder, Sebastian slips inside his body, still tight after last night but giving little resistance. He reaches for his cock, but Sebastian grabs his wrist and holds his arm over his head, not allowing him any relief. Kurt throws his head back, and his cock feels like a glove, but it’s not just Kurt’s body. It’s his everything – his mind, his heart, his wit, his conceit, his mad intelligence. Everything Kurt is matches everything Sebastian is – the real Sebastian. The one that hid so long behind insults and deceit. In Kurt’s arms, inside his body, Sebastian gets to be the truest version of himself, and that in itself is a release.

Inside the house, in the hallway outside his brother’s open bedroom door, Julian stands, listening to the undeniable music of Kurt and Sebastian sharing this moment of intimacy. Lurking on his brother and his boyfriend having sex might be considered a gross invasion of privacy – one that could bring up bad blood, cause Sebastian to shut him out again. But Julian isn’t eavesdropping for any of the number of sordid reasons Sebastian would accuse him of. (Not that he hasn’t been guilty of those before, but this time he isn’t.)

Julian is listening because this sweet sound of two people making love helps him remember.

He closes his eyes and he’s in Ohio with Cooper. He leans his head back, eyes squeezed shut, and
they’re children at Dalton, fooling around in secret – and yes, they were just children. Julian sees that now, not that that realization diminishes any of the things that happened, it’s simply a truth he’s come to terms with. It doesn’t make what he felt then any less real, but it makes what he feels now much more relevant. He blinks his eyes and they’re older, passing one another by like strangers, with only a flash of blue eyes meeting to remind him of the hope that had once been. Another blink and it’s a few days ago, in the front seat of Julian’s Jag, Cooper turning his head to speak and Julian stealing the taste of espresso from Cooper’s lips.

Julian hears Sebastian tell Kurt that he loves him. After a pause filled with kisses and sighs, Kurt tells Sebastian that he loves him, too, and Julian smiles. He almost fist-pumps the air. It feels like a personal victory for him. It shouldn’t. He shouldn’t take credit for any part of this. After all, what did he actually do? Kurt and Sebastian fell in love and came together on their own. No, that’s not where the victory is. The victory is in knowing that his little brother has a chance – a chance to grow from this bitter teenager who throws himself around like he’s nothing, to a man who truly knows how to love.

Because Sebastian loves Kurt and Kurt loves him back.

And that gives Julian hope.

***

Kurt side-eyes Sebastian while he stabs into his breakfast with murderous fervor, picking apart his slice of French toast piece by piece, white clouds of powdered sugar puffing into the air when the tines of his fork strike the plate. Kurt takes a bite of his breakfast, convinced that whatever’s wrong with Sebastian has nothing to do with their meal, as Kurt made it, and it’s absolutely delicious.

“Why are you Mr. Grumpy Pants this morning?” Kurt asks coolly, not giving much weight to Sebastian’s current mood. Sebastian has gotten better at regulating his feelings around Kurt over the summer, but he still has his sudden, inexplicable swings. Like this one, apparently, where Sebastian, in sullen silence, attacks his breakfast like a simple mixture of eggs and sugar baked into bread has somehow done him a grievous wrong. It has crossed Kurt’s mind that this might have something to do with his nightmare. Kurt still hasn’t said anything outright, but he’s hoping he’s opened enough of a door that Sebastian knows he’s welcome to enter and start a conversation.

Sebastian doesn’t raise his eyes at Kurt’s question, but he sneers at being called Mr. Grumpy Pants. “I mean, you didn’t have to make breakfast this morning…” Kurt slides in close, talking low in his boyfriend’s ear, “and I know I definitely can’t walk straight this morning…” That comment earns Kurt a half-smile. “So I’d say things are going pretty good for you.”

Kurt kisses Sebastian lightly on the cheek…then again…and again, peppering his faces with kisses and cajoling a smile from his lips.

“Alright! Alright!” Sebastian puts down his fork, leaving a massacre of ruined French toast on his plate. “I saw something…” Sebastian starts - a vague beginning, but that in itself feels like more considering Sebastian has rarely beat around the bush about anything with Kurt, almost to the point of being cruel.

“Well, what did you see?” Kurt folds his hands in his lap and puts on his sincerest active listening face.

Sebastian’s head nods back and forth, a visual representation of the thoughts ping-pponging in his brain as he assembles them to his best advantage, and Kurt can’t help thinking Oh God, this is going to be a biggie.
“I may have seen something…on your phone…”

“Oh, God!” Kurt throws his hands in the air. “Here we go again! What do I need to do to keep you out of my phone? Get a restraining order?”

“This isn’t a new infraction,” Sebastian assures Kurt in a way that manages to make it sound like this is more Kurt’s fault for being offended than Sebastian’s for rifling through his property. “It’s from, you know, before, so calm your tits.”

Kurt inhales deep and closes his eyes, working to keep from jumping straight to offense and going high-pitchy in the process, because whatever this is still might have something to do with Sebastian’s nightmare. It’s time for Kurt to put his indignation aside and be the supportive boyfriend.

He can always get Sebastian back later for being a nosy jerk.

“Oh, so what heinous thing did you see on my phone?” Kurt asks. “What do I have to apologize for even though you’re the one invading my privacy?”

Sebastian scowls like he’s about to tell Kurt to forget it, but he changes his mind. He scratches at the table top, clearing his throat, getting ready to explain.

“It was…” Sebastian looks immensely uncomfortable, as if Kurt had stumbled on his baby pictures or something equally embarrassing, “something I saw…on your bucket list…”

Sebastian drums his fingers on the table.

“Yeah?” Kurt asks. “Okay…” He keeps his interrogation open-ended to give Sebastian every opening to continue. “So, which one bothered you so much?” Kurt tries to think over the entries. Which ones are left that Sebastian might find offensive? They’re all pretty tame as far as Kurt is concerned…well, perhaps for the one about streaking the Academy Awards red carpet, but that one is still in question. Or maybe it’s one of the crossed-out ones. Could Kurt have already done something that’s making Sebastian look at him in a different light?

Seeing as Kurt has never blackmailed anyone, he doesn’t see that Sebastian is in a position to judge.

“It was the…” Sebastian looks like he’s considering whether cutting out his tongue is a better option than actually admitting what he’s about to admit, “kiss your boyfriend…under the fireworks…thing.”

Kurt opens his eyes wider. He’d forgotten all about that. Well, no, he hasn’t forgotten about that. He doesn’t think he will ever forget. It’s more like he didn’t realize that Sebastian finding it would bother him. Of course, he never dreamed that his phone would suddenly become Sebastian’s favorite plaything. Is Sebastian offended that Kurt crossed it off after that fourth at the Smythe’s house? But how would Sebastian have known that’s when Kurt did it? Sebastian didn’t even know about Kurt’s bucket list then. Kurt could have crossed it off any time.

“If it bothered you, why didn’t you talk to me about it?”

“Well, I’ve been a little busy, you know…” Sebastian doesn’t finish, and Kurt suspects it’s because he doesn’t want to sound like a dick by saying, “because I’ve been busy wooing you,” or something similar.

Sebastian purposefully not wanting to sound like a dick. He’s definitely making progress.
Kurt furrows his brow.

“I don’t understand,” Kurt says, reaching across the table to take Sebastian’s hand. Sebastian stops his incessant drumming in favor of taking it. “Why would that bother you?” Kurt sighs. “If I recall, our kiss on the fourth of July was pretty amazing.”

Sebastian tightens his hold on Kurt’s hand and locks his jaw.

“I thought our kiss was pretty amazing,” he says. “I thought that kiss…meant something. I know it might sound weird, especially considering how we were at the time, but it didn’t feel like part of the act to me, you know? And I thought…”

“That I felt that way, too?”

“Yeah.” Sebastian pauses when that word cracks. “After everything that’s happened, I’d started to think that maybe it was some kind of turning point, you know. But apparently not.”

Kurt stares at Sebastian, at the set in his jaw, at their hands joined together, baffled by Sebastian’s hurt.

“Wait…” Kurt says, shaking his head to get his thoughts into some sense of order, “do you think…that me and Blaine…”

Sebastian’s jaw becomes so tight a vein stands out on his neck. “Well, didn’t you?”

Kurt wants to laugh, but he doesn’t want to hurt Sebastian more. Miscommunications. That’s what this whole summer’s been about up to this point. Miscommunications, wrong turns, and a variety of other comical missteps.

“You should have asked me about it,” Kurt says.

“But…” Sebastian says dramatically, knowing that the words that follow are going to sound ridiculous, “I didn’t want you to know that I went through your phone.”

This time Kurt does laugh. He anticipates Sebastian’s reaction and holds his hand with both of his so his surly boyfriend can’t yank it away.

“Stop laughing at me,” Sebastian growls, but he doesn’t make a move to take his hand back.

“I’m not laughing at you, Sebastian,” Kurt says. “I’m laughing because…” He stops to catch his breath. “Do you know when that was added to my calendar?” He doesn’t bring up the fact that he didn’t add it. That’s an unnecessary piece of information and contrary to the point.

“No,” Sebastian says. “I didn’t check.”

Kurt sighs, bringing Sebastian’s hand to his mouth, having to lean forward to get to it when Sebastian resists, and kissing across his knuckles.

“Well,” Kurt says, “if you had talked to me, you would have found out that that got added to my calendar for this summer, which means Blaine and I didn’t do that one…”

Sebastian’s blush is slow to show, but his smile is immediate, and more than a tiny bit victorious.

“We did.”

“Yup,” Kurt says, not even minding the sound of superiority in Sebastian’s voice. “You and I
crossed that one off. That was our first.”

Sebastian sits up straight in his chair, picks up his fork, and digs in to his breakfast. The change in his attitude is remarkable, and Kurt is both amused and surprised.

“So, I take it you feel better now?” Kurt asks, watching Sebastian pull a 180 and devour his food.

“Mm-hmm,” he mumbles. “It proves what I always suspected.”

Kurt raises a brow. He can’t wait to hear this one.

“And what was that, pray tell?”

Sebastian swallows the last bite of his French toast.

“That even back then, you were harboring a huge crush on me.”

Kurt scoffs in disgust and drops Sebastian’s hand.

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Sebastian makes no elaborate plans (even though he has a couple of ideas up on deck), no day trips, no adventures that will take them far from the beach house so that they can hang out, spending their time just being around each other - not that they hadn’t been for the past week, but in a much different way than before. They touch each other more, smile at each other more. Sometimes they stop whatever they’re doing to hold each other for no reason. Sebastian becomes strangely silly, almost on a crusade to make Kurt laugh, and Kurt retaliates by telling really lame jokes that Finn and Puck taught him, most of them heterosexually X-rated.

He tries to alter some of them in the middle, but that just makes them worse.

By mid-morning, the rain clouds burn off and they lay out on the beach, lining up their towels side by side and holding hands in between. When the temperature starts to heat up, they head to the water for a swim – first wading, then splashing, then full on tackling each other in the surf. Kurt shoves Sebastian backwards into an oncoming wave, knocking him off his feet and under the water. Sebastian sneaks up on Kurt from beneath the swell and grabs him around the waist, threatening to dunk him. Kurt curses, and when that doesn’t work, he negotiates, not keen on getting salt water up his nose, knowing it will drain like a sieve afterward, bringing the contents of his sinuses with it. But Sebastian locks Kurt against him, about to lift him into his arms and toss him into the next wave. Sandwiched close together with nothing but their swim trunks between them, they forget about wrestling and make out instead, there in the shallow water, enjoying long, passionate kisses as the sun warms their skin and the cool waves crash around their knees.

With the Smythe family heading their way, they take advantage of their last day of solitude to make love, moving from the porch to Sebastian’s bedroom when the sun outside gets too strong and the tent too hot. Not that that stops them. The hour shower after is worth the near heatstroke they suffer to get them in there. They opt to use the outdoor shower, the ice cold water a nice change from the hot showers they’ve taken before, and an exhilarating addition to the taboo of being seen from the beach (okay, a *private* beach…plus the shower has a door, but once or twice that door gets *accidentally* bumped open, exposing the nude tangle of Kurt and Sebastian’s bodies to the sand, ocean, and sky).

It’s a controlled danger, and to Kurt, that’s the best kind.

Julian makes an appearance, popping in and out a few times, unannounced, mostly for food and a
change of clothes, though considering he can afford to eat anywhere, Kurt suspects that Julian might be checking in on them. Kurt doesn’t know where Julian goes when he leaves – neither boy asks and Julian doesn’t offer to tell them. Sebastian seems happy to ignore his older brother’s irritating presence, but to Kurt, Julian seems downright sedate, his mind lost in another universe that’s much more interesting than this one. Kurt catches Julian from the porch, walking the shoreline after lunch, shoes and socks off, jeans rolled up to his knees, talking on his cell phone. Mostly he smiles but occasionally he laughs, and when he does, Kurt gets a glimpse of the boy he must have been when he attended Dalton.

A boy a lot like Sebastian.

The boy who fell in love with Cooper Anderson.

So Kurt knows Julian has to be talking to Cooper.

Watching Julian talk to Cooper brings the thought of Blaine briefly to Kurt’s mind – where is he, what’s he doing, what’s going on in his life…is he still with that guy? But as that thought flares, pestering him, eating holes into his happiness like a termite through supple wood, suddenly Sebastian is there. He puts a hand on Kurt’s shoulder, turns him away from his view of the ocean, and kisses him, softer than his possessive, claiming kisses, but still just as much a brand – a mark on Kurt’s lips. Sebastian only has to kiss him for a few seconds before the entirety of the world and everything in it disappears, leaving behind the only things that matter - the heat pooling in Kurt’s gut and the boy putting it there.

Julian leaves again and comes back in the evening, right around dinner time. He blows by Kurt and Sebastian puttering in the kitchen. He walks straight to the sofa, drops down on the cushion, and props his left ankle on his right knee. Staring at Sebastian with a teasing (albeit tired) smirk, and says, “So, where’s the grub, Iron Chef Ohio?”

“There’s a toaster in the kitchen,” Sebastian answers without missing a beat. “Turn it upside down and shake it over a plate.”

“Don’t be like that,” Julian whines. “I’ve had a long day.”

“And I care?” Sebastian mutters, putting a stack of freshly washed dishes away.

“What about your man? Don’t you know that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach?”

“Really?” Sebastian scoffs. “And when’s the last time you cooked?”

“I don’t,” Julian says, “but then again, I don’t have a gorgeous young thing like Kurt here to seduce.” Julian’s teasing eyes sparkle in Kurt’s direction, and Kurt sees him come up with a plan. “Come to think of it,” he says, scooting off his seat, “maybe I should get my ass in the kitchen and whip up something. It might be nice for Kurt to know that there’s more than one Smythe man that can cook.”

“Sebastian,” Kurt says, turning and wrapping his arms around his boyfriend’s waist, “you didn’t tell me your dad can cook?”

Sebastian chuckles and Julian, defeated by his own remark, sits back down.

“Don’t worry about my man, big brother,” Sebastian says, kissing the crown of Kurt’s head, adding to the countless number of kisses already there. “I’ve got this.”

Sebastian did have dinner under control, he just doesn’t want Julian to be a part of it. But seeing as
Julian’s not likely to go anywhere until he’s fed, Sebastian puts off his plans to make Kurt a salmon almondine and orders a pizza.

“Ah, Seb! You copped out! And I was so looking forward to seeing you in an apron,” Julian jeers when the pizza arrives, but that doesn’t keep him from grabbing three pieces for himself.

“I hope you don’t mind,” Sebastian says as he puts two slices on a plate for Kurt. “I’m not really in the mood to cook for Captain Asshat.”

“It’s alright,” Kurt assures him, taking his plate and leaving Sebastian with a kiss on the chin. “I understand. Another time?”

Sebastian smiles at Kurt and gives him a wink.

“Of course,” he says, looking as warmed by Kurt needing reassurance that there will be a next time as Sebastian is giving it.

The pizza’s not from a chain restaurant, but a local Italian pizzeria not far from the beach, popular with vacationers and locals alike. It ends up being a really good pizza, Kurt has to admit (Sebastian says it’s because of the water), but he doesn’t like missing out on one of Sebastian’s handcrafted meals, and marks this as another in a small series of strikes against Julian, a tally that changes up and down every time Julian opens his mouth.

The three of them work their way through a large pizza as if they haven’t eaten in weeks. Kurt and Sebastian banter back and forth, debating the merits and deficits of the Warblers vs New Directions, rehashing old arguments, but mostly discussing some of the things Kurt can expect when Liv gets there and takes over planning the activities for the rest of their stay (not because Sebastian wants to turn over that responsibility, but because there’s really no way of stopping her). Julian contributes by jumping to Kurt’s defense during the argument portion of the conversation, then zones out when the subject changes to Liv and her military precision scheduling skills, dropping back in when there’s only crusts of the pizza left.

“So, what do you boys have planned for after dinner entertainment?” he asks. “Are you guys going to fuck some more? Because in that case, I should go to your room, Seb, and look for a good seat.”

“Julian…” Sebastian starts in the same warning tone he uses whenever Julian brings up their sex life – even if they only legitimately started having one in the last couple of days.

“Or were you thinking of going at it right here?” Julian continues. “Because, I won’t lie…that’s hot. It’ll give me something to visualize during Liv’s boring Pictionary tournaments.”

“Julian…” This one comes from Kurt, having his left hand crushed in Sebastian’s grip.

“Though might I suggest you guys switch it up a bit? Poor Kurt looks like he’s going to need a hernia pillow from now on.”

“How about we watch something on TV?” Kurt suggests, cutting the commentary short before Sebastian leaps for Julian’s throat, though Julian’s not wrong about the pillow. Not that Kurt cares. Kurt doesn’t know yet where Sebastian stands on the issue of Kurt topping him, but for now, even if he can’t sit comfortably, he’s not complaining, especially when Sebastian puts a pillow from the couch between his legs and gestures with a couple of playful pats for Kurt to join him.

The satellite has long since returned, but they break down and watch Top Gun – the vote 2 to 1, making Sebastian the odd-man out. (Julian leapt in and voted in favor of the minute he saw Sebastian vote against. He remembers firsthand how much Sebastian loathes that movie. That’s
one of the main reasons Julian bought it the last time the satellite went out.) But halfway through
the movie, Julian stands up, says, “It’s been fun, kiddos. Thanks for the ‘za, Seb. Always a
pleasure, Kurt. See you guys tomorrow,” and leaves. Kurt and Sebastian share a look when they
hear his Jag drive away, both curious what prompted him to leave and why (Sebastian less so,
looking relieved to have his brother gone). Kurt has a theory, seeing as once the movie started Kurt
and Sebastian became a little more interested in each other than in the plight of Maverick and
Goose, and whether or not they’d make it to flight school.

Kurt was basically straddling Sebastian’s lap when Julian made his exit.

Perhaps Julian isn’t quite the voyeur he claims to be.

Or maybe it’s too hard being around two people in love when the one you love can’t be around.

But not for long, Kurt thinks, knowing that he’ll be face to face with Cooper again soon enough.

Once they figure out that Julian’s not coming back, they turn off the movie, clean up what’s left of
dinner, and retreat back to their tent.

Undressing goes speedily now that any and all embarrassment is gone, the hurdle of possible
rejection or biting ridicule no longer an issue. Kurt offers himself to Sebastian, and Sebastian buries
himself inside his boyfriend. Kurt leans back against him, head on his shoulder, sighing with
contentment and subdued ecstasy, absorbing Sebastian’s shallow thrusts and the sensual touch of
the hands massaging his skin.

“Mmm…I think I could do just this for the rest of the night,” Kurt says, rolling his head on
Sebastian’s shoulder to look him in the eyes.

“Really?” Sebastian answers with an excitement he’d normally crush, but he doesn’t. He doesn’t
mind Kurt hearing it because this isn’t normal. Not for him. Making love (not fucking, but making
love), being in love, getting the boy (not just any boy, the boy as far as he’s concerned), Sebastian
is a stranger to these concepts. “Then we’ll do this all night.”

“You promise?” Kurt asks, sleep sneaking into the tone of his voice.

“I promise,” Sebastian says, cradling Kurt against him, making love to him slowly, not in any hurry
to get to a destination, just enjoying the stops along the way. Kurt’s breathing becomes an even
rhythm as he falls to sleep and Sebastian can barely believe that this – any of it – is real. He holds
Kurt close, and inside Sebastian, deep, deep inside, old hurts finally begin to heal.
Chapter 28

Chapter by fhartz91

Kurt wakes the following morning to Sebastian’s arm snaked around his waist; the sand-laden down-comforter clumsily wrapped around them both (since they had made love burrito-ed inside it, and then just sort of shifted it at the ends to cover whatever body parts felt the chill, which turned out to be most of Kurt’s front but not his legs, and Sebastian’s legs and body minus his back); and Julian's *Artful Dodger* face smiling deviously at him through a traitorous crack in the tent door flap. The smile that Julian has chosen - curling at the edges like that of a cartoon villain and showcasing the tips of his perfect, gleaming white eyeteeth - would be eerie if it wasn’t so freaking annoying. He appears completely dressed, though Kurt can only see the broad shoulders and long neck of him, but his electric eyes are brimming with unleashed sarcastic commentary.

The only thing that seems a little off about his usual mode of effortless perfection is his hair. It's not as primly styled as is the practice of the Smythe boys. Instead, it seems mussed. Not purposefully mussed, which Kurt could attribute to a conscious *de rigueur*, but bedhead mussed, like he slept on the sofa or in his car all night. In fact, Kurt can’t remember if Julian has officially moved in to his room in the beach house yet. Kurt assumed he had, because where else would he be sleeping? But the more that Kurt reflects on the time he’s seen him there - when he was hiding in wait in the living room and caught him and Sebastian furiously tearing their clothes off on their way to Sebastian’s bedroom, or when he had joined them for pizza and a movie but then left halfway through - Kurt doesn’t really know for certain where Julian has been spending his nights. It doesn’t seem as though he’s taken the time to make himself comfortable here yet. His arriving insanely early (*Is it early?* Kurt assumes so from the sunlight diffused into a dozen shades of grey by the morning mist out over the ocean) points to him bedding down somewhere close by, so more than likely, not a hotel.

Maybe he’s *not* comfortable here, spending time with Kurt and Sebastian alone with the whatever it is that hangs heavy between Sebastian and Julian; not comfortable with the thought of bringing Cooper here for whoever’s sake, whether it’s Kurt’s or his own. Or maybe it *is* about bringing Cooper here and finalizing the relationship whose legs they seem to be testing out. Maybe that’s why Julian chose to bring Cooper to North Carolina, because “coming out” to Julian’s family will be a hell-of-a-lot easier than coming out to the rest of their world.

Better to go into war with a battalion behind you than to try and go it alone. Kurt knows that personally from his time dealing with Karofsky. He was brave enough to confront him, but having the entire Glee Club behind him didn’t hurt either.

Kurt knows that whatever happens when this relationship comes to light, he has Julian’s back (Kurt cringes mentally as that phrase surfaces again, but he just woke up, so he can’t be held responsible for whatever unoriginal and overused phraseology his comatose brain rudely abandons him with), and so will Sebastian, because even if Sebastian didn’t love his brother, which Kurt is confident that deep down he does most ardently, this seems like the kind of fight, and the kind of adversary, that Sebastian would take on for shits and giggles. Olivia would be Julian’s shieldmaiden and lead the charge, not to mention Charlotte, who Kurt can picture tearing into naysayers with her teeth. (The Andersons, perhaps? Because whom else would Julian be hesitant to reveal his and Cooper’s secret relationship to?)

“Good morning, gorgeous,” Julian says, throwing Kurt a kiss and a wink, officially dislodging Kurt’s thoughts from their tangential musing. “You know, morning sex hair *really* suits you.”
“Julian!” Kurt hisses, attempting to keep his scolding *sotto voce* so as not to wake the exhausted boy behind him – the one breathing pleasantly against Kurt’s neck with their limbs intertwined, holding Kurt so incredibly close he would think Sebastian was trying to meld their bodies together so he’d never have to let him go. “What the fu---?”

“Calm down, kitty cat,” Julian purrs. Kurt grits his teeth. He absolutely *loathes* being cut off, which Julian seems to find positively adorable. Another strike against the once stroke-fuel worthy Julian Smythe. “I just thought you two stunningly naked gentleman might be interested to know…” Lush lips transform into an even creepier, bizarre mutation of what Kurt considers the Smythe boys’ trademark Cheshire grin, “*they’re heeerrrrreeee.*”

Kurt’s brow furrows. He knows that should mean something, something important. Something that should prompt him to leave the comfortable arms and indulgent body of his boyfriend *tout suite.* Still mildly asleep and sex intoxicated, with his boyfriend’s bare skin flush against him, Kurt doesn’t immediately comprehend who *they* might be, what *they* are there, until the words, “Boys! Oh, boys!” sing through the air, rising above the lullaby of the ocean.

“We’re out here, Mom,” Julian replies, taking the liberty of answering for them. “But give us a minute. Some of us are still…*indecent.*” He punctuates his sentence with a growl that sets Kurt’s nerves on edge.

“Well, don’t take too long…” This time, the voice sounds closer, speaking through the crack of the door to Sebastian’s room. “We can’t wait to see you guys!”

Kurt goes rigid in Sebastian’s arms with the fear that Charlotte Smythe may wander out on to the porch and discover them there in their love nest, wrapped naked in each other’s arms, but as flashbacks often do, they intrude, and he instantaneously relaxes.

“Well, you don’t look too concerned about the prospect of my poor, innocent mother coming out here and finding you guys *in flagrante delicto,*” Julian comments when Kurt’s eyelids flutter shut. His eyes roll behind his lids at Julian’s assertion that Charlotte Smythe would wither like a violet in the face of PG-13 nudity, and he snuggles into Sebastian’s embrace.

“Why should I be?” Kurt asks with a yawn. “It wouldn’t be the first time.”

“Why, Kurt!” Julian gasps, feigning shock. “Are you telling me that my dear, sweet mother has already caught you and my brother *in the act?* Sebastian, I’m insulted!” he exclaims, cluing Kurt in to the fact that Sebastian is awake. “You’ve been holding out on me. And I thought we were friends.”

“I don’t know when or how you would have gotten *that* impression.” Sebastian catches Kurt’s yawn. He raises an unimpressed brow over Kurt’s head at Julian’s too amused expression.

“But Sebastian,” Julian persists, his penchant for stalling getting on Kurt’s nerves, “our exploits are legendary. We’re two of a kind, birds of a feather. You’re the Pancho to my Villa, the Cyrano to my de Bergerac…”

“Then in the spirit of so-called *brotherhood,* could you give us a hand here?” Sebastian cuts in when his brother doesn’t shut up or move his ass.

“With what, little bro? Do you need me to help you get this charming young man dressed, or…”

“Can you hit the fucking bricks so we can get ready?”
Julian tuts, pretending to look wounded but with a grin on his face that refuses to quit.

“Man, Sebby,” he says, standing up straight. Kurt can see him completely now as he backs away, dressed rather casually considering the Julian Smythe norm, and yes, it appears from his rumpled t-shirt and tragically wrinkled dark wash Gucci jeans that he may have spent the night in his Jag. “When did you turn into a dull old dude?”

“Mmm-hmm…” Sebastian doesn’t dignify Julian’s jab with a response, too occupied with the softness of Kurt’s neck and the habit-forming heat of Kurt’s mouth the second he’s the tiniest bit satisfied that Julian will leave them alone. Kurt curls up against him, turning in his embrace to give Sebastian better access to his lips.

“So, are you ready to go out and be the handsome social butterfly we all know and love?”

Kurt’s heart skips at the word love, the way it always seems to when Sebastian says it, but he answers first with a small, regretful smile. “Would it be awful if I said no?”

“Not at all,” Sebastian reassures him with pecks to the bridge of his nose. “We can stay out here as long as you need…” He doesn’t say want, because he knows that Kurt needs this - this closeness, this quiet, this time away. And Sebastian wants nothing more than to give it to him. He wants to give Kurt everything. “But I’m not sure how long they’ll be willing to wait for us before they storm their happy asses in. They kind of like you, you know.”

Kurt chuckles. “Good point.” He holds Sebastian closer, tighter. “Just tell me we’ll be able to do something close to this, even with them here? That I’ll be able to fall asleep making love to you and wake up in your arms?”

“I promise,” Sebastian says, placing a kiss on Kurt’s forehead. “I’ll find us a way.”

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The atmosphere in the house transforms drastically with everyone else descending upon it. The spacious abode becomes a little claustrophobic with more bodies in it, and the ambiance, with its ever-present veil of romantic/sexual tension hovering in the air, becomes a bit more family-friendly. Even the ocean seems quieter, taking a back seat to Charlotte and Olivia relieving Sebastian of the title of “cruise director” and planning the itinerary from here on out.

But even though Kurt will be exchanging his week of turbulent, deliciously drama-filled, Harlequin Romance-esque fantasy getaway for something more along the lines of Sweet Valley High, it’s not an unpleasant change. He likes the feeling of family. He enjoys the good-natured jesting, the laughter, even what he foresees will be the occasional joke at his expense. It’s nice to be part of a unit like theirs and feel like he really belongs. That was one of the things missing in Kurt’s relationship with Blaine. Kurt loved Blaine, and there was a time when he was infatuated with Cooper (a time that Kurt has been eradicating from his memory). But Kurt wanted to love Blaine’s parents like they were an extension of his family, the way his father and Carole had come to love Blaine, and he had high hopes that they would love him back, but they never quite got there.

Blaine’s parents seemed to avoid Kurt like a canker. Considering what Sebastian explained to him early on about the importance the Andersons placed on distinctions like ‘new’ money and ‘old’ money, their distance from him had begun to make sense. Kurt may be a Congressman’s son, but that’s only a recent development. Kurt came from no money at all. It’s ironic how something like that would matter to the Anderson’s, who had consented to sending their youngest son to a public school twice, and not to the Smythes.
The second Charlotte sets eyes on the boys slipping conspicuously out of Sebastian’s bedroom, sharing guilty grins over their disheveled appearances, she rushes at them, arms wide, and gathers them together in a joint embrace.

“Oh…my…goodness,” she murmurs, squeezing them both. “It’s so good to see you two again.”

“Mom,” Sebastian choke out with Kurt’s hair stuffed in his mouth, “it’s barely been a week.”

“What? A week’s not long enough for me to miss my boys?”

Kurt blushes at being labeled “one of her boys”. He knows Sebastian catches it, too, when he feels a kiss drop on to his head.

Charlotte takes a step back, managing to keep one hand on Kurt’s bicep and the other on Sebastian’s shoulder. She appraises them with a glance. “Why, don’t you two look…rested.”

“They should,” Julian chirps in as he passes behind, heading towards his bedroom carrying a suitcase. “They’ve barely left the house.”

“That’s not true,” Sebastian says, sticking out a leg to trip Julian that his brother deftly avoids despite the heavy-looking bag he’s lugging.

“Of course it’s not,” Charlotte says, shooting Julian a stern-ish glare.

“Please tell me he hasn’t taken you to the mall yet,” Olivia begs. “I explicitly told him not to take you so that I could take you.”

“Like I would ever choose to go to a mall,” Sebastian retorts.

“Oh, Kurt! I’m so glad you’re here!” Olivia says over his brother’s remark. “We’re going to have so much fun!” She claps her fingertips together, behaving more like a teenager than the other teenagers in the room. “You have to tell me how much you love it out here! Tell me everything you guys have done so far!”

“Yeah,” Greg says, standing behind his wife and joining the conversation. “What did you kids do out here all by yourselves?”

The first thing that leaps to Kurt’s mind is sex. They’ve had sex. Correction. They’ve made love. Out on the porch in their tent, they finally made love. Aside from that, they’ve done a lot of fooling around – on the bed, on the living room floor, in Sebastian’s Mustang, out on the sand surrounded by strangers partying and getting high. When he searches for a single other thing that they’ve done together, the only thing that his brain offers as a replacement for carnal pleasure is skinny dipping.

“Well, uh…”

“I took him clam digging,” Sebastian adds helpfully, trying to stem the possibility that Kurt might swallow his tied tongue.

“Oh, that poor boy!” Charlotte laughs. “I thought you liked him!”

“Actually, it was a lot more fun that I thought it was going to be,” Kurt says in Sebastian’s defense. “Plus, he made me dinner after, so that kind of made up for getting me filthy.”

Charlotte looks at her husband, and Greg, sharing a similar expression that Kurt can’t define, looks
“Sebastian…cooked?” Greg asks.

“Yup.” Kurt glances over his shoulder at Sebastian, a bashful grin starting on Sebastian’s lips the second Kurt’s proud gaze falls on his face. “He’s made most of our meals, as a matter of fact. He’s a really talented chef.”

“Is that right?” Greg says. He doesn’t say it like he doesn’t know this about his son, just that he’s surprised that Kurt knows. Which doesn’t seem to make any sense because, if Kurt and Sebastian have been dating as long as Sebastian had been telling his parents they were, wouldn’t they assume that Sebastian would have cooked for him by now?

Or is this one of those things about Sebastian that he doesn’t normally let other people see?

“We sang karaoke,” Sebastian admits, eyes flicking up to Olivia’s face to see how she’ll react. Her indignant posture and expression are worth the mention. “We went up in a hot air balloon…” Sebastian says in an affectionate tone, giving Kurt a squeeze.

“Yeah,” Kurt says. “Yeah, we did.”

“Oh my God! That sounds so romantic!” Olivia gushes. “Brian!” she calls to her fiancé, who appears in the doorway with two more suitcases. “They went up in a hot air balloon! We need to do that, too!” Kurt notices Brian’s face go pale. It would seem that Brian might be a tad afraid of heights, too. “I want to see pictures!” Olivia presses. “Tell me my brother remembered to take pictures!”

“We have pictures,” Kurt laughs. “Don’t worry.” Kurt can’t help himself. Olivia’s joy on their behalf is contagious.

“I saw the tent on the way up,” Gregory remarks cautiously, eyes shifting between Charlotte and Olivia, the three sharing a significant look. “It looks like you guys were camping? Out on the porch? That’s new.”

“Yeah, well, we thought it might be nice to sleep out under the stars, and I thought it would be safer out there than on the beach,” Sebastian explains with finality, quick to wrap up this piece of conversation before it becomes the topic. Gregory nods, and Olivia goes back to her own unpacking, but Charlotte, her inquisitive eyes worried, seems to be waiting for something more.

“And…was it nice?” she asks, looking directly at Sebastian for an answer.

“Yes,” he says, drawing Kurt closer to rest his chin on his boyfriend’s head and breathe him in. “It was. Very nice.”

Kurt forgets where they are for a second when Sebastian hugs him, forgets that they’re standing in the living room, talking to Sebastian’s parents. His eyelids drift shut at the contact, and Sebastian’s automatically do the same. Charlotte wraps her husband’s arms around her in a similar fashion and sighs. Kurt can’t see her face, but she sounds inexplicably relieved.

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Charlotte, Greg, Olivia, and Brian get the bulk of their things unloaded and moved to their rooms in close to thirty minutes, but settling in takes the majority of the day. In between rapid fire conversation, which seems to take precedence over anything, and switch topics like the wind, they break for lunch, a walk on the beach, and an impromptu game of badminton using a half-size set
for children that Olivia digs out of one of the utility closets. Kurt knows that he must look
absolutely ridiculous chasing a birdie using a racket the size of a fly swatter, but he’s having too
much fun to care. He collides with Sebastian more than once, who has been fighting him the whole
game for badminton supremacy even though they’re on the same team.

The first time is probably an accident. The next three times, probably not.

The game ends in an all-out puppy pile, with Julian on the bottom.

Teasing comments get tossed around about Sebastian whipping them up one of his *fabulous*
gourmet meals for dinner, but Greg kindly rescues his son by ordering in from a Thai place nearby.
After dinner, the contingent of newcomers decides to go for a secondary stroll down the beach,
giving Kurt and Sebastian the golden opportunity to sneak into the shower together. But when they
shower till the water runs cold and the family has yet to return, Kurt becomes suspicious about
what they could be doing.

He sincerely hopes that they haven’t taken it upon themselves to give him and Sebastian privacy,
which would imply that they know what the two of them are doing up in the beach house alone…
which they *are*, but he doesn’t feel comfortable about everyone not only knowing about it, but
adjusting their schedules accordingly.

“Don’t sweat it, babe. They’re probably busy going over last last *last* minute wedding business, and
you know how that gets,” Sebastian reassures him as they snuggle in bed. They opted to sleep in
Sebastian’s room since Kurt’s back had caught a twinge from a combination of the weathered
porch floorboards and the persistent ocean chill. Sebastian could be right. It seems like Sebastian’s
parents and Olivia are always going over “last minute wedding business”.

After the wedding takes place, what will everyone have to talk about? The honeymoon probably.
Then kids. Liv’s life is moving forward, milestone by milestone, and her family is there with her
every step of the way.

And Kurt feels slightly envious.

Kurt is in no way ready for marriage and kids. Hell, he doesn’t even know if he’ll be able to attend
college yet or not. But he had plans, too – graduate from college with honors, perform in a
Broadway musical, marriage by thirty *legally*. Thoughts of his acceptance, his plans, the money,
all of it settles heavy like a sickness in his belly.

“Good,” Kurt says, letting the sickness lie since there’s nothing he can do about it right now but
ignore it, “because I like having you, and the house, all to myself again.”

“Yup. There are some perks to privacy,” Sebastian agrees, his hands sliding down Kurt’s chest and
stomach to slip underneath the waistband of his pants. Kurt squirms, but he submits to Sebastian’s
hands, Sebastian’s gentle touch welcome *whenever* and *wherever*.

“Could you imagine if we were going to the same college together?” Kurt sighs as Sebastian *feels*
him, not stroking him, not bothering him, just exploring his skin. “People would hate us and our
three hour long showers.”

“You know, if it gets too close for comfort here, we could escape for a little while. Go to a hotel or
something.”

Kurt wonders if that offer is as much for Sebastian as it is for Kurt, but it warms Kurt’s heart
nonetheless. Sebastian might be running away again, distancing himself from his family for a
while to take a breather, but he’s planning on taking Kurt with him.

“I appreciate the offer,” Kurt says, “and that’s definitely something to consider, but, to be honest, I kind of like this. I like being in a house full of people. Hearing the sound of someone walking down the hall to the kitchen, or closing the door to their bedroom, knowing that someone’s around if I need them, it’s kind of comforting.” Kurt lays his head back on Sebastian’s shoulder, unintentionally emphasizing that connection. “That must sound weird to you.”

“No, it doesn’t.” Sebastian drums his fingers against Kurt’s thighs, gentle palpitations mimicking the spray from the waves sprinkling the windows. He may even be playing musical notes, using Kurt’s legs as a surrogate piano while he thinks. If Kurt could only concentrate, he might be able to decipher the tune… “I can understand what you’re saying. I guess I’m just so used to it, I take it for granted.”

Kurt feels his chest tighten at the words he’s about to say, at the things he’s about to admit, but learning about one another means knowing the good and the bad.

The joy and the pain.

And maybe, if Kurt shares some of his pain with Sebastian, Sebastian might be willing to share the pain he’s carrying with Kurt.

“You know, after my mom died, it was just me and my dad for a long time,” Kurt confesses. A small lump of memories wastes no time forming in his throat. God, even that small admission seems to want to do him in. “He had a heart attack not too long ago. I don’t know if…if Blaine ever told you…” Not that Kurt knows why the subject of his dad would have come up during any of their conversations, but it seemed that, for a while, Blaine was telling Sebastian everything. Minor details of Kurt’s dad’s ordeal were highly exaggerated for the public eye when his father started running for Congress. Sue Sylvester accused him of having a baboon heart, but most of the mud-slinging came from that asshole Reggie “The Sauce” Salazar, whose slanderous campaign ads played a part in outing Santana Lopez to all of Lima. “He passed out at work, and he had to stay in the hospital for a while. He was…he was unconscious and I…I was home for the first time without him.” Kurt wipes his eyes against the pillowcase. Sebastian moves his hands to Kurt’s stomach and holds him close. “Without him at home, I couldn’t sleep. You know all those things that kind of annoy you about other people you live with? The things you work your way around because there’s really no way to stop them?”

“Yeah,” Sebastian says, his throat tight.

“Well, my dad, he” – Kurt giggles – “he snores. Like a chainsaw.”

“So that’s where you get it from?”

“Ha ha,” he says dryly, pinching Sebastian on the back of the arm. Kurt knows that Sebastian is trying to lighten the mood, but it’s a hard mood to lighten. The doctors and the cardiologists constantly assure Kurt, Carole, and Finn that Burt is fine, that he came through his health scare with flying colors. He eats better, he watches his weight, he takes his medication, he goes for walks. He’s learned techniques to handle the stress that comes with being a Congressman. In most respects, he’s in exceptional health for a middle-aged man who’s suffered a heart attack. But there’s always that chance that things will go south again, and every day, Kurt faces that fear.

“Anyway, while he was gone, I didn’t hear his snoring through the walls. I didn’t hear anything at night. I’d put on music and that would help, but it didn’t hide the fact that I knew he wasn’t there, and it…it made me feel so alone.”
“I’m sorry,” Sebastian whispers. “I didn’t…I didn’t know any of that.”

“It’s alright,” Kurt sniffs.

“No,” Sebastian insists. “No, it’s not. I’m sorry you had to go through that. I mean, I know I’m not the greatest son that ever lived, but if anything like that happened to one of my parents…”

Sebastian swallows and Kurt feels it, strong enough to dislodge the lump in his own throat. “I don’t think I’d know how to handle it, and I have Liv and Julian for support. I’m sure I wouldn’t have done it with the backbone you did.”

“Thank you. I lucked out. I had my friends from Glee to lean on, and Finn and Carole had recently joined our family at that point so they were there for me, too. It just…there were things I had to do, responsibilities I had to take on with the doctors, and the insurance company, and at my dad’s shop. Things I would have never dreamed of having to handle as a teenager, even if it was just finding other people to handle them for me. It was kind of a turning point for me in that it made me realize who I was as a man by myself, without my father standing beside me.”

“And how did that feel?” Sebastian asks, fortifying Kurt with kisses to the back of his head and neck, giving him the strength to continue on with his story.

“I hated it.” Kurt hiccups in an attempt to not cry. “I mean, I could do it if I had to, but…I’m not ready to lose him. Not yet.” Not ever.

Sebastian cradles Kurt in his arms, and Kurt is glad to have him, glad that Sebastian was there to listen to him get that off his chest. It’s been a while since he’s talked about it, but that doesn’t mean it hasn’t been there, lodged in his mind, hanging out in the background as Kurt made his plans to leave. In a way, and he hated to admit it, he tried to overlook it. It’s difficult enough worrying about his father’s health when he’s right there with him, dealing with the twice-shy feeling that any second he’ll get called out of class again and told that his father has had another heart attack, but that this one’s worse. This one he won’t recover from. But living hours away, not coming home every night to see for himself that everything’s okay? Not being within driving distance of the hospital if everything’s not? Of all the things that Kurt has had to come to grips with, that’s the one that’s been the hardest.

But his father has already told Kurt that he can’t let his health be the reason why Kurt doesn’t follow his dream.

This is Kurt’s time, and no matter what, he has to take it – no fears, no doubts, nothing holding him back.

If only…

“Hey, why don’t we stop with the heavy for tonight and prepare ourselves for tomorrow?” Sebastian suggests, tucking the blankets around himself and Kurt until one of them can barely move without the other. “There are other things to fear now that the parentals and my siblings are here.”

“Really?” Kurt cozies into Sebastian’s arms, feeling nothing but his warmth and the lure of sleep dragging him under. “Like what?”

Sebastian’s smirk branding the back of Kurt’s neck is as much sympathy as it is fond teasing…with just a hint of foreshadowing. “A whole day with Olivia.”

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Kurt wakes up early, before Sebastian, which he feels will become the norm. He doesn’t begrudge Sebastian sleeping in. Kurt cherishes this alone time – a sliver of privacy before he clocks in with the rest of the world. Blaine, when he and Kurt spent the night together, always got up before him to make him breakfast in bed. Waking up in the morning to a handsome boy serving him breakfast was the caliber of romance that Kurt had always dreamed of finding. It had started out sweet, but Kurt began to miss those times when he could be alone with his thoughts, when he could find his center and psyche himself out for the day ahead. It was difficult to carve out time for himself otherwise. Between school and Glee, competition rehearsals, the school musical, and Mr. Schuester’s insulting insistence that he attend “Booty Camp”, Kurt’s dance card on most days was full up.

His after school schedule wasn’t any less cluttered. His afternoons were kind of a repeat of school in that everyone he hung out with at school, he hung out with after. By the time evening rolled around, he didn’t have the energy for much more than his skin sloughing routine and the occasional chat with Finn over a mug of warm milk. He hopes these crack-of-dawn yoga sessions are something he can continue from here on out. Whether he’s in New York, finding every loophole around the credit limits at NYADA, or at home in Lima, braving the community college circuit, he feels that starting early and attacking the day head-on is a good habit to keep.

As he heads down to the beach with a towel and a bottle of water, dressed in Sebastian’s white t-shirt and grey sweatpants (also holding hard to the habit of wearing Sebastian’s clothes because why the hell not?) a random thought pops in his head. Instead of hanging out in Lima for the year, depressing the crap out of himself wearing a Lima Bean apron and mourning his wasted acceptance to one of the most prestigious performing arts academies in the country, why not move to wherever it is that Sebastian’s going and attend community college there?

As soon as Kurt gives that idea a thorough thinking through, it sounds pathetic and needy, but still - why not? His life should be an adventure. And they love one another, right? Sebastian seems to want this relationship for the long term, so he shouldn’t object to Kurt relocating to the same city and laying temporary roots – get a part time job and his G.E. requirements out of the way, with the added bonus of the two of them spending more time together and seeing where this relationship goes. Then when he registers for NYADA again, provided he gets in, he can apply for federal aid as an independent student, entirely unsupported by a parent (minus the checks that he knows his father will slip him from time to time, but no one needs to know about those). That way, he stands to get all the money he needs to cover his tuition and housing. And if he doesn’t get in to NYADA again, there are other schools. NYU for one. Some of acting’s biggest names have matriculated at NYU, people he admires – Anne Hathaway, Idina Menzel, Gina Gershon, even Chelsea Clinton. Heck, Liv went to NYU. She’d probably be tickled eleven shades of pink if he told her that he was seriously considering attending her alma mater. Maybe she could write him a letter of recommendation. It’d be too late to apply now, but next year. Next year for sure.

NYU might even have a mid-year acceptance program. A lot of colleges do. He can ask Liv the next time he sees her, put this plan into motion.

Kurt walks on to the sand with a skip in his step. He feels lighter, relieved, like he’s once again moving forward instead of stuck in one place, sulking the loss of the future he had so meticulously orchestrated. This seems like a good plan, a feasible plan, an exciting plan if he does say so himself.

But, and this is a huge but, it hinges partially on whether or not Sebastian would mind Kurt moving to the same city he’s going to.

All of a sudden, Kurt’s back to pathetic and needy.
How would he even bring this plan up? He’d have to tell Sebastian the truth about *everything*, which he’s been planning on doing, but also avoiding. He doesn’t want to lie about it, and besides, after the way he constantly hyped NYADA every day of his life since he first auditioned, Sebastian would never buy that Kurt simply decided not to go *just because*. And definitely not for him.

But there are worst things than having to explain *why* he needed the money in the first place...like Sebastian taking pity on him. Or Sebastian coming up with some way - an ultimatum - that would force Kurt to accept the money regardless. If Kurt refused to take it from Sebastian directly, he’d recruit another member of the Smythe family to do it for him. He’d have Charlotte sit him down and talk to him. He’d give Julian permission to hound him. He’d lay out every intricate detail for Olivia until she agreed to threaten him.

Kurt stumbles in the sand when he realizes that no, Sebastian wouldn’t bother playing games and risking that Kurt would be able to deflect those three assaults. With no time left to dilly-dally before September, knowing Sebastian, he’d probably do the lowest thing of all.

He’d rat Kurt out to his father, and he wouldn’t do it alone.

He’d institute *his* dad.

It *is* flattering to think that Sebastian might love Kurt enough to blackmail him into attending the college of his dreams, but that’s ultimately trounced by an ice-cold fist socking him in the brain just picturing it. Greg Smythe, Burt Hummel’s biggest fan, schooling his father over the maintenance of the Hudmel family finances, would be the height of humiliation, especially since the impetus behind that discussion would be Kurt – Kurt and how he immaturely derailed his own future by, admittedly, picking a less than sensible choice in solving his financial woes.

Kurt tries to fix this, see the silver lining so that he can recapture that lighthearted feeling he had a second ago. On the one hand, it might be good to have Greg teach his father how to properly manage a Congressman’s salary. (Kurt thought that things would be so much easier now that his father was making civil servant money. Who knew that you could close to triple your yearly salary while living a blue-collar life and still struggle to make ends meet?) Greg could teach his father the best way to diversify his portfolio, the difference between a stock and a bond, what an IRA and a 401K are all about (because Kurt sure as hell didn’t know), the most effective methods of padding his retirement fund (Burt Hummel won’t be a Congressman forever, and he’s always talked about spending his twilight years driving an RV across America...).

*Yes,* Kurt thinks, cheering on this new development, in full support of Sebastian tattling on him to their dads. *Positives! Think of the positives! This will work!*

But then, alternately, something Kurt had never in a million years considered casts a dark cloud over his celebrating. What if the Smythes know someone who can pull some strings at NYADA? Some member of the board, or chairperson of the arts council? What if Sebastian’s parents bypass Kurt’s dad altogether and go straight to that plan instead? Kurt can’t see them doing it if he outright asks them not to, but what if they do it as a surprise? Kurt will become *that* guy - the guy who got his tuition covered as a favor to a rich philanthropist. That’s worse than a pity loan. Oh, the Smythes will be discreet, and ask the administration to keep it a secret, but knowing how notoriously hyperactive rumor mills tend to be in performing arts circles, everyone would know about it before the end of freshman orientation. Kurt would never live it down. He’d also never get a part in a play, a solo, or an audition for as long as he was a student. It could potentially follow him after graduation, and his Broadway career would be over before it started.

Kurt would rather bury himself up to his neck in the sand and wait for the tide roll in.
Kurt finds an acceptable spot on the beach and decides to set up. He breathes in a calming lungful of salty ocean air as he buries his water bottle halfway in the sand and lays down his beach towel. He’ll clear his mind, greet the day, and hopefully he can find the answers he’s looking for lodged in the middle of his sun salutations.

He gets into mountain position. He breathes in again, focusing on the air as it enters his body through his nostrils, curling up to his head, filling his lungs, and swirling out to his body – blood and cells and skin swilling with it, trapping all of those impurities, emotional and physical, that are clogging his chakras. He breathes out long until he feels the tension in his muscles release into the universe, carried away on the wind and over the tide, back to where it belongs. He’s ready to begin when he hears a cheerful, “Woo-hoo!” summon him from the fuzzy outskirts of meditation. He opens his eyes and smiles as Olivia, dressed in an aqua sports bra and yoga capris that compliment her peachy skin tone, her dark curls pulled back into a ponytail, and carrying a lavender-colored yoga mat rolled-up beneath her arm, makes her way down the beach towards him.

“Hey, Liv,” he calls back with a wave.

“I saw you down here from the house about to get started,” she says. “Is it okay if I join you? I’m not interrupting or anything, am I?”

“Well of course you can join me.” You’re just the person I wanted to see, as a matter of fact. Kurt stands straighter, presses his palms together, and bows politely. “Namaste.”

Olivia bows back. “Namaste to you, too.” She starts rolling out her mat on a flat spot parallel to Kurt’s towel. “I’m surprised you’re down here alone. You and my brother seem to be attached at the hip. Haven’t you been able to persuade him to come down here and stretch out with you?” she asks with subtle innuendo.

“I didn’t think that Julian was into yoga,” Kurt quips back. Liv laughs.

“You know who I mean.” She twists back and forth at the waist to warm up her back muscles, her gaze resting on Kurt’s face with an underscore of intensity.

“Nah,” Kurt replies, ignoring the way that gaze raises his hackles the teeniest bit. He extends his arms over his head to lengthen his spine. “I mean, I’ve considered it, but I don’t think he’d be up for it.”

“Ha! He’d be up for it if you asked him,” Liv argues. Kurt gets the feeling, though he doesn’t know why, that she’s roundabout trying to prove a point.

“Sebastian?” Kurt shakes his head in amusement, picturing Sebastian on a towel between them, complaining loudly as he contorts his body into cobra position, or making lewd jokes as he bends into downward dog. Maybe Kurt could throw something more challenging his way for laughs, positions that it’s taken Kurt over a year to master, like firefly pose, or eight-angle pose. If Sebastian does yoga the way he dances…

But then Kurt pictures Sebastian dancing, and not in the way they have been back at Penny and Eduardo’s studio, but up on stage, thrusting his hips while belting out one of the many ill-chosen bawdy numbers The Warblers had taken to performing post-Blaine, the ones Blaine admonished them about for not being classy. As Kurt’s internal body temperature begins to soar, he curses himself for not throwing on a pair of underwear underneath Sebastian’s sweats.

That’s Sebastian’s fault, really, for mentioning the fact that he liked Kurt wearing his clothes sans underwear.
Would Liv object if he ran down the beach for a dip in the icy water before they got started?

“Well, do you see any other boy staring down here like a lovesick puppy?” Liv asks, poking Kurt in his exposed flank. “In fact, I’d better switch sides so I don’t obscure his view.”

Liv picks up her mat and moves it to Kurt’s other side while Kurt stares up at the porch where Sebastian sits, swinging back and forth on his swing, drinking a mug of morning coffee, eyes fixed (as far as Kurt can tell) not on him but on the water.

“No,” Kurt objects, “he’s staring out at the ocean. He’s probably not even completely awake yet.”

“Oh, please,” Liv scoffs, blowing a raspberry through pursed lips, “in all the years since Sebastian and Julian switched rooms, I’ve never so much as seen him step foot out on that porch. Now he’s sitting in that swing as if he does it every day, and you really think he’s looking at the ocean?”

The urge to ask her about that is so overwhelming, it makes Kurt want to scream, but as he doesn’t see a way to slip it into their amiable conversation, he lets it go. He screws up his face and considers what she said. Kurt sees Sebastian take a sip from his mug, but his head doesn’t turn; his eyes don’t seem to move. His gaze is flat and straight, glued to the horizon. Without any warning, Kurt performs a full Roman split, bouncing up and down on the sand for good measure. They hear a crash and Sebastian curse as he jumps up to brush searing hot coffee off his lap.

“Oh my God! Jesus Christ, Kurt!” Olivia laughs, doubling over. “You sure got him!”

“Yeah,” Kurt giggles as Sebastian stares down definitely at him, then disappears into his room. “I guess I did.”

“Yeah,” Liv says thoughtfully, her laughter attenuating. “It kind of makes me wonder…”

“Hmm?” Kurt asks, standing back up and tugging up the waist to his sweats. “Wonder what?”

“Well…it makes me wonder how come, with you guys dating as long as you have and probably going at it like rabbits…”

“Liv!” Kurt gasps, scandalized.

“Pfft! I was a teenager once. I know how it is,” she says, waving a hand to dismiss Kurt’s silly interjection. “But like I was saying…I wonder, with the way he reacted, it’s almost like my brother didn’t know you could do that. Like, maybe, he hasn’t seen you do it before.”

Kurt drops his arms to his sides. Her intense gaze returns, no longer an underscore, but a fully bolded statement, and his body heat seeps into the sand. Kurt’s lips move, wiggling around words that would be lie after lie if he spoke them, and he doesn’t want to lie to the Smythes anymore.

Not about how he feels about Sebastian.

Liv waits with her hands on her hips, expecting an answer. She stares him down with a no-nonsense glimmer in her eyes, and all at once Kurt begins to understand what Julian and Sebastian meant when they said that Olivia is scary. Kurt had always been sure that he would like Olivia even more when he finally saw her claws come out.

He didn’t know that the first time he saw her in action, it would be against him.

“You…you know?” Kurt asks, swallowing hard, seeing his short life flash before his eyes. “Did…Julian tell you about...?”
“He told me enough,” she says.

“But…why?” Kurt asks, feeling betrayed by this loss of confidence. “He promised…”

“I overheard him say something about it over the phone to Cooper. In Julian’s defense, it took quite a bit of convincing to get him to say anything, but I think that, in the end, he thought the fewer people you two have to lie to, the better,” Olivia explains. “But in the end, you shouldn’t have to lie. If you have nothing to be ashamed of, then why not let everybody know?” Olivia closes in on him with a cocked eyebrow. “Do you have anything to be ashamed of?”

“No!” Kurt answers quickly. “No! Definitely not!” The words tumble over themselves, jumbling together on their way out of his mouth. Liv cocks her eyebrow higher, and he finds himself fearing for his safety. “Are you going to…hurt me? I mean, your brothers say you’re terrifying. I haven’t seen that side of you yet, and I was kind of hoping that when I did, the reason would be…you know…less me oriented.”

“Well, I am. Terrifying, I mean,” she resolves when Kurt mewls. “For example, one of Julian’s testicles may be significantly smaller than the other right now, but you…” - She puts an arm around Kurt’s shoulders and pulls him in close, ruffling his hair – “you I like.” She pecks a kiss on his cheek, chuckling when his smile shakes. “I always had a good feeling about you.”

He wants to object to the manhandling of his coiffure, especially since it took him so long to tame his unruly bed hair, but it’s the not the place for the mouse to argue with the owl when she’s decided to keep him as a friend and not make him her dinner. But very quickly, and without any prompting from Liv, fear makes way for shame, and Kurt drops his gaze humbly to the sand.

“Thank you,” he says. “I appreciate you having a good opinion of me, even now that you know what we did.” Kurt had tried not to think about it too much. He hadn’t wanted to feel guilty about lying to the Smythes before, but then everything changed. He had been genuinely frightened over how Olivia might react if she ever found out, and not because he was worried about her unleashing on him, but because he considered Olivia a friend. He considered them all friends, some of the best friends he’s ever had. Losing Sebastian would be devastating, but losing the Smythe family altogether would be quadruplely so.

Olivia sighs, releasing Kurt so she can talk to him face to face.

“In all seriousness though,” she says, taking his hand, “Julian told me about what my brother did to you when he met you, the horrible stuff he pulled on you and your friends…” Kurt’s eyes widen in surprise. From what Kurt knew, Julian had gotten his information regarding Kurt and Sebastian’s arrangement from Cooper. He didn’t realize that the two brothers had had some kind of heart-to-heart about this whole situation. But he would have never imagined that Sebastian would spill about their pre-dating history together. Even if it wasn’t the entire beast, the skeleton of it was apparently bad enough for Olivia to extend this apology on Sebastian’s behalf after hearing second-hand information. “And I want to say, from the bottom of my heart, that I’m sorry. I can guess why he did it…” Kurt opens his mouth, leaping to ask, feeling this is his opportunity, but she’s too quick at closing the gap. “I don’t mean his motive, I mean…his emotional state. But my mother wasn’t lying when she said that you’re the best thing that’s happened to this family. I don’t know why he chose you for this in particular, and I don’t know why you agreed to it, but you’re a saint, Kurt.” Her eyes dart away, back to the porch where Sebastian was sitting a moment ago, to the house, to the ocean. He’s about to object to her calling him that, about to make a joke so that he doesn’t come out as some sort of hero in all of this considering that he did this for money, but she raises a hand to her cheek and Kurt sees her brush away a tear. “In a lot of ways, you’ve brought the old Sebastian back,” she says in a wobbly voice. “A Sebastian that I was afraid I wouldn’t see
again for a long, long time.” She chuckles. It sounds bittersweet. “So even though he’s been a total
douche to you, I’m so glad you guys ended up together.”

Liv tugs on Kurt’s hand and takes a step closer. Kurt meets her halfway and puts his arms around
her. He feels her body shudder, then a tear drop roll down his cheek.

“Thank you,” she says, her voice wobblier, but happier. Kurt smiles. Laughter through tears; it
happens to be a favorite emotion of Kurt’s.

“My pleasure,” he says, because above everything else he can think of to say, those two words are
more truth than any of them.

“Hey, you two. Are you just going to stand there and hug, or are we gonna see some yoga this
morning?”

Olivia lets go of Kurt and wipes her eyes dry. She smiles at her brother jogging towards them re-
dressed in dry blue jeans, a military green t-shirt with Ulan Bator on the front, and an
uncharacteristically wide grin on his face.

“Sebastian,” she says. “So you’ve decided to descend from on high to join us? And you’ve changed
your pants, I see.”

“Very funny, Liv,” Sebastian says. “So, are you two done with your fancy stretching or…?”

Kurt loves the way Sebastian and Liv fall in step with one another. The joking is kinder between
the two of them, and in many ways, their age difference more evident than it is between Sebastian
and Julian, who always seem to be competing for the exact same things, regardless of whether
Julian is too old, or Sebastian too young. But levity aside, Kurt needs to tell him, and the sooner the
better. He doesn’t know how to lead into it, so he blurts it out. “She knows, Bas.”

Sebastian’s smile, still bright, looks forced for a moment. “Knows?” he stalls nervously.

“Knows…what?”

“Knows about us,” Kurt says. “About…us not being us until recently.”

Sebastian takes one look at his sister, her cunning eyes dancing with mirth, and his face blanches.
“Is that why Julian’s walking kind of funny this morning?” he asks, ducking behind the shield of
his boyfriend’s body.

“It’s only the one testicle,” Liv says, returning to her mat. “If he still wants to breed, he can.”

“Well, that’s reassuring,” Sebastian says around a gulp. “Is there any way to ensure that that
doesn’t happen to me? I mean us?” Sebastian backpedals when Kurt glares at him, appalled at his
lack of chivalry.

She gives it some thought as she shakes out her mat, then says: “Answer me one question?” She
looks seriously at both boys. “Do you love him?”

“Yes,” Kurt says, taking Sebastian’s hand, which is there beside his the second he thinks to reach
for it. “I do.”

“Thanks for the reassurance, Kurt, but I wasn’t asking you. I was asking you, Sebastian.” Her eyes
shift to her brother’s face with a purpose. “Because this young man here deserves the world
considering what he’s had to put up with from you, and I expect you to give it to him.”
“I know. I agree. And yes” – Sebastian’s arm winds its way around Kurt’s middle with a hand splayed possessively on his belly. It’s not for show, not for Liv’s benefit. It’s a reflex, what needs to happen every time Sebastian comes within touching distance of him. “I do love him. Very much.”

Olivia looks them over one last time, satisfied by that answer enough to go back to warming up. But that’s not the end of it. Kurt knows it’s not. Julian knows. Olivia knows. And if Olivia knows, that might mean that Brian knows. So that leaves two people at the beach house out of the loop, who may have to come in to the loop very soon.

“Do your parents know?” Kurt asks meekly, terrified that he’ll hear an affirmative answer. He hasn’t run into either Greg or Charlotte yet this morning, so Olivia’s reply will set the tone for his day – whether he’s free to go about business as usual and plan on how he’ll face the music later, or if he should start finding himself a cave along the beach to hide in.

“My dad doesn’t know…yet” - She starts getting in to mountain pose, closing her eyes against the rising sun - “and it might be best if we keep him in the dark for a little while longer.” As she raises her arms, one eyelid sneaks open. “But if I were you, I’d watch out for my mom.”
The End of It

This has been spurred by a lovely tumblr post I saw requesting that someone willing to devote their time to finishing this fic actually finish it. I’ve had it with this fic. And I’ve had it with this fandom. I really have. Why I continue to write for it, I don’t know. The fact that I’ve been insulted up the ying yang, called names, dirt, threatened, and otherwise intimidated (tried) by you all doesn’t seem to matter. The fact that what I have written so far has more words than the original doesn’t matter. The fact that when I started this, I was going so far as to email chapters to people individually per request, drop them in inboxes on tumblr didn’t matter. Those chapters still went un reviewed, uncommented on. There have been many lovely people who have supported me, but the majority have been real rats. You don’t support my other work. You couldn’t care less. All that matters is ACITW AU. You want to talk about me, and my effort, as if I’m some lout who doesn’t want to fulfill her promises because y’all are sucking your thumbs singing, “A drop in the ocean … a change in the weather … “ Here you go. I’m putting up what I have, unfinished, chapter by chapter. Why? Because I’m an old lady with health issues and I COULDN’T CARE LESS! Most of y’all didn’t like my version anyway. So here’s the end of it. Have fun!

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“Who in the world needs three trousseaus?” Sebastian moans, trudging behind his boyfriend and his sister through, what Olivia obnoxiously referred to as “the hallowed halls of Carolina Premium Outlets”. Kurt was surprised that a woman with the financial means of Olivia Smythe would opt to shop at an outlet mall instead of all the other upscale clothing stores within a hundred mile radius, but it also made him adore her even more.

“I do,” Olivia says, grabbing Kurt’s hand and bolting towards Talbots, as if trying to outrun her brother’s cynicism and sour attitude. “Now, hurry up! We’ve got seven more stores to hit.

“Why bother?” Sebastian grabs for Kurt’s other hand, frowning when his hand closes around air. “I think you’ve bought every white outfit in this place.”

“Hmph. You can never have too much white,” Olivia tosses over her shoulder, smirking when she notices her brother’s ineffectual attempts at retrieving his boyfriend.

“Should you even be wearing white at this wedding?” Sebastian retaliates. “I mean, isn’t white reserved for the virtuous?”

Olivia and Kurt stop speed-walking. Olivia gasps, and Kurt wraps an arm around her, carefully shielding her ears with his hands.

“That’s a low blow,” he says.

“Yeah. And besides, if I was worried about a higher power sending lightning down to smote the impure, I wouldn’t have invited you or Julian. Between the two of you, you could set the entire place on fire.”

Kurt feels guilty spending money, but since he has this new plan to put into action, he breaks down and buys a shirt or two.

“You know, you should just go crazy,” Sebastian says. “It’s all good. I’ll pick up the tab.”

“I don’t want you spending money on me.”
“Why not? I have it to spend.” Sebastian playfully bumps Kurt’s hip. “What’s a couple thousand between boyfriends? Besides, I like the idea of spoiling you.” He leans down close to Kurt’s ear and whispers, “If you want, I can take it out of what I owe you.”

Those words, in contrast to the heat of Sebastian’s breath, make Kurt’s skin cold. It’s just a joke. Sebastian is teasing. And Kurt should be happy that he feels free to tease him about this. Things are slowly coming out in the open, people are finding out about their ruse, and they don’t care, because in the end, the two of them fell in love.

It may not mean anything to Sebastian. It shouldn’t mean anything to Kurt. So why does it?

Kurt sees pic text from his dad; can’t open pic for some reason

“Oh, can I see those pictures now?” Olivia asks, looking over Kurt’s shoulder. “From the hot air balloon ride you guys took?”

“Oh, yeah,” Kurt says, slightly distracted by this new issue with his phone. “Let me just …”

“What’s going on there, babe? Forgot how to use your phone? I mean, you haven’t really been using it the past week. I can see how you might have forgotten.”

“It’s not that,” Kurt says, not even surprised anymore by how easy it is to simply bypass Sebastian’s humor and see the real message inside. “This has happened to me a few times before. It won’t let me access my photo gallery.”

“I should really upgrade your phone,” Sebastian says offhandedly.

“My phone’s fine, Bas,” Kurt says, more annoyed at his phone than he is at his boyfriend.

“Well, I don’t want your wack ass service to go out when I need to get a hold of you. What if we’re sexting and your phone drops the signal?”

“It’s not the service,” Kurt grumbles, then gives up, accessing Facebook for the photos instead. “It’s the phone.”

“Ergo why I should upgrade it.”

“Grr,” Kurt groans, not bothering to glare at Sebastian since he realizes he just made his point for him. Yes, it would be nice to have a new phone. This one’s been giving him grief for a while. But, it still works, and it’s decent. Why toss something away just because it’s temperamental and frustrating? By that logic, he should break up with Sebastian. He laughs out loud when that conclusion pops in his head.

“Oh, Kurt says with satisfaction as his Facebook page pops on to the screen, “here’s the one at holy shit!”

“Holy shit?” Olivia repeats.

“I don’t remember us going there,” Sebastian says, crowding, along with Olivia, around Kurt, and looking at his phone. The first photo that comes up is the exact photo that Kurt wanted – the two of them kissing in the basket of that hot air balloon, with the caption he wrote Love Defies Gravity. That’s not the issue. The issue is:

“Seen by … 1,452 people!”
Even Sebastian gasps when Kurt reads it, and the four of them stop walking.

“That’s … a lot of people,” Brian comments.

It’s not just the seen by list that makes Kurt’s jaw drop, but the comments, only the first four displayed, but when he clicks the View more comments hyperlink, they shoot down his screen.

Kurt scans the list of names quickly, noting that pretty much every member of the New Directions has not only seen the pictures, but has had something positive to say, and that makes Kurt giddy with happiness and relief. Not that their disapproval would have had any influence over whether Kurt stayed with Sebastian or not. He doesn’t need a single one of his friends to approve of what they have to know that it’s what he wants. It’s just nice to know that his friends are happy for him regardless…even Rachel Berry, who has left him a string of heart emojis and the almost impossible to believe comment – *I’m so sorry. About everything. Call me soon. I want to talk about this.*

Kurt doesn’t read each name one by one, so he doesn’t see one name in particular at the way bottom.

One of the first people to see the photograph, even though they didn’t leave a comment.

They couldn’t bring themselves to.

And had Kurt looked at all of the other photographs that he’s uploaded while he’s been at the beach house – the ones he took of the ocean view from Sebastian’s room, the selfie he took with Sebastian on the porch swing, and the one he took of Sebastian asleep in bed – he would have seen that one person had already seen each and every one of them.

*Blaine Anderson.*

Converses with Rachel (who apologizes)

Finds out about how Seb knew about the coffee (from Mercedes) and the single ladies video (from Brittany)

Kurt wonders if Sebastian knows, the way he seems to know about everything, that forehead kisses are one of Kurt’s hidden weaknesses? Blaine could never quite pull it off the way Sebastian does. Kurt would always have to tilt his head a bit for Blaine to reach. But Sebastian doesn’t, and that little item makes a world of difference.

Several times on the car ride home, Kurt tries to download the message. He waits while an icon circles around, around, around, but all he gets back is the error message, “File not available for download.”

“Shoot! But why aren’t you available for download?” Kurt asks.

The phone doesn’t answer, but Sebastian does.

“Because I’m a shit phone, Kurt. Let your sexy boyfriend upgrade me.”

“Shut it, Smythe,” Kurt says and raises the volume on the radio.

Kurt decides to do a hard reboot.

*To Kurt:*

*Call me as soon as you can. We really need to talk.*
Along with that ominous message his father sent a picture – a photo of an envelope, the return address, NYADA, specifically the financial aid department. And across the bottom of the envelope, where Kurt has gotten used to seeing the words AMOUNT DUE are stamped the words FINAL NOTICE.

Kurt swallows hard. No, he thinks. Not now. Not when I’m here, in this sanctuary, when nothing bad can touch me, still trying to sort things out. Not when I don’t have a clue how to fix this, where to even start.

But maybe that’s the rub. Maybe he was never meant to figure this problem out. Maybe his acceptance to NYADA was something he was meant to lose, like Blaine. Just another part of his life he arrogantly thought was a sure thing, something he didn’t bother worrying about once he’d gotten it, slipping through his fingers.

“Hey. You figured your phone out.”

“Yeah,” Kurt says, quickly closing the text. “I just turned it off and turned it back on again. Worked like a charm.”

Sebastian looks his boyfriend over, but most particularly his smile - two-dimensional, not doing its usual job of lighting his eyes - and starts to worry. “What did your dad have to say? Nothing bad, right? He’s not … he’s not sick or anything?”

“No. No, he’s fine. He just got home, I guess.” Kurt tries to stuff the phone in his pocket, but his numb fingers refuse to move.

“You know” – Sebastian sits beside Kurt, his eyes on the phone that Kurt tucks out of sight – “I never did ask you what you needed $10,000 for. I mean, did you pick that number out of the air at random? Or was that what you thought dating me was worth, because, if that’s the case, then frankly I think you sold one of us short.”

Kurt nods tersely but doesn’t answer. He can’t. He’s paralyzed. Now is definitely the time to own up to something, but what? To his old plan of needing the money to go to NYADA? Or this new plan of moving wherever Sebastian is going that he’s become recently attached to? He knows he’ll tell Sebastian both, but which one takes precedence? If emotion weren’t entering in to it at all, if he wasn’t still slightly confused about this relationship with Sebastian, than the answer would be NYADA, definitely. And even as that new plan, glimmering in his head, is tickling his lips to make its way out, he knows the answer is NYADA, no matter what, above all.

Sebastian puts an arm around Kurt’s shoulder and pulls him against him as he reclines. He pushes off the porch with his feet and starts the swing rocking its soothing rhythm.

“Originally I thought it was so you could buy yourself a new wardrobe,” Sebastian continues, hoping to get Kurt relaxed enough to spill, “and I have to say, I was all for that. Hell, I was going to up it to $50,000 and just take you shopping myself. Make sure you got your money’s worth.” Sebastian waits for a comeback, a snide remark, anything. But when Kurt remains quiet, Sebastian kisses his head. “Talk to me, babe. Tell me what’s going on.”

Kurt sighs. He can’t put this off any longer. Putting it off, coming up with some excuse not to talk about it, would feel like lying, and he doesn’t want to lie to Sebastian.

“It’s for … it was for college. NYADA.” God, he isn’t prepared to admit this. Not yet. Even after the time he’s given himself, he’d never wanted to admit to any of this out loud. That was worse than not having the money, so he’d been doing everything in his power not to. “I had gotten some
scholarships and some financial aid, but I was approved before my father was elected to Congress.”
Kurt hears Sebastian sigh, and he knows he can fill in the rest, but Kurt feels like he has to keep
going. “It never dawned on me to call and update them, but they found out on their own anyway.
They readjusted my aid and, in the end, I came up short. Without that money, I … I can’t go to
college.”

Sebastian sighs again, but instead of sounding frustrated, this sigh sounds hurt. “Why didn’t you
tell me?”

“Because it doesn’t matter, Sebastian. I can’t take that money now. Not after …”

“Stop, Kurt,” Sebastian says, reaching for his wallet. “Just … just stop.” He pulls out a piece of
paper, folded once, and hands it to Kurt. At first, Kurt has no idea what it could be, though he has a
nagging suspicion. But that suspicion can’t be correct! It would be ludicrous if it were.

But since ludicrous seems like par for the course this summer, it’s exactly what Kurt thinks it is – a
cashier’s check for $10,000, made out to Kurt Hummel, dated the day after Kurt agreed to their
boyfriend arrangement. And even though Kurt is teetering on the brink of incredulity, he has to
smirk at the comment Sebastian had the bank print in the memo line – For services rendered. Bow-
chicka-bow-wow.

“You’ve … you’ve been carrying this around with you this whole time?”

“Well, yeah.” Sebastian shrugs. “Regardless of what you see on TV, you can’t just write a personal
check for ten grand. And I had every intention of keeping up my end of the bargain so …”

“Thank you, but … but I … I can’t,” Kurt says, those words killing him, driving nails into his heart
and twisting, as he stares at this check, made out for more than he needs and his name in the pay to the order of line. It’s the answer to all of his prayers, but for the sake of his conscience, he has to
turn it down. Goddamned conscience! Fuck you!’ ‘That’s very generous of you, but …”

“We had a deal, Kurt,” Sebastian interrupts. “You more than held up your end. In fact, I would say
you went above and beyond, considering.”

Kurt nods. Objectively, he has to agree, but the way Sebastian chose to phrase it makes him feel
sick. Plus, and he doesn’t know why, he feels offended. He doesn’t know what he expected
Sebastian to say about the matter. He’d prepared himself for Sebastian to give him the money.
He’d prepared to refuse and for the two of them to fight over it. But instead of indignant, he feels
insulted.

“Then … then what does that make us? What does that make this? Everything we’ve done so far?”

“It makes it what it is, Kurt,” Sebastian says, throwing an arm in the air. “I love you, and you love
me. And this …” He gestures to the check in Kurt’s hands like it’s an annoying fly he’s shooing
away. “This is ancient history. Tying up loose ends.” Kurt starts shaking his head. It’s a reflex to
object. This doesn’t seem right. It doesn’t seem like the kind of thing that boyfriends did for one
another. It’s too much.

Sebastian, facing down his obstinate boyfriend, groans. “Kurt! Are you really going to throw your
dreams away, your entire future, for something as stupid as money?”

“Well, you can call money stupid,” Kurt argues, his hand holding the check shaking. “You have it,
alright? But when you don’t have it, it’s not stupid! It’s actually kind of important!”

“You’re right,” Sebastian agrees. “You’re absolutely right. It is important. It’s important, and you
need it. You need it to go to college. So why the fuck aren’t you taking it, Kurt? I’m fortunate. I happen to have more money than I can use, sitting around, doing nothing, so let me give you some …” Kurt scoffs and rolls his head away, and Sebastian amends his statement. “Or lend you some, or however you want to do this. Remember when I said that money doesn’t matter to me beyond enjoying all the things my wealth can buy me? Well, I would enjoy the opportunity to do this for you. Look, if you don’t take it, I’m just going to send it to fucking NYADA with your name plastered all over it, so you might as well stop being so fucking stubborn and do it your damn self! If you and I hadn’t gotten together for real, if we hadn’t fallen in love, you’d be taking this check, conscience clear, and on your way to New York. But we lucked out, Kurt. We got something better out of this in the end, and being able to call you mine is worth the world to me. But if it causes you to give up your dream, Kurt, then it’s a bad thing. I don’t want what we have to be a bad thing. I want it to be a good thing. I want it to grow and last, and that will only happen if you live out your life. If you follow your dream.”

Sebastian takes the check from Kurt’s fingers. He folds it, and slides it in Kurt’s pocket. Kurt doesn’t move to object. He can’t. What Sebastian says makes sense to him logically. It’s his pride that has a problem with it. This isn’t the end. Sebastian isn’t Blaine. He isn’t just going to let go of Kurt because they’re going to schools in separate states. Kurt is finally seeing an ending to all of this where he gets to have it all – the school of his dreams, the future he planned, and the boy he never planned on. This wouldn’t be a loan, he promises himself. He’ll pay back every single cent somehow, even if it takes him a lifetime.

“You’re going to NYADA, Kurt,” Sebastian says, kissing Kurt on the forehead between words, “one way or another. And there’s not a force anywhere on earth that’s going to keep me from making sure you get there.”

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They go horseback riding.

Sebastian shows Kurt a secret overlook.

“You know, if I wasn’t here, seeing it for myself, I don’t think I would ever believe any of this about you.”

Sebastian looks like he’s about to get offended, then says, “I guess I didn’t really give you the chance to find out for yourself.”

(Kurt starts thinking that Charlottes throwing him looks.)

“Sebastian says you have quite a fondness for this old swing. You know, before you, he’d never come out here. Ever. You would think he was afraid of heights or something the way he avoided it, and my son is definitely not afraid of heights.”

“How did you figure us out?”

“Because whether they like it or not, I know my children, and to be honest, because he’s my youngest, I probably know Sebastian most of all.”

“Kurt, I’ve walked in on my son mid-coitus more times than any mother should, and what I saw when I walking in on the two of you…that wasn’t my Sebastian. Not the one I had seen torturing himself with boys and men for years. The laughing, the smiling, that was different. It was honest – real. It’s what I’ve wanted for him for longer than I can tell you.”
“You raise your kids the best you can in the hopes that they can make the right decisions on their own. I may not agree with all of the decisions my children have made, but they’re their decisions to make. I can’t micromanage their lives. I have to trust them.”

“Well, for what it’s worth, I think you guys did an amazing job.”

“Thank you, Kurt.”

***

Kurt began to notice that those long conversations that Julian used to have with Cooper seemed to be less and less. He remembers that their relationship has always been a volatile one, but Julian seemed so happy when he first arrived. Kurt hoped that their flame hadn’t burned out so quickly.

“Hey, why don’t you take a picture? It lasts longer? In fact, I have a few I can just text you, if you want to take a peek…”

“So, what are you guys doing later on? I mean, between the sex, and more sex.”

“Have they been having a lot of sex?” Olivia asks.

“As far as I can tell. I don’t know, I haven’t been watching.”

“Yeah, right.”

“Here. I was gonna take Cooper, but he hasn’t called me yet. Anyway, no reason for them to go to waste.”

“It’s great, except, this chic keeps elbowing me in the ribs, and she has really sharp elbows!”

Sebastian looks over their heads towards the stage. He must see someone because his eyes light up, and he waves. Then he nods, and takes Kurt’s hand.

“Come on. Maybe I can fix that.”

“Hey, Viola.”

“Hey, Sebastian. Long time, no see.”

“Well, I’ve got a good reason. This is my boyfriend, Kurt.”

“Very nice,” she says, giving Sebastian an approving wink. “So, you guys through mixing with the rabble.”

“Absolutely.”

“Well, you guys are welcome to hang here for the rest of the concert. And here…” she reaches into her pocket and pulls out two stickers, taking the liberty of affixing one to each boys’ thigh before Kurt can complain about adhesive on his Gucci jeans. “These’ll get you back stage after.”

“Thanks.”

“Anytime.”
“Of course, you would know the manager of a big name band.”

“No, Julian does. I just know Julian…unfortunately.”

“And that’s apparently enough,” Kurt chuckles. “I would have thought you’d be just as famous. You know, your name and number written on bathroom walls from here to the space station.”

Sebastian’s expression changes – becomes tight, a little muddled, sort of like every default expression he has is scrolling by on his face, trying to land on an appropriate one. When he can’t seem to settle, he shoves his hands in his pockets and looks down at his shoes, still trying to choose.

Kurt doesn’t know why, but he feels like he needs to apologize. “I’m sorry. I…insulted you.”

“It’s not that,” Sebastian says, shaking his head with a look in his eyes like even he’s trying to make himself believe that that’s not what he feels. “It’s just…” Kurt watches Sebastian’s lips…lips that were kissing him not moments before, warm with just an underlying hint of beer, now trapped between words. “I’m not ashamed of who I am, and…I’m not going to apologize for who I was, but…I don’t want you to look at me and see the Whore of Babylon.”

Kurt wants to tell him that he doesn’t. It’s simply a fall back joke. The two of them have tons of them. It’s not even one of the crueler ones as far as Kurt is concerned. It’s never bothered Sebastian befo—

No. Actually, Kurt can’t say that. It bothered Sebastian when Julian calls him that.

“Who do you want to be?”

Sebastian loops his arms around Kurt’s waist

“I want to be yours. Just…your man. Kurt Hummel’s boyfriend, and that’s all.”

“Just Kurt Hummel’s boyfriend?”

“Well, Kurt Hummel’s sexy ass boyfriend.”

“I’ll look into having a shirt printed up.”

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“Okay, so that’s Ursa Major,” Sebastian says, pointing to a series of stars up and to the left above their heads. “And that’s Ursa Minor. And that over there, that’ Orion’s Belt.”

Kurt turns his head from where it rests on the windshield of Sebastian’s Mustang, both boys staring up at the night sky from where they lie on the car’s hood.

“Really?” Kurt asks, partly impressed, partially skeptical.

“How the fuck should I know?” Sebastian asks while Kurt laughs. “They’re all stars,” he says, waving his hand towards the clear night sky. “That’s just what guys do when they look up at the sky, they identify shit.”

“Damn, and I was all impressed,” Kurt says. “And you know, smart guys get me hot.”

“Actually, I do know a few of them.”
“Ah,” Sebastian says, sliding over closer, “luckily, I have an app for that.” Sebastian reaches into his pocket and pulls out his iPhone. He sweeps his finger over the screen, looking through his apps until he finds the one he’s looking for. He raises his phone and takes a shot of the night sky.

Sex in the car in the rain.

“Have you guys seen Julian?”

“No. We’ve been out looking at the stars.”

“So, no phone calls or anything?”

“No. Why?”

“Because, we can’t find him. He’s gone.”

***

“I even called the house,” Julian says, staring ahead of him with blank eyes, talking sotto voce, as if the two of them aren’t standing there beside him, listening to every word. “Emily says he just … he just left. He didn’t pack a bag, didn’t tell anyone where he was going … just pfft. Gone.”

“Julian, I’m … I’m so sorry,” Kurt says sincerely, his heart sinking when that light that always lingers in Julian’s eyes, the one that blazes hot behind the ice blue of his irises, starts to burn low, threatening to go out.

“So many secrets …” Julian shakes his head, looking down at his phone clutched in his hand as if any moment it might spring to life with a call or a text. “We’re so good at keeping secrets, aren’t we, Sebby?”

Kurt feels Sebastian go rigid beside him.

“Julian …”

Kurt has heard Sebastian say his brother’s name dozens of times, and as many different ways. He’s said it jokingly.

He’s said it seriously.

He’s spat it like a curse.

He’s said it with affection.

But this was a plea.

He was begging Julian to stop.

“We keep secrets from mom and dad,” Julian continues, again to himself as if they aren’t there, “secrets from Liv. Hell, the two of you kept the biggest secret of all. You even had me duped, though, apparently that isn't as hard as I thought.”

Julian laughs, sad and hollow, until it becomes a cough.

“Julian …” Sebastian repeats his plea softer, subconsciously searching for and taking Kurt's hand. He squeezes it tight, and Kurt can't help noticing how it shakes.
Julian looks at his brother with a wry smirk, lifting the shot glass in his fist in an unspoken toast and downing it in a single gulp. He slams it down on the bar, the glass bottom hitting the wood with a poignant *thunk*.

“Now why haven’t you told him yet, Sebby?” he asks, mockingly upbeat the way depressed drunks sound when the liquor finally hits. This Julian is such a departure from the one Kurt normally sees – the suave and sophisticated sexy man whose every word speaks to Kurt’s artistic soul – that he might as well be a complete stranger. Someone who looks so much like Julian that from a distance on a cloudy day he could be mistaken for him, but turns out to not be him.

This transformation frightens Kurt, but Sebastian’s reaction to it concerns him more.

Sebastian squeezes Kurt’s hand a little harder, coming to a conclusion that Kurt has yet to come to.

“Tell me … tell me what?” Kurt asks. He at Julian, then to Sebastian. He would rather hear from Sebastian, but Julian gets to him first.

“Why it is that he went away,” Julian replies, talking to the wood grain in the bar, the bottom of his glass – everything but them. “You know it wasn’t your fault, Sebby. At least, if you tell him, he’ll know exactly how much of a bastard I really am, and you’ll never have to worry about losing him again. Not to me, anyway.”

That last part was meant as a joke, but to Kurt, it feels more like a jab. Not at Kurt, and not at Sebastian. At himself. He’s skewering himself on his own metaphoric sword, one he’s been carrying around with him ever since whatever happened happened.

Whatever he’s about to say, he doesn’t expect Kurt to forgive him, or to speak to him ever again.

Kurt’s eyes meet Sebastian’s, but Sebastian isn’t looking at him. He’s staring at some insignificant spot on the bar. He looks frozen. Numb.

“Come on, Sebby,” Julian says, tears burning in his eyes that Kurt can hear in his voice. “You love him. He loves you. He should know, dontcha think?”

Sebastian still can’t seem to answer. He’s paralyzed, mouth agape, unable to breathe a single word. Kurt has never seen Sebastian like this. Whatever Sebastian hasn’t told Kurt yet, whatever this pain is that the two of them hold on to, that the two of them share, Julian is getting ready to spill it. Kurt won’t deny that he wants to know - he wants to help - but this is not how Kurt wants to find out. Not like this.

“Julian, no,” Kurt says, even though he’s sure what he’s saying no to is the one thing he’s wanted to know all summer. “You can’t do this. You can’t hurt your brother like this. It’s not right.”

“No, Kurt! It’s my story, too.” Julian sniffs. “And I … I need you to hear it, to try and forgive me because what I did made this …” He flicks a finger between Kurt and Sebastian “… so much harder for you. And you don’t deserve that.”

Julian had mentioned early on that Sebastian would never want to look weak or vulnerable. Kurt suspects they have that in common. Kurt wonders when the last time Sebastian saw his brother like this was. A while, he assumes, if the way Sebastian’s eyes widen are any indication.

“It’s … it’s fine.” Kurt’s voice is thick, on the verge of panic. He feels like he’s standing in the path of a runaway train with nowhere to run, no way to escape. “Really. Forget about it. I … I forgive you. It’s …”
Julian shakes his head. “Don’t, Kurt. You don’t understand. You can’t even conceive of how bad I hurt him …”

“Julian …” Kurt speaks firmly, putting his free hand on Julian’s knee and squeezing, trying to break through his haze of whiskey and self-pity “… please, stop. I don’t need to know.”

“Yes,” Sebastian agrees behind him. Kurt turns to look at his boyfriend, expecting him to be looking away, off in the distance like Julian, or maybe down at his shoes, but he’s looking right at Kurt instead. “Yes, you do.”

Kurt slowly shakes his head.

This time, it's Kurt's turn to plead.

"Sebastian …"

“That’s the spirit, baby brother,” Julian cuts in with a fake laugh and a halfhearted version of his trademark salute, which has been conspicuously missing the past week since he’s been brooding over Cooper. He takes his next shot off the bar and passes it to Sebastian. Kurt watches Sebastian sadly put the glass to his lips, snap his head back, and down the drink, a single tear racing down his cheek and getting lost in his hair. “Let’s tell our story together.”

Julian knocks on the bar as the bartender walks by and the man fills their glasses. He sets one out for Kurt without asking and fills that one, too. Kurt is so stunned he doesn’t have the wherewithal to wave the man away. On his end, the bartender doesn’t seem to mind that Kurt and Sebastian don’t look anywhere close to 21. He looks about as done with life as they all feel right now, or like the bouncer at Scandals when Kurt and Blaine first went, which would be a funny comparison any other time but now. Kurt wishes he could bring it up, break the tension, get a smile out of Sebastian, steer this conversation in a different direction.

But that would be beneath them.

“There was this … guy,” Julian begins, landing on that word as if the crux of their problems is always some guy.” Seb fell so hard for him, so fast. He called my brother all sorts of cutesy nicknames. They were so adorable together. Frankly, it made me kind of sick. But, in the spirit of brotherly love, I wanted to help Sebby land this boy, because back then, he had no game to speak of. I got them some fake IDs, and I took them out drinking.” Another shot appears. Julian downs it, and just as quickly, it’s refilled. Kurt has lost count at this point. “It might have been love. Was it?” Julian squints up at Sebastian for an answer. Sebastian stares but says nothing. Julian shrugs. “I don’t know. It could have been. But right before we went out, I got into a fight with Cooper, and I turned into an asshole. I got them both drunk, and then I seduced this poor boy of Seb’s. Man, I pulled out all the stops for that kid! I mean, I really went overboard. And he fell for it – hook, line, and sinker.” Another shot goes down Julian’s throat. “Sebby, he got mad, sulked in a corner, had one too many to drink. He got real sick and went to the bathroom, and while he was in there, there was … there was this man …” Julian hiccups.

Warning bells sound off in Kurt’s head, coursing through his body, carrying adrenaline with them, and now his hands begin to shake. “Don’t. Stop. I don’t think I should hear …”


“When I got to them …” Julian squeezes his eyes shut, tears leaking from the sides “… he had Sebastian pinned between the sinks, had his pants unzipped and his hand down them.” Julian’s voice shudders, gaze glues to his glass as if he can see the memory there playing before his eyes. It
probably is, Kurt thinks. It probably plays back for him over and over when he shuts his eyes, when he drinks too much … every day that Sebastian was overseas … “He was trying to kiss him, kept saying …” Julian clears his throat so violently Kurt can feel his own throat go raw “… kept saying that he wanted to taste himself on Seb’s lips.”

And that’s the moment.

The moment when those alarms in Kurt’s head, and all that coursing adrenaline, build in his chest, and explode.

With those words, Kurt’s entire body folds in on itself and freezes solid from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. It creeps underneath his hair, makes his follicles itch as if bugs have been nesting there and are now clawing to get out. A sudden picture of Sebastian pinned against a bathroom wall like Kurt was with Max back in that bar in Columbus fills Kurt’s brain. The man pinning Sebastian there, Kurt fills in with the vilest human being his mind can come up with. And now that that image is there, Kurt knows it’ll never leave him.

Like Sebastian and Julian, he’ll never be free of it.

But back in Columbus, when Max tried to assault Kurt, Sebastian was there. Sebastian saved him. Even though that memory enrages Kurt, it doesn’t paralyze him with fear.

A second later, he feels the phantom of Dave Karofsky’s mouth on his, and his knees almost buckle beneath him.

“So … so, that man … he …”

“Yeah,” Sebastian says with the last bit of voice he has left. “Big brother charged to the rescue about a minute too late.”

“Oh … oh God. Sebastian …” Kurt turns to his boyfriend, to reach out and hold him, but the hand that’s been latched on to his since this saga began slips away. By the time Kurt spots him, he’s nowhere within reach, weeding his way through the crowd to get outside, get some air. “That’s what happened between the two of you?” Kurt says, staring at his boyfriend’s back, fighting between running after him and giving him a minute to pull himself together. “That’s why Sebastian went to Paris? That’s why he stayed away for so long?”

“Yup.” Julian downs his next shot. Kurt’s and Sebastian’s, too, with such effortless fluidity, those glasses might as well be full of water. “That’s the story of how big bad Julian Smythe let his brother down, lost his trust … and broke his heart.”

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“But, as soon as I can, I’ll drive up and meet you. We’ll have that big house all to ourselves. Who knows what kind of mischief we can get ourselves into?”

“What sounds like a…”

Sitting on the steps to Kurt’s patio is Cooper. And beside him, curled into a ball, hugging his knees, is Blaine.

Kurt thinks he should feel an overwhelming tide of emotion. That it should knock him back about twenty feet, transport him through time to a place where he swore he would always love Blaine.
But what he felt was barely a swell. The boy who used to be perfection by Kurt’s standards was riddled with flaws. Kurt found himself comparing Blaine to Sebastian the way he used to compare Sebastian to Blaine, but this time Blaine was the one didn’t measure up.

“Maybe you should go check on Julian.”

“So, what, you owe it to him to hear his side?”

“No. He owes it to me to tell me why he took everything and through it all away.”

Kurt hands him the check.

“Wh—why are you…?”

“This way, when I come back, you’ll know it’s not because of obligation. It’s not because of the money. It’s because I love you. I love you, I love you, I love you, and nothing he can say is going to change that. Have a little faith in me.”

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- Kurt rips up Seb’s check so he’ll know he’s not coming back because of the money
- Kurt drives Blaine home
- Kurt figures out that Blaine met his friend on Facebook before camp
- Mr. Anderson tells Kurt how he planned to get Blaine away from Kurt
- Burt tells Kurt he paid the $10k

“Explain yourself.”

“Wh—what … what do you mean?” Blaine looks up at him, hazel eyes pleading and wide like a lost puppy, sitting on the edge of his bed, hands folded in his lap, back bowed as if this is all too much for him to bear.

“You know exactly what I mean!” Kurt originally thought he was going to be more patient than this, but the patience he had built up is wearing thin. He’d even worried that driving Blaine home, then following him up to his room, would soften his heart to him, bring old memories rushing back, make what Blaine did seem forgivable – a lesser offense. No, he wouldn’t kiss him or sleep with him, and not just because Blaine cheated – BLAINE CHEATED! But because Kurt has something in his life so much more wonderful now that he holds dear, and there’s no way in heaven or on earth that he would jeopardize it for the fairytale Disney prince boyfriend that was Blaine Devon Anderson.

“I … I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Too late, because you’ve already done that.”

Blaine nods, eyes drifting to his folded hands. “If I … if I explain, if I tell you everything, would you consider … getting back together with me?”

Kurt’s throat goes dry, and a simmering rage rises in the form of red splotches on his cheeks. “You do realize I have a boyfriend now, right? I mean, I’m sure Cooper told you. He can’t seem to keep his mouth shut about things like that.”
Blaine’s eyes close, his brow pinching. Kurt should feel Blaine’s pain tug at him, every wrinkle furrowing his brow should pluck at his heartstrings and make his whole chest ache. He remembers a time when nothing hurt quite like watching Blaine cry. Not even his own world falling to pieces. But there is no tug. There is no ache. “You can’t … you can’t be serious. I thought you were just dating Sebastian to hurt me.”

“It’s not all about you, Blaine!” Kurt snaps. “I’m dating Sebastian because I like Sebastian. In fact, I love Sebastian and he loves me! So no, I have no intention of breaking up with him to go back to you, a boy who broke up with me for the summer and then slept with someone else after just NINE DAYS! And when you did, when I felt like my life was over, when I felt like I was going to die, do you know who was there for me!? Sebastian! So, you’re going to sit there and explain to me what you did and why you did it because it’s the decent thing to do! No other reason!”

Blaine’s eyes open again, moisture clinging to his lashes, but he doesn’t say a word. Why did Kurt think this would work? That he might get some answers? And that it might be easy? This innocent schoolboy act of Blaine’s that Sebastian had said he found so hot really wears on the nerves after a while, Kurt has discovered. How did he not see it before?

Because he was in love. That’s the answer. So very much in love with Blaine that the feeling overwhelmed him. It felt like a dream come true when the two of them met on that staircase at Dalton, like the answer to prayers he’d never admit to praying.

“You know …” Kurt decides to start since Blaine is leaving him no other choice. He focuses in on something that happened at the beginning of all this that has bothered him since day one “… I always wondered, the day you left, when you drove away, you had this look in your eyes. I couldn’t explain it at the time, but it’s haunted me.” Kurt watches Blaine’s reaction to those words as they land and sink in. His back bows further, his head sinks deeper – a confirmation that the theories Kurt had been entertaining all summer were true. His eyes narrow with repressed anger. “You knew, didn’t you? Before you left, you knew you were going to hook-up with someone? This wasn’t a ‘let’s do a trial separation and see what happens’. You had a plan!”

“I didn’t!” Blaine says, finally meeting Kurt’s eyes, vehemently shaking his head. “There … there was a guy, but I didn’t break up with you to be with him! I swear!”

“But you were going there to meet someone, weren’t you? Someone you’d already met?”

Blaine sighs. “Yes. I … I met him on the camp’s Facebook page. He was … cute and flirty. I was … interested in him. But that’s it.”

“That’s it? That’s all you have to say – that’s it? What we had was love! Love! It’s supposed to mean everything! It’s not the kind of thing you can dump and pick up again when it’s convenient! That’s not how it works!”

“I know!”

“We talked about spending the rest of our lives together, and you threw that away for some guy on Facebook you thought looked ‘interesting’! And it only took you NINE DAYS!”

“I’m sorry, Kurt …”

“At the very least you could have told me the truth from the beginning instead of leading me to believe we were actually going to get back together again when the summer was done.”

“But I wanted to get back together with you! I didn’t want this break up to be permanent! That life
we talked about – I wanted that to happen! More than anything!”

Kurt shakes his head, trying to rectify the idea that Blaine thought he would ever be okay with getting back together if Blaine slept with someone else.

The answer to that is so simple, Kurt is surprised he didn’t figure it out sooner.

God! Why did he have to be so damned naïve?

“You had no intention of telling me about your little friend … did you?”

“Well … what about you?”

“What about me? I didn’t cheat on you!”

“Oh, really?” Blaine finally looks at Kurt, right in his face, his eyes red-rimmed with tears, but also with indignation. “I saw the pictures on Facebook, Kurt! From what I hear, you were dating Sebastian pretty much from the moment I left!”

So, it appears Cooper did tell him some things, but he didn’t tell him everything? Why not? Did he want Kurt to have the chance to tell him? Or did he, and Blaine chose not to listen?

“For your information, we were fake dating!”

“Fake dating!? What the heck does that mean?”

“It means that he was paying me to pretend to be his boyfriend! To get his parents off his back about … stuff!” Kurt refuses to go into any more detail than that. Blaine is the last person who deserves to know. But a spark ignites in Blaine’s eyes at Kurt’s admission, as if he’s found an opening. As if he still has a chance. Kurt rushes to stomp that spark out before it turns into a full-fledged fire. “But that changed. It became real … after I found out you slept with someone else!”

“I know I was with someone! I know! I know I hurt you and I’m sorry! I didn’t mean for it to happen but it did! I had every intention of coming back to you, Kurt! Of moving to New York with you, of living happily ever after with you! But I didn’t ruin that, Kurt! You did! You did because what you did was way worse!”

“What? What did I do that was way worse?”

“You fell in love! And with Sebastian Smythe!? You hate him, and if memory serves, he hates you!”

Kurt jerks back a foot, the words Blaine hurled at him like hands against his chest shoving him. They carry with them so much past pain, so much humiliation, so many insults and schemes and conspiring, all against him. But they don’t make him back down because if Sebastian has proved anything to Kurt it’s that people can change.

Sebastian has changed.

Sadly, so has Blaine.

“This was your bright idea! You were the one who said that if we could survive the summer broken up and still wanted to be together, we’d get back together. If not, if we decided we’re better off apart, then we’d go our separate ways. Did that only apply to you and not me? You made up all these rules that only applied to you when there were two of us in that relationship! You wanted to
be broken up, so we broke up! You wanted to sleep with someone, so you slept with him! Now you want to get back together, and I’m supposed to dump a boy I care very much about to go back to you, just because it’s what you want!?”

Kurt wants to go on and ask him, ‘Did you think of me at all when he kissed you? When you were fucking him or he was fucking you, did you almost say my name? Was my smell still on your clothes, or did you make sure to wash them twice before you packed them so it was gone completely?’ But none of that matters anymore.

Kurt’s sorry it ever did.

“Look, Blaine, we loved each other so much. But we’re so young, so immature, made so many bad choices …” Kurt says that word we, we, we over and over even though he doesn’t entirely mean it. But deep down, there’s a part of Kurt that’s culpable. He let Blaine make that decision instead of taking ownership of his own feelings. He let Blaine command the conversation when he had so much more to say. Blaine controlled how they communicated, even with their mutual friends, but Kurt went along with it. The best he can do now is try to leave the hurt feelings in the past and let it go - not necessarily for Blaine. Not to make Blaine feel better. But so that Kurt can walk away with his head held high, into a future that he deserves … with someone he loves. “Let’s just … remember that and part as friends. Like you said. No mess. Just good friends.” Blaine drops his head and looks off to the side, turning his back on the conversation. It’s a signal to Kurt. Whatever he wanted to accomplish here, he’s done. "Maybe we weren’t meant to be together, but that’s not a horrible thing. It’s not going to … not going to kill us."

Ironic, since that’s how Kurt felt for the first month Blaine was gone, but now he sees how ludicrous that was. He’s young. They’re both young. And this, too, shall pass.

Kurt waits for Blaine to speak - to agree, to argue, to try and win him back, to sing - but he says nothing. He stares at a far wall – a wall with pictures of Blaine and the Warblers and his family … and Kurt smiling back at him, putting Kurt’s words together. Or maybe shoving them away.

Kurt puts a hand to his aching forehead. Too much drama and too little sleep. He doesn’t need this. What he does need … or correction - who he needs, is driving back to Westerville this very moment.

And Kurt wants to be with him.

Why did he offer to drive Blaine home again? It’s getting harder to remember with every minute that rolls by.

Kurt looks at the boy in front of him - the boy he pined over; the boy he obsessed over; the boy he loved, for a while, more than he loved himself. But that’s over. He has someone else in his life that he needs to return to.

‘If I leave now,’ he thinks, ‘I can get there only twenty minutes after Sebastian does.’

"Relationships are about trust,” Kurt says quietly. “And I don’t trust you anymore. Good-bye, Blaine.” He doesn’t reach a hand out to hold him, to hug him, to give him any comfort. That’s not what their ‘relationship’ is anymore. Even if they manage to become friends again in the future, even if Kurt finds some way to trust him, it probably won’t be about physical contact for a long, long time. That’s heartbreaking since Blaine has been the one he’s reached for when times were tough since the day they met.

Now, he has a new hand to hold, one just as sure and steady as Blaine’s used to be.
Kurt walks toward Blaine’s bedroom door when he hears his voice, shaking with rage, maybe some embarrassment, and thick with tears, talking to his back.

“Wh--what do you expect me to do now?”

Kurt stops with his hand on the knob, itching to turn it and leave. “I expect you to grow up. I expect you to learn from this. I expect you to accept that we’re over. And maybe, in time, we might go back to being friends again.”

“No.” Blaine sniffles through gritted teeth. “I … am never … going to forgive you for this, Kurt. Never.”

There’s a harsh sound in Blaine’s voice, one Kurt had only heard once before - when Blaine fought off Dave Karofsky in the halls of McKinley on the night they went to watch the New Directions perform.

When he fought Dave off to defend Kurt.

Now that anger is directed at Kurt, and it makes Kurt’s blood run cold. Not out of fear. In anger. In disbelief. It zaps any sympathy he might have had for Blaine straight from his body.

*So much for not ending badly*, Kurt thinks, remembering what Blaine said to him when he first told him about his asinine break-up plan.

“Good,” he says, turning the doorknob and opening the door, the relief he gets from that one action telling him it’s the right one. “Now you know how I’ve felt most of this summer.”

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Kurt half expects Blaine to follow him down to the hallway to the stairs when he leaves his room, but he’s definitely relieved when he doesn’t. The house is eerily quiet. It’s never been particularly festive or warm before, but the way it feels now, like he’s the only one inside,

He hurries down the stairs, nearly springs for the front door, but a voice stops him before he gets there.

“So, does this mean you’re finally gone for good?”

“Mr. Anderson? What does that mean?”

“I was never too thrilled with Blaine dating you,” Blaine’s father says, walking down the staircase while he talks. He strikes Kurt like a superhero movie villain, expositing his master plan while walking down a grand staircase. He almost laughs out loud from all the tension the night’s heaped on him already. “I mean, it took me a while to accept my son’s *orientation* and whatnot. His mother coddles him in that regard. There was little I could do.”

“I don’t understand. You’re not making any sense.”

“I send him to the most exclusive school money can buy, and he ends up with you – a mechanic’s son.”

“The idea of you became more palatable when your dad became a congressman, but not by much.”

“Palatable?”

“You come from nothing. You have no money, no name ...”
“Why does that matter …?”

“…It cost a pretty penny to send him to that camp in San Francisco. I was willing to donate tens of thousands if he didn’t get in to ensure him a spot, but luckily he got in on natural talent.”

“I hear you’re going out with the youngest Smythe boy.” Mr. Anderson tsks. “He’s just as vulgar and classless as his brother. The two of you belong together.”

“You know, that’s the nicest thing you’ve ever said to me.”

“Now, I just need to find a way to keep Cooper away from that Julian for good, and the Anderson family will be back on track.”

“You see, you just said the wrong thing. Now I’m going to make it my life’s mission to ensure that Julian and Cooper live a long, happy life together, whether you approve of it or not. Good night, Mr. Anderson. *Asshole*”

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“When were you going to tell me about that NYADA bill?”

“I …” Kurt swallows hard “… probably … never? I didn’t want to add another thing to your pile of stress. I was going to figure it out myself.”

“Well, you don’t have to worry about it,” his father says stoically.

“Wh—what do you mean I don’t have to worry about it?” Oh God, Kurt thinks. He’s not going to NYADA. He ran out of time to get the money and now his acceptance is null and void. Even if he could get the pieces of that check from Sebastian and tape it back together, too much time has gone by.

He failed at the one thing he wanted more than anything in life. His dream, the one he put his pride on the line for, is officially over.

“I mean, I called the admissions office and I handled it.”

Kurt's eyes open so wide, he genuinely fears they'll pop out of his skull and roll across the floor. “How?”

“Kurt, I know we haven’t talked about it much, but becoming a congressman has raised my net worth considerably,” his father says with a chuckle. “Nine plus thousand dollars has been a lot for us before, but it wasn’t a huge stretch this time.”

“I … I guess I didn’t realize that.”
“Well, maybe you should have talked to me about it first.”

“You didn’t have to do that.”

“Yes, I did, Kurt. Look, I know you’re all adult and everything know, being all of eighteen, but I’m still your dad. I’m gonna help you out when I can.”

“You have to make the decision that’s right for you, kiddo. What makes you happy? If it’s this Smythe kid, then I promise, I’m behind you all the way. I just want you stop worrying for once and enjoy your life.”

“He said that to you? And he still has a neck and two testicles?”

“Amazing, isn’t it?”

“Jesus Christ! I knew Blaine’s parents were a mess, but I never would have thought … I’d say you dodged a bullet there, babe.”

“I need you to promise me something,” Kurt says.

“I told you before, I’ll do what I can.”

“I know that what happened today was … pretty intense.”

“You can say that again.”

“But you can’t leave. If I wake up in the morning and you’re not here …”

“I’m still here, Kurt. And I promise, I’m not going anywhere.”

***

At the wedding …

“On this incredible occasion, surrounded by all of our dearest friends and family, we don’t just have one thing to celebrate. We actually have two. My son, Sebastian Smythe, has been accepted to Cambridge.”
“Cambridge, huh. No chance he’s talking about Massachusetts?”

“No.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I only found out before we left for North Carolina. I haven’t even decided whether or not I want to go.”

“Your dad seems to think you’re going!”

“Of course, he does! It’s an amazing opportunity! Just like NYADA! I just don’t know if it’s the opportunity for me.”

“I just got you. I don’t want to lose you.”

“I’m not Blaine. I’m not stupid. I want to be with you, and I have no intention of letting you go so easily. Even if I do go, that doesn’t need to be the end of us!”

“Please … have a little faith in me. Please.”

***

But Sebastian doesn’t go to Cambridge. He goes to NYU.

“Do you miss me yet?”

“No,” Kurt says, hanging up his shirts, evaluating them by wrinkleage to determine which ones he’d need to steam and which ones he could just let the wrinkles fall out of.

“I don’t believe you.”

“Yes, I miss you. Of course, I miss you.”

“You gonna show me how much?”

Kurt rolls his eyes. “What, like on Skype or something.”

The next time he hears Sebastian’s voice, it sounds like it’s directly behind him. “Or something.”

The End

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