You don't wear pigtails, and we don't use inkwells.

by sissy_bloke

Summary

Quinn reveals that she is in fact a he - FTM. And he has a crush on Rachel. How will Glee club react? How will the school react? How will *Rachel* react?

It was the Monday of the last week of school, and Quinn took a deep breath, face settling into its usual impassive expression, before walking through the cafeteria over to the table where two fellow glee clubbers were sitting.

“Hi Mercedes, Kurt.”

“Quinn. What’s up?” Mercedes greeted with an offhand smile, still facing Kurt.

“Nothing much. Kurt, could I talk to you?”

“Certainly. Please, sit,” the boy gestured regally. “What can I do for you?”

Quinn sat, but then continued awkwardly. “Actually, uh, it’s kind of… um, personal. Would you like to go for coffee after school? I’ll buy.”

At this, Mercedes turned to face Quinn fully. “Girlfriend, what you got going on that you can’t tell me but you can tell Princess Kate here?” Kurt managed to look simultaneously offended and pleased by the moniker.

“Uh…” Quinn faltered, realizing belatedly that a cover story would have been a good idea. “It’s just… something for Glee.”

“Something that’s personal? Uh uh, try again.” Mercedes scoffed.
“Um…” Quinn tried again. Suddenly Kurt got a knowing look on his face. He caught Mercedes’ eye, and she made a little surprised sound and then turned back to Quinn.

“Is it the gay talk?” she asked.

“No…” Quinn denied after a beat, but it must have sounded unsure, because Mercedes certainly wasn’t convinced.

“Oh my God, it is, isn’t it?” Mercedes continued. “I can’t believe you felt like you couldn’t talk to me about this!”

“That’s not…” Quinn tried, unsuccessfully, to interject.

“Sweetie, you wouldn’t be the first person to come to me about this,” Kurt confided. “As the only out gay person at the school, I’ve been a port-of-call for several questioning individuals, and I have maintained absolute confidentiality.”

“But I’m not…”

Mercedes seemed upset: “You could have told me. Don’t you trust me?”

“It’s not about…”

“Darling, you absolutely have to come with me next week when I go into the city to visit the gay bookstore. That’s one of the first things I’ll be doing with my summer break.”

“I’m not gay…”

“It’s okay, you don’t have to hide in front of us, Quinn. We’re not going to judge you.” Kurt reassured.

“Of course not, Quinn. Honestly, you could have come to me.” Mercedes added.

“I’m not…”

“We can form a Gay Straight Alliance!” Kurt interrupted excitedly.

Finally Quinn exploded: “I’m not gay! I like girls!”

“Yeah! We could ask…” Mercedes suddenly trailed off. “Wait, what?” Her mouth dropped open.

Quinn’s face drained of all color. Kurt and Mercedes just sat looking at Quinn in shock.

Kurt’s face slowly moved from shocked to confused to understanding to hesitant.

“Point of clarification,” he started cautiously. “And I may be getting confused here, and if I am making a huge, huge mistake, I humbly apologize in advance, and could you please let me change out of this McQueen sweater before you have me slushied, but… if you’re straight, and you like girls, does that mean you identify as a … boy?”

Quinn just stared at the other two in dread, face still white, before rushing desperately out of the cafeteria, leaving Mercedes and Kurt looking at each other in shocked confusion.

“What just happened?”

That evening, Quinn had changed into comfortable clothes and was sitting at home doing math
homework when, over the sound of the iPod, came the noise of the doorbell, followed by a hollered “Quinn! A friend of yours is here!”

Quinn switched the music off and warily went downstairs. Kurt was standing at the door looking nervous.

“Hi Quinn,” he greeted, “can we talk?”

“Um, sure. Is... is Mercedes with you?” Quinn asked awkwardly.

“No, she doesn’t know I’m here. I know you wanted to talk to me, and I’m sorry things were... uncomfortable today.”

“Yeah...” Quinn huffed out. “Anyway, do you want to come up?”

“Thanks,” Kurt responded, looking awkwardly up at Mrs Fabray as he walked past and followed Quinn up the stairs.

Once upstairs, Kurt seemed unsure how to start. He was alternating between looking at his shoes and taking in the room. Quinn wasn’t any more eager to talk. They just stood around looking awkward.

“I’ve been-”

“Were you-?” Kurt and Quinn both suddenly tried to talk at the same time.

“You go-”

“Sorry-” they tried again, before Quinn took a deep breath and held a hand up. “I’ll start.”

Kurt fell silent and waited for Quinn to say something. And waited. And waited.

“Quinn?” he finally prompted.

“You were right. Today. About me... feeling like a guy.”

“That’s what you wanted to talk to me about? You’re questioning your gender identity?” Kurt asked sympathetically.

“I’m not questioning it!” Quinn responded heatedly. “I’m a guy. I haven’t been questioning that for years.”

“Then…”

“I wanted to ask... I wanted to ask you a favor. I’ve been... seeing a gender therapist for nearly a year.” Kurt looked shocked: “Your Mom agreed to that? You told your Mom?” he interjected, gaping.

“Well, yeah. What was she going to do? Kick me out of home?” Quinn answered bitterly. “No wait, that’s not fair. She’s actually been really good about it. She didn’t do anything but cry at me for a few weeks, but then we sat down and talked about it, and she’s been really supportive about me getting therapy. She says she always wanted a son.” Kurt smiled at that.

“Anyway, I have to see this therapist so I can get on hormone treatment. He’s nearly ready to let me go on testosterone.”
Kurt’s shock returned: “You want to go on testosterone now? While we’re still in school? There won’t be enough slushies in the world! Why aren’t you waiting one more year until you go to college?”

Oddly enough, Quinn blushed bright red. “I want... I need my... voice to change.” Quinn knew it would make more sense to wait another year. He knew how much hassle he would get at school. He knew all of this, but all he could think of was finally getting to sing a male role - something he couldn’t do without testosterone. The fact that those dreams always featured the same female lead had nothing to do with why he was in such a hurry. Nothing at all. Really.

“But why now?” Kurt was still confused, but was just met with Quinn’s stony expression, at odds with the bright blush on his cheeks. Kurt decided to leave it alone - for the moment.

“Anyway, like I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted, for the second time. The psychiatrist is nearly ready to let me go on testosterone. But he says that he wants me to meet other trans people before he’ll sign off on it. So... there’s this GLBT group that meets once a month in the city. I’ve talked to some of the people on the Internet. There’s a summer barbecue thing on this Saturday, and...” Quinn trailed off, biting his lip nervously.

“And you want me to go with you?” Kurt guessed.

“Please.” Quinn let out his breath in a rush.

Kurt beamed. “I would be honored.” He made a step towards Quinn, arms half outstretched for a hug, before stopping hesitantly. Quinn answered Kurt’s smile with one of his own and stepped, a little self-consciously, into the other boy’s abortive hug. He thumped Kurt on the back a few times before stepping back.

Kurt coughed. “A little overdoing it on the back-thumping,” he choked out.

“Oops, sorry. I’m not exactly used to ‘guy-hugs’.” Quinn looked a little bashful.

“Sweetie, do I look like I’m used to ‘guy-hugs’?” Kurt asked with a smile.

“No I guess not,” Quinn laughed.

“Anyway,” Kurt changed the topic, looking over Quinn’s outfit, which was baggy mens' jeans and a plaid button-down. “In addition to accompanying you to this group, I insist on taking you shopping. I know you’re trying to look masculine but, honey, it’s possible to do that without dressing like a lumberjack.”

“Hey!” Quinn complained, in mock outrage. “And I’m not sure you’re the best person to be giving advice on looking masculine,” he added with a smile.

“Fashion has no gender,” Kurt insisted with a huff. “We’ll go shopping on Saturday before the barbecue. Pick me up at eleven. Don’t even think about arguing.”

Quinn just held his hands up in surrender. “Fine, fine!” He smiled widely, but then his face grew troubled. “Did you and Mercedes talk about it? What did she say?”

“I think she might take a while to convince that you’re for real. She thought there was no way you could be a guy, because you’ve always been so feminine.”

“It’s amazing what you do when you’re overcompensating,” Quinn sighed ruefully.
“Do you want me to talk to her?” Kurt offered.

“No. No, I’ll tell her. Thanks Kurt.”

“You’re welcome. I have to go now, but I’ll see you at school tomorrow. Let me know if you want to talk. Anytime.”

“Thanks,” Quinn said simply, and when he hugged Kurt goodbye, this time he omitted the back-thumping.

The next morning Quinn decided that, while he was still going to wait until school started back after summer break to wear boys’ clothes to school, he might as well wear something a little less feminine for the last few days of the semester. He settled on girls’ jeans and a plain T-shirt. They still made his skin creep a little, but nowhere near as bad as the dresses he had worn to try to be the girl everyone thought he was supposed to be.

He drove in early hoping to catch Mercedes, but he couldn’t find her by the time the bell rang for the start of school. He was distracted in class; fortunately even the teachers were over it by the last week of term, so the classes were basically a way to kill time.

By the time morning break came around, Quinn had worked himself up into a state of nerves about telling Mercedes, but he figured Kurt would help him out if he needed it. Unable to eat, he skipped the food line and went straight to Kurt and Mercedes’ usual table, not sure whether he was relieved or terrified to find Mercedes there with Kurt.

“Hi, Mercedes,” he started nervously. Mercedes looked at him with an odd expression on her face.

“Quinn, do you want me to give you two some space?” Kurt asked thoughtfully.

“Thanks,” Quinn answered, sitting down opposite Mercedes, who looked a little confused at why Kurt was offering.

“I’ll see you next class, Mercedes,” he said. “I’m going to go practice that ‘Wicked’ number with Rachel.” In surprise, he caught the way Quinn’s head spun in his direction at Rachel’s name, and smirked silently to himself as he walked off, filing his questions away for later discussion.

This left Quinn staring awkwardly at Mercedes, unsure how to start.

Mercedes didn’t have any such problem, immediately voicing her confusion: “What’s that about? Why does he think you need space? Is this... is this about yesterday?”

“Yeah,” Quinn breathed out, relieved that Mercedes had offered him an opening.

“I can’t believe boyfriend thinks you want to be a guy,” Mercedes scoffed. “I think he’s just got guys on the brain.” Suddenly she noticed that Quinn wasn’t saying anything, and couldn’t meet her eyes.

“Quinn?” she asked. “Quinn?” her voice became shrill.

Finally Quinn managed to speak: “He’s right.” It came out softer than a whisper, but Mercedes still heard. She goggled.

“You what?”

“I don’t just want to be a guy. I am a guy.” Quinn’s voice found its strength, though he kept it soft,
aware of just how many people were near them in the cafeteria.

“You what?” Mercedes said again. “No way. You and Kurt are just winding me up, aren’t you? This is a joke, right? Right?” She practically begged Quinn to agree.

“Sorry. No joke.” He waited to see if Mercedes would ask questions, but when she didn’t, he just went on: “I’ve never actually felt like a girl. It took me a while to realize that I could be a guy, though. And even longer to decide to do something about it. I’m going to be starting testosterone therapy soon.”

“But... you were pregnant!” Mercedes squeaked out.

“Yeah, and if you can’t feel like a girl when you’re pregnant, then you pretty much can’t feel like a girl.” Quinn said, a little heatedly.

“Oh,” was all Mercedes could say. “So... are you saying... you were born in the wrong body? Because God doesn’t make mistakes.”

“I don’t think God’s made a mistake. I think this is a burden that He has chosen me to bear. He didn’t make a mistake when He made me feel like a guy, and it’s not a mistake that I was born with a girl’s body. It’s my job to find the best way to make the two go together.”

“Hmm...” Mercedes paused, thinking.

“Are you... okay with this?” Quinn asked nervously after a beat.

“I don’t know yet. I... think I will be. But I need to think about things awhile.”

“Yeah, I guess so,” Quinn mostly managed to keep the disappointment out of his voice, reasoning that that response was certainly a lot better than it could have been.

“Are you going to get an operation?”

“Like I’m going to talk about that!” Quinn’s first instinct was to glare at Mercedes with the scowl he’d perfected in his head cheerleader role, but he figured Mercedes was just trying to understand, and when he came out to the world he’d need all the friends he could get and he couldn’t afford to antagonize the ones he had.

“Sorry,” Mercedes looked a little abashed.

“No, I’m sorry for snapping. It’s just a little personal.”

“Okay,” Mercedes said, preoccupied. “I need a little time to deal with this. I assume that Kurt already knows?” Quinn nodded. “Is it okay if I talk about this with him?”

“Sure,” Quinn assented, relieved - he figured that Kurt would help Mercedes come around. “I’ll leave you alone then. But if you have any questions, or anything, call me?”

When Quinn left Mercedes, he decided to go and find Kurt to debrief. He told himself that it had nothing to do with who Kurt was with. Nothing at all.

For most of that week, Quinn found himself at somewhat of a loss.

He wanted to tell Santana, but Brittany was sick, and no way was he suicidal enough to tell the volatile girl without Brittany’s calming influence. Because of the blonde’s absence, Santana was in an even fouler mood than usual, so Quinn found himself avoiding spending much time with his
friend.

He wanted to hang out with Kurt but that was a little difficult, since the other boy spent most of his
time with Mercedes, and Mercedes, while not ignoring Quinn, had not gotten over her
awkwardness at his revelation.

He’d never really hung out with the other cheerleaders, so they were out.

Finn certainly didn’t want to hang out with someone he’d just broken up with, and was still
mooning over Rachel, which made Quinn grind his teeth, despite the fact that Rachel was avoiding
the bigger boy.

Puck and Lauren were being particularly coupley that week, for some unknown reason, and
wouldn’t appreciate a third wheel.

So, for the rest of the week, when Quinn found himself heading to the auditorium at lunchtimes, he
told himself it was just because all his friends were busy. Or because he wanted to practice his
singing. Or just... because. It had nothing to do with the person who usually spent her lunchtimes
there. Nothing at all. And if he found himself feeling a little disappointed on the days when the
auditorium was empty, well that was just because he didn’t feel like being alone. And the leap in
his chest when the auditorium wasn’t empty? That was just excitement at having someone to
practice with. And if he swooned listening to that magnificent voice, well, didn’t everybody?

On the days when Rachel was there, they either sat in silence eating their lunch, or took turns
singing. Sometimes they would sing together, repeating phrases until they got it perfect. The only
spoken words they shared were questions about what song to try next or brief comments about the
arrangements. This had nothing to do with how nervous she made him, Quinn told himself. It was
just because it was Rachel Berry, and Quinn Fabray did not talk to Rachel Berry. Of course, he’d
had three years of trying to convince himself of that, so surely that was the reason, right?

When he’d first joined glee, Quinn had been surprised to discover how much he loved singing:
even singing in the female voice he had now made him happy, although it made him long for the
changes testosterone would bring, long to be able to sing a male part. Not with Rachel. Well, not
necessarily with Rachel. Maybe with Rachel. But only because she was the best. Not for any other
reason.

So he just enjoyed the time they spent at lunchtimes practicing, and went back to mostly ignoring
her the rest of the time. Well, pretending to ignore her. He certainly wasn’t looking at the way her
short skirts made her legs look impossibly long, or the way her hair swayed over he shoulders as
she moved. And he certainly wasn’t listening out for the merest hint of her laugh.

So of course he couldn’t come out to her. They weren’t talking. So that would make coming out
difficult. Impossible, in fact. Well, he could sing that song from Mulan that was like, the FTM
anthem, but really? Disney? So no, he couldn’t come out to Rachel.

However, he still had to come out to Santana, and on Friday, Brittany was back, so his excuse for
not doing so had expired. He managed to find them at lunchtime. Sucking up the nerve, he walked
over to the table they were sharing.

“Hi guys. You got a sec?”

“What?” Santana asked shortly, shooting him a filthy look, obviously wanting Brittany to herself
after her absence of the last few days. Quinn nearly chickened out then and there, but after a brief
moment to chastise himself out of his cowardice, he continued.
“I’ve got to talk to you about something. Can we go somewhere quiet?”

“Sure!” Brittany chimed in, no doubt cutting off a stream of profanities from Santana. “Let’s go to the Cheerios’ locker room. Come on San!”

Santana scowled, but followed in Brittany’s wake.

When they reached the locker room, Santana didn’t even have to change her expression for the few cheerleaders that were there to take one look at her and clear out.

Santana sat down with a huff. “Okay, what? And make it fast.”

Quinn quailed, but pressed on: “I’ve realized... Well, actually, it’s something I’ve always known, but I’ve finally decided to do something about it... Well, I’m...”

“For God’s sake, Q. Hurry up!”

“Santana, shut up! This is really personal!” Quinn exploded, employing the “head bitch” glare, something he’d really hoped he’d never have to use again.

Hate it or not, it worked, and Santana quieted down, her expression even softening a little. A very little.

“Go ahead.”

Quinn stared at Brittany, because if he looked at Santana he would chicken out. “All my life, I’ve never actually felt like a girl, even though people kept telling me I was one. I tried really hard to be a girl, and apparently I’m quite good at pretending. But I’m not one. Inside, I’m a guy. So I’m going to start taking hormones so I can finally look like the way I feel inside.”

The announcement was met with silence. Brittany had her thinking face on, and when Quinn chanced a look at Santana, her face was blank.

Then to Quinn’s complete astonishment, Santana burst into peals of laughter.

“Oh my God, that’s priceless! The head bitch, the one every girl wants to be and every boy wants to do, is a guy! Oh God! That means most of the guys in the school are, like, gay! You kill me, Q.”

Quinn and Brittany just stared at Santana as the girl doubled over with mirth.

“So, if I were to call you ‘Man hands’, that would be a compliment? I love it!”

Of all the possible reactions Quinn had imagined, and he’d spent a lot of time imagining, this wasn’t among them.

Santana was laughing so hard she was crying. After a moment of looking on in bemusement, Brittany turned to Quinn. “So, you’re a guy now?”

Quinn nodded.

“That’s cool. Oh! Oh! Wait!” Brittany said as something occurred to her. “That means I don’t have a perfect record any more!” she pouted.

“What?” Quinn said in confusion.

“I had a perfect record of making out with every guy in the school. Can I make out with you?”
Santana stopped laughing.

Quinn tried to respond: “Uh, Britt, I don’t think that’s - mmf!” and Brittany was kissing him!

It was nice. It was nicer than Finn or Sam or Puck. If he’d had any doubts about liking girls, they would have instantly disappeared. But if he didn’t end it, he was going to be very, very dead. He pulled away.

“Um, Britt, that was...” Oh no! If he said he liked it, Santana would kill him, but if he said he didn’t like it, Brittany would be upset, and then Santana would kill him. “Nice...” he finished feebley.

He took one look at Santana’s face and made a decision: “Okay thanks for the talk I’m out of here bye,” he managed, and dashed out of the door, “Fabray!” echoing after him.

After his lunchtime adventure with Santana and Brittany, Quinn’s last day of school finished uneventfully. The cheerleaders were having a party that night, which frankly Quinn would rather poke his eyes out than attend, so he headed home for a quiet night with his Mom, deciding to save himself for the Glee party which was on Saturday night.

He’d been honestly surprised at how good his Mom had been about him being transgender. He figured it was a combination of guilt about throwing him out, relief at having him home again and a determination not to be like her ex-husband. But whatever the reason, Quinn was happy to take it. She still didn’t like to talk about it, and she had yet to manage male pronouns, but she’d let him get therapy, and she was going to let him get T, and hopefully she’d pay to let him get those Godawful things off his chest.

It was nice spending time with her. The first few months after he moved back in had been awkward, and then again after he’d come out to her, but now it was nice. By the time she got home, he’d made some dinner, which they ate at the table, and then they watched some TV together.

“I’m going out with Kurt all day tomorrow, Mom, and I’ll probably be spending the night at Brittany’s after the party.”

“That’s fine, Quinnie. You have a good time with your friends.”

He looked over at her. “Thanks Mom. You’re awesome,” he said, and went over and gave her a big kiss on the cheek. “Good night. I love you.”

Judy blushed happily. “What was that for?”

“Nothing. I just wanted to tell you.”

“You’re a good son, Quinn,” she said, a little awkwardly. Quinn’s smile was bright enough to light up the room.

Quinn went upstairs and got ready, and as he lay in bed he smiled to himself and fell asleep quickly, still smiling.

The next morning, Quinn couldn’t sit still as he ate breakfast. He couldn’t wait until eleven when he was supposed to pick Kurt up to go shopping, so he texted him to see if he was ready to go early.

While he was waiting for a response, he went upstairs and surveyed his outfit again. He’d skipped
the plaid shirt, to avoid offending Kurt’s delicate sensibilities, and was wearing a plain blue button-down with jeans. He stood sideways on to the mirror, admiring the way his chest looked with his binder, but God, he couldn’t wait until he didn’t need it any more.

His phone beeped with an incoming message and he checked it eagerly: “Do you have any idea how long my morning ritual takes? Fine. Be here in half an hour. K.” Quinn grinned.

When he knocked on the door at Kurt’s house it was opened by Finn, Kurt peering over his shoulder, grimacing.

“Uh, hi Quinn. Are you here to see me? And why are you dressed like that?”

Quinn looked to Kurt for help. Kurt responded with a small shrug, then a quirk of the eyebrow and a nod towards his brother. Quinn knew what he was asking, and nodded minutely.

“No, Finn. Quinn’s here to see me. He and I are going shopping. I absolutely have to get him out of those drab, drab clothes.”

Finn turned around and looked at Kurt in confusion. “Huh?”

“What do you mean, ‘huh’? Can’t you see it? He’s wearing a plain blue business shirt! How old is he? 30? Is he a banker?”

Quinn started chuckling despite the solid lump in his stomach. “Kurt, I don’t think that was what he was talking about,” he said, then turned to Finn. “I’ve realized that I’m transgender. I’m really a guy. Kurt’s just helping me out with some stuff. Including shopping,” he added with a grin.

“Quinn, that’s not funny.”

“It’s not a joke, Finn,” Quinn sighed. “I’ve known I felt like a guy inside for a while now. It’s just I’ve only now gotten up the nerve to say something about it.”

“Are you doing this because I broke up with you? Because I told you, it’s not funny!”

“Finn, I’m sorry. But it isn’t a joke, and it isn’t anything to do with you.” Quinn had not been looking forward to this conversation for just this reason.

Finn grabbed him by the shoulders. “Quinn, stop it!”

Kurt put his hand on Finn’s arm. “Finn, let go,” he said gently. “It really isn’t a joke. Quinn and I are going to go now. But when I come back, we can talk about things if you like.”

Kurt pulled Quinn out of the bigger boy’s grasp. Finn just stood there, looking angry and baffled.

As he walked away, Quinn looked back once. “I’m sorry,” he repeated, earning only a furious shake of the head.

“Hey, it’s okay. I’ll talk to him,” Kurt said softly once they were out of earshot.

“Is it okay?” Quinn felt utterly deflated.

“It will be,” Kurt said, then deliberately changed the subject: “when we get you some better clothes.”

“What?” Quinn feigned outrage.
“And a hair cut. That length on a male is just too... Justin Beiber. It just won’t do.”

“Fine, fine. I am in your hands. I can’t afford designer labels though.”

“No worries. Just leave it to me.”

The next few hours were a whirlwind of colors, styles, fabrics, quick changes and ensembles, punctuated with Kurt’s commentary:

“No, no, no. Put it back. My eyes are bleeding.”

“Darling, in that outfit, I would do you.”

“Honey, in that shirt, you look gayer than I do. Which is not a bad thing, but I understand it’s not the look you’re going for.”

“Sweetie, it’s a classic. Yes, I saw the price tag, but every closet needs a focus piece.”

“Solid black? With your coloring? Oh no.”

Quinn found that he was having a lot of fun, more than he had expected. He’d always hated shopping, but it was rather different when he was buying clothes that he actually wanted to wear. By the time his feet had started hurting and he had reached mall saturation point, although Kurt was only just getting started, he had a new short haircut, four new shirts, a jacket and two pairs of pants.

Before they left the mall for the GLBT group barbecue, Kurt had him change into one of his new outfits, a cotton shirt with irregular blocks of grey, white and blue, with black slacks which minimized his hips. He had to admit it suited him better than most of the outfits he would have picked on his own. When he looked in a mirror, it was the first time he could really believe that other people might see him as a boy.

So, heading to the community hall where the event was, he felt imbued with confidence. Confidence which was suddenly shattered when he saw a familiar-looking red sedan.

“Kurt! That’s the Berry’s car!”

“Oh, it is too. They must be going to the meeting. Small world. Well, it is Ohio, so that goes without saying.”

“But Kurt! I can’t go in there!” Quinn started to panic. “She could be there!”

Kurt looked at him curiously: “Did you just give ‘she’ a capital letter there?”

“What? No!”

“You did.”

“Well, it was the start of a sentence, of course it gets a capital letter.”

Kurt raised an eyebrow. “Sweetie, you gave it a capital letter, bold, italics and underline. Is there something you want to tell me?”

“No!” Quinn said, too fast. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Ri-ight.”
“I don’t!”

“You like her, don’t you?”

“No!” Quinn was going red in the face.

“Then why is it such a big deal?”

“I’m not ready to tell her!”

“Why? You told your very Christian mother. You told Finn, who you used to date. You told Santana, who, let’s face it, is a complete bitch. Why is Rachel - Rachel who you’ve never really had much to do with, Rachel who has two gay dads, Rachel who, despite being highly annoying, is actually the biggest sweetie in the world - such a big deal?”

Quinn couldn’t think of an intelligent response. He was simultaneously excited and terrified at the thought of Rachel knowing. “I just... She... I...”

“It’s okay to like her, you know,” Kurt said softly, sympathetically.

Quinn only managed to open and close his mouth uselessly, his face still bright red.

“Well, you’re being ridiculous. You’re going inside, and you’re going to talk to people, including Rachel, and it is all going to be fine. I’m going to be right beside you, okay?”

Quinn still looked terrified, but Kurt grabbed him by the hand and dragged him into the community centre. There were about a dozen people hanging around inside, and the delicious smell of barbecue wafting in from the open back door. The people seemed to be a mix of ages, genders, sexualities and backgrounds, though Quinn couldn’t see anyone their age around. He also couldn’t see Rachel or her dads.

After a moment of standing in the doorway, a woman of about thirty came over to greet them.

“Hi, I’m Rebecca. Please, come in.”

After an elbow in the ribs from Kurt, Quinn found his voice: “Uh, hi, I’m Quinn and this is my friend Kurt. Did we meet on an online forum?”

“Oh yes! Pleased to meet you face to face! And you too, Kurt. Let me introduce you around, and then you should get something to eat.”

Quinn smiled nervously. He had met Rebecca on an online trans forum, but if he didn’t know she was transgender, he would never have thought it. She looked so... feminine. She had shoulder length reddish brown hair, wore a casual summer dress and sandals, and she was really pretty. He knew intellectually that often there was no apparent difference between trans people and non trans people, but after all the stereotypes he’d seen on TV, a shameful part of him had half expected trans women to look like drag queens. He found it jarring, really hammering home some of the points that he had read about but hadn’t understood.

He realized he was staring, and blushed and ducked his head. Fortunately, Rebecca didn’t seem to notice, or else she was just too polite to make anything of it. She introduced them to the rest of the people in the room, although Quinn knew he would probably have to ask their names again.

She lead them towards the back door, chatting amiably: “We don’t usually get many teenagers, but Hiram and Leroy brought their daughter along. She comes to a lot of our meetings. I’ll introduce
you.” Quinn froze, and would have stood there looking like an idiot for ever if Kurt hadn’t pushed him not-so-subtly in the back.

“I think we already know her,” Kurt said, still prodding Quinn, who finally decided to move.

“Oh, that’s fabulous! It’ll be great for you to have a friend. I know it’s awkward walking into a group of people you don’t know.”

Quinn stopped again. “Wait. She doesn’t... I haven’t...” he couldn’t get a sentence out, but Kurt came to his rescue.

“What Quinn means to say is, Rachel doesn’t know that Quinn’s a guy.”

“Oh. Do you... are you okay with her knowing?” Rebecca asked tentatively. After another nudge from Kurt, Quinn nodded mutely.

“Oh,” Rebecca said, then paused. “Do you want me to subtly let her know, without making a big deal of it?”

Quinn felt weak with relief. “Yes. Please.” He started walking again.

Outside in the back garden there were another dozen or so people hanging around the barbecue. Quinn’s eyes instantly found Rachel, who was standing over the barbecue defending her vegan patties from encroaching sausages, laughing and waving her tongs at a tall black man who was laughing back at her.

Quinn suddenly couldn’t make sense of what Rebecca was saying. He could only hear Rachel’s laugh as they got closer to her. When Rachel turned and saw them, her eyes widened in surprise and she smiled broadly: “Kurt! Quinn! You didn’t tell me you would be here! Kurt, I told you about this group six months ago. Why are you only now taking the opportunity to visit?”

“Hi Rachel,” Rebecca interrupted before she could really get going. “These boys were telling me they knew you.” Quinn couldn’t look away from Rachel, desperate to see her reaction, and was amazed to see that, other than a slight pause and a flicker of her eyes, there wasn’t one.

“Yes, we go to the same school. We’re in glee club together. You can leave them in my capable hands.”

Rebecca quirked her head at Quinn, who nodded slightly, then left them to it.

“Hi Rachel,” Quinn managed, trying, and failing, not to blush.

“Hi Quinn,” Rachel responded, sounding a little tentative. “I really like the new haircut. You got that today?” Quinn nodded, but still couldn’t manage to talk.

Kurt stepped in: “Yes, and we went on a shopping spree as well. You should have seen the horrible outfit I talked him out of buying. It was nearly as bad as that hideous green dress you wore at your party, about which we have already had words.”

“Kurt!” Rachel exclaimed.

“If it’s any consolation, your current ensemble is much more flattering. I see you took my advice.” Quinn couldn’t help but agree - Rachel was wearing her usual plaid skirt, but instead of an animal sweater or something argyle, she was had on a plain black blouse, the neckline of which had a slight ruffle and while still modest, dipped slightly lower than Quinn was used to seeing on her.
Which had nothing at all to do with his raised heart rate. Nothing at all.

“Thank you,” Rachel said, a little grudgingly, but then all offence disappeared and she gushed: “Oh, Quinn, I have to introduce you to my dads! Come on!” She grabbed them both by the hands and dragged them over to where the tall black man they had seen before was talking to a shorter man with glasses.

“Dad, Daddy! Kurt’s here! And this is my friend Quinn! He’s in glee with us. Quinn, this is my Dad Leroy, and my Daddy Hiram.”

“Hello, Kurt,” Leroy said, “And Quinn, I’m very pleased to meet you.” He stuck out his hand. “Rachel sweetie, you’re going to have to let go of Quinn so he can shake my hand.” Rachel and Quinn both blushed, and when Rachel dropped his hand, Quinn stuck it out to meet Leroy’s.

“Pleased to meet you, sir,” he said. He was overwhelmed by how easily Rachel, and now her father, had referred to him with male pronouns. Rachel hadn’t even paused before it. It didn’t seem real.

“Leroy, please.”

“Leroy,” Quinn tried.

Rachel’s other father introduced himself as well, shaking Quinn’s hand in turn, and welcoming Kurt with a hug. They exchanged a little bit of small talk about Nationals and respective plans for summer holidays, before the two older men excused themselves, leaving the three teens by themselves.

“I’m going to go get a drink,” Kurt said. “Do you two want anything?”

“Oh, hey, I’ll come with you,” Quinn offered, but Kurt responded with a shake of his head.

“Don’t be silly, I can carry three drinks by myself,” he said with a pointed look. Quinn returned it, trying not to look desperate, and they had a mini staring match before Quinn gave in.

“Thanks. I’ll just have a lemonade, please.”

“Me too, please Kurt.”

“I’ll be back soon,” Kurt said, leaving Quinn alone with Rachel. Quinn had his head down, silently cursing the other boy, unable to think of anything intelligent to say.

“Quinn,” Rachel said softly. “Look at me.” Quinn glanced up and saw her gazing at him gently. He looked away again. “Do you want to talk about it? If you do, I would be happy to be there for you, after all, we are friends and friends are there to talk about things with. But if you don’t want to talk about anything, that’s okay too, because friends don’t pressure friends to talk about things they’re not ready to talk about.” She paused, then stamped her foot. “Quinn! You just made me end two sentences with prepositions!”

Quinn half smiled at that. “Gosh, I’m sorry, prepositions aren’t good things to end sentences with.” Rachel burst out laughing. Quinn’s half smile turned into a full one. He thought it was cute how Rachel was rambling; after all, he was the one who should be nervous.

“There’s nothing really to talk about. I’m just... a regular boy, who was trying way, way, way too hard to be the perfect girl.”
“I can understand that. I have to say, you were very good at it.”

“I studied. Like a zoological experiment. You females make interesting subjects,” Quinn didn’t know how he managed to keep a straight face.

“Quinn!” Rachel slapped his arm, and he lost it.

“I’m sorry,” he gasped out.

“You’re forgiven,” Rachel huffed.

“I do apologize, it wasn’t a zoological experiment, it was sociological.” Rachel slapped him again. “Okay, okay, anthropological.” Rachel kept slapping him, which only made him laugh harder. “Entomological?” he tried.

“You... you... man!” Rachel squeaked with indignation, and Quinn doubled over with hilarity, Rachel’s mock blows raining about his head as he kept teasing:

“Geological?”

“Archaeological?”

“Pathological?”

“Biological?”

“Ecological?”

By this time, Rachel was laughing as well, and she stopped hitting Quinn and leaned against him for support. “You’ve run out of -ogicals, haven’t you?” she asked through her chuckles.

“Yup,” Quinn confirmed as he straightened up.

They had just about stopped laughing when Kurt came back with three cans of soda. He gave them an odd look. But that didn’t matter, because suddenly, Quinn wasn’t nervous around Rachel anymore.

Rachel took them round and introduced them to everyone. Quinn found that he was really enjoying himself. He was surprised by how comfortable he was, by much he had to talk about with these people, but most of all, he was surprised by just how normal everything was.

There were lesbians, gay men, transsexual women, one older transsexual man, and Quinn, never having met any queer people before, apart from Kurt, had had some ridiculous half-formed idea in his mind about what they would be like, drawn mainly from television and his father’s biblical rants. Although he knew full well that those were not the most reliable sources, they were all he had.

But this gathering would not have been out of place at his church. The conversations he overheard were about work and troubles with the boss, what had been on TV last night, sport, relationship problems, all very … normal.

Quinn was immensely relieved, realizing that he could continue being his usual, church-going, straight-A-getting, non-drinking, boring, regular self. And if he’d finally figured out he’d rather be Prom King than Prom Queen, that was okay too.

Relieved, and a little disappointed. He’d just expected something more... exciting.
He’d found himself in a conversation with a guy named Paul, a friend of Rachel’s fathers’, about last night’s episode of “So you think you can dance,” and they were getting quite worked up about the relative difficulty of the various dance styles, when he noticed Rachel and Kurt talking, looking secretive, their heads very close together. Quinn’s stomach dropped, as he thought about what the other boy might be telling her. He glared across.

His conversational partner noticed his death stare, and seemed to misinterpret: “Oh honey, you don’t have to be jealous: that boy is as gay as they come. There’s nothing going on between those two.”

“That’s not...”

“Although... which of them are you interested in?” he mused.

“I’m not...!” Quinn squeaked, but his blush belied his words.

Paul smiled indulgently. “Do you mind me asking if you’re gay?”

“No. I’m not gay. I like girls,” Quinn flash-backed ruefully to the last time he’d said those words.

“So you like Rachel?” Paul teased.

“No!” he denied, but his blush intensified.

“Oh sweetie, that’s so cute. You’d make such a cute couple. You should go for it.”

“I don’t...” Quinn mumbled, then, unable to take it any more, he said “I’m sorry, I um... have to go. I’ve got to...”

“Hey,” Paul said softly. “I’m sorry for teasing. It was great meeting you. Maybe see you next month?”

“Yeah,” Quinn mumbled, but despite the apology, he still decided to make good his escape.

Unable to help himself, he made his way over to Kurt and Rachel, but by the time he got there, they were no longer looking so conspiratorial, and were talking about the party tonight. Kurt’s place was on Rachel’s way to Brittany’s, so she was going to pick him up.

It wasn’t until they were driving home that Quinn got Kurt alone.

“So, what were you talking about with Rachel?” he asked, trying for nonchalance.

“Oh, I was just giving her some advice,” he replied airily. “Trust me, you’ll appreciate it.”

“You didn’t tell her about...?”

“About what?” Kurt wasn’t making this easy.

“About what you said... how you thought I liked her,” Quinn’s voice was almost inaudible.

“You said you didn’t like her,” Kurt teased.

“I don’t! But you think I do, so did you tell her?” Quinn abandoned nonchalance, and merely aimed not to sound desperate.

“Relax,” Kurt put him out of his misery. “I didn’t say anything. After all, there’s nothing to say... Is
“there?” he smirked.

“Nope. Nothing at all. Nothing.”

Quinn remained mostly silent until he dropped Kurt at his house.

“Thank you. For coming with me today. It made it a whole lot easier. Even if you are a bitch,” Quinn joked.

“You’re welcome. I had a good time, and I met a few people I wouldn’t mind keeping in contact with, so thank you. Even if you are a bastard.”

Quinn merely stuck his tongue out as he left. “I’ll see you tonight.”

That night, Quinn was nervous as he got dressed for the party. He kept on his new slacks and swapped to a long sleeved white shirt with a panel of black with a single red stripe, and added his new black jacket. He figured that by now everyone would know he was a guy, and he had no idea how people would react. Still, he wasn’t going to let that stop him going to hang out with his friends, and he knew that at least Kurt and Rachel would stick by him, and probably Santana and Brittany too, for all the weirdness of their reactions.

His Mom looked up as he came down the stairs, and smiled at him: “You look wonderful, darling. I confess I’m still not used to the new look, but you look very... handsome.”

Quinn walked over and gave her a huge hug. “Thanks, Mom. And thanks for, you know, everything.” He realized he hadn’t actually said that to her yet, and hugged her tighter.

“You look very dressed up. Is there a young... lady you’re trying to impress?” Judy asked, the pause barely noticeable.

“Mo-om,” Quinn whined. “I’ve had people asking me that all day. I don’t like her!”

“Ah, of course not. Who is this ‘her’ that you don’t like?” his Mom asked, a smirk in her voice.

“Nobody! There’s nobody! Mom, stop laughing! Mom! Fine, I’m leaving. No respect, I get no respect in this place.”

“See you later, honey. Make sure nobody gets behind the wheel if they’ve had too much to drink, okay sweetie.”

“I know, Mom. See you tomorrow.”

In the car, he started fretting again about what people’s reactions would be. He pulled the car over and turned the engine off, resting his head on the steering wheel, trying to take deep breaths and swearing quietly to himself.

When he finally got the nerve up to turn the engine back on, he looked at the clock on the dash and realized that nearly half an hour had gone past while he had his little freak-out. He laughed a little, embarrassment at his own ridiculousness being enough of a prompt to get him moving again, enough to get him walking straight up to Brittany’s front door.

He paused outside, overhearing male voices arguing. He couldn’t make out what was being said, but then Rachel’s unmistakable voice cut clearly over the top of them: “You’re all being ridiculous! It has nothing to with you!”
Just then, Brittany opened the front door, and the group of people who had been sitting in the front room looked up at him and fell silent. Quinn dropped his eyes to the floor.

“Quinn!” Rachel broke the silence. “You’ll have to forgive these imbeciles. I have just been informing them how silly they’re being about the whole situation. I’ve explained that it’s perfectly natural, but they’re just not listening. I think I’m going to have to prepare a Powerpoint presentation.”

“Oh, thanks,” Quinn mumbled, then looked up. Finn, Puck and Sam were standing around looking distinctly uncomfortable. Then he saw Rachel. She was wearing a black dress with an asymmetrical hemline just above her knees, with one shoulder bare. Her hair was loose and curled around her shoulders. It showed just enough of Rachel’s perfect tanned skin, an despite being not at all immodest, was the sexiest thing he’d ever seen. Quinn’s eyes nearly bugged out of his head, and for the first time in his life, he was glad that he didn’t have standard male equipment, because he was sure he would be really embarrassing himself right now.

“Hi Rachel,” he squeaked out, then coughed, trying to get his voice back to normal. “Hi guys.”

Kurt sidled up to him, and, indicating Rachel’s outfit, said “That’s what we were talking about today. I told you you would appreciate it.” He smirked. Quinn tried, and failed, to look away from the smooth tanned skin that the dress revealed and the way it clung to lush curves.

“Oh,” he croaked.

“Now that Quinn’s here that’s everybody!” Brittany chirped obliviously. “Quinn, do you want a drink?”

“Yes please,” he said, glad to have something to break the tension and moisten his suddenly dry throat. “Just juice please, and not the way Puck makes it.” Brittany headed off into the kitchen to make it.

“Don’t worry, I’m not going to try to get you drunk,” Puck said, surlily.

Quinn looked at him blankly. “I didn’t say you were.”

“Well, I’m not, okay.”

The silence lengthened, Quinn’s face a mask of confusion.

“Okay, I think I can clear this up,” Kurt broke in, smugly. “Puck, Sam and Finn are all worried that, because they went out with you, you being a guy makes them gay.”

“Which I told them was ridiculous,” Rachel added.

Quinn felt the urge to laugh hysterically, but managed to suppress it, guessing from the sullen looks on the boys’ faces that it would not be well-received. “Oh,” he said simply.

“Of course it’s ridiculous! I’m not worried about that!” Finn denied heatedly. “Of course I’m not gay, because Quinn is a girl!”

“Yeah, baby mama, you’re all woman, and I know from personal experience,” Puck added with an overdone leer.

Quinn started to get angry, and it was on the tip of his tongue to tell Puck the truth - that it had been one of the worst experiences of his life, but he managed to bite the words off, his jaw
clenched.

“No. I’m not a woman. I’m a guy. And I only went out with guys to try to deny it to myself.”

“But you never looked butch or anything!” Finn exclaimed.

“Because I was trying my hardest not to! I was overcompensating!”

“Quinn, you’re just confused. You’re upset because I broke up with you.”

“God, get over yourself! Not everything’s about you!” Quinn stormed off towards the kitchen, Kurt and Rachel following.

As soon as they entered, the kitchen, they were greeted by a cheerily drunk Santana: “Hey! How you going, Treasure Trail?”

Rachel started to frown.

“Streisand, I’m not talking to you. I’m talking to Man Hands here,” she laughed uproariously as she indicated Quinn with a wave of her hand.

Rachel’s frown turned to confusion.

“Hi Santana,” Quinn greeted blandly. “Just ignore her, Rachel.”

“Hey! You don’t ignore me!” Santana protested. She walked over and draped her arms around Quinn and Rachel. “Now we all know why Quinn here was so quick with the tranny insults. Hey, you and Karofsky should form a club!”

“Yeah, but I actually came out of my closet,” Quinn remarked.

“Yes, and Quinn’s never threatened to kill anybody,” Rachel defended staunchly.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, it’s the we-love-Quinn club. Whatever. Get yourselves some drinks and get out of here,” Santana said grumpily, removing her arms from around their shoulders.

The three of them did as she suggested and then returned to the front room. Artie had taken over the stereo and was pumping the volume up, and Mike and Tina had started to dance. Rachel grabbed Kurt and Quinn by the hands and pulled them into the middle of the floor to join in, forcing them to put their drinks down on a nearby table.

After a couple of songs where the three of them danced in a triangle, Kurt moved off to pull Mercedes onto the floor, leaving Quinn and Rachel dancing together. Quinn sent him a pleading look, which he blithely ignored. As soon as the two of them were left alone, the fluidity with which Quinn had been dancing disappeared, leaving him with two left feet.

Rachel didn’t seem to notice, reaching her hand out to grab Quinn’s and pulling him a little bit closer. He speared a look over Rachel’s shoulder at Kurt, glaring at him for leaving him alone. Kurt just grinned back and gave him the thumbs up. Quinn’s glare intensified.

Rachel stepped back a little bit, and he instantly cleared the scowl from his face and replaced it with a smile. She smiled back, that wide beaming smile, and his own lips quirked into a silly grin. He ignored Kurt where he could see the other boy laughing at him from over Rachel’s shoulder.

Despite the awkwardness from the start of the night, and the fact that Mercedes, Puck, Finn and Sam were avoiding him, he actually had a great night.
After the party at Rachel’s earlier in the year, a few of them knew better than to get as messily drunk as they had then, but some of them hadn’t learned their lesson. Santana had been drunk at the start of the night, and Finn and Puck had become so shortly afterwards. Rachel had returned to her usual protestations that alcohol was bad for her vocal chords, and Quinn was still avoiding alcohol - ending up pregnant was certainly enough to put one off wine coolers, especially if you were a boy! The rest of the glee club only had a few drinks - enough to loosen them up and make them silly and happy, but not enough to get obnoxious.

As a result, the awkwardness over Quinn’s revelation was much less than he had feared. Mike, Tina and Lauren had been shocked, but had gotten over it quickly enough. They still kept calling him ‘she’, but they apologized afterwards. Lauren had simply said: “Hmm, so you’ll be running for Prom King next year...”

After Artie had gotten over his surprise, he had commented that becoming a man was simply the only sensible decision, receiving a smack around the ear from all the women present. Quinn wasn’t quite sure whether that was a win or not.

They ended up dancing late into the night, and if Quinn danced more often with Rachel than would be dictated by mere chance, well, that was just because Rachel was the only girl that didn’t have a partner to dance with. Oh, who was he kidding? He danced with Rachel because he wanted to. He wanted to feel the way she moved when they touched, he wanted to make her laugh, he wanted that smile of hers to be directed at him and only at him. All the same, he was a little glad that no slow songs came on while they were dancing, because he didn’t think he would survive it.

At the end of the night, when everyone was flaking out, he realized that Santana and Brittany would not be accepting anyone else sleeping in Brittany’s room with them, and Finn and Puck were passed out drunk on the only two couches, so he decided that, since he was sober, he might as well drive home. He offered lifts to the others, but they had all made their own arrangements.

As he drove home he was unable to wipe the grin from his face. He crept quietly into the house, not wanting to wake his mother, and after a quick shower, went to sleep still smiling.

When he woke up the next morning, he went downstairs to let his mother know that he’d made it home after all, and then, after waiting until a reasonable hour to call, went up to his room and rang Kurt.

He didn’t even wait for the other boy to speak before launching into it: “Kurt, just supposing, hypothetically speaking, that you were right, and I’m not saying you are, but if you were right about me liking Rachel, what should I do about it?”

“Hypothetically speaking, of course,” Kurt drawled.

“Yes, hypothetically speaking.”

“Well, it is Rachel, she does appreciate grand romantic gestures. That means a song.”

“Of course,” Quinn smiled to himself. “Oh! But I can’t do that yet. I have to wait until the doctor puts me on testosterone and I get my proper voice!” he said, dismayed.

“That’s okay, you can just practice until then. Or, you could, if you were interested in Rachel. Which you’re not.”

“That’s right,” he said. “Anyway, could you help me practice? You’re the guy with the best voice in glee.”
“I am, aren’t I? I suppose I could give you the benefit of my expertise.”

“Thanks, Kurt. I’ll see you later.”

The next thing he had to do was find the perfect song to sing to Rachel. Or, actually, to sing with Rachel. He knew that she put so much of herself into every song she sung that singing a duet was the perfect way to get he to notice him. And dammit, he wanted that male lead spot. So he was going to find the perfect song, and he was going to get Rachel to sing it with him in front of Shuester and the club, and he was going to take that male lead from Finn.

He set to googling.

Four hours of searching and listening later, he had some possibilities, but he wanted the song to be perfect. However, his eyes were swimming from staring at the screen and his head was starting to hurt. He figured he had time, since he wasn’t even going to be starting testosterone until later in the week, and that was if everything went smoothly with his therapist and the endocrinologist. He’d booked appointments so that he could start as soon as school let out, but who knew what they were going to say?

He spent the rest of the week looking for the perfect song and trailing round doctors with his mother, who was supportive, but terribly uncomfortable, until:

“Kurt, Kurt!” he yelled as soon as the other boy picked up the phone. “Guess what? My doctor signed off on me going on T and I went to the endocrinologist and he prescribed it and I went to a drug store and got it although I had to go to three different stores to find one that had it in stock and then I went back to my GP and she shot me in the ass with it and now I have a bruise on my butt but I am officially on testosterone!” he managed in one breath.

“Whoa, slow down!” Kurt laughed. “Congratulations! How does it feel? Has anything happened yet?” he added curiously.

“What, like, did I suddenly grow a penis?” Quinn joked.

“You know what I mean.”

“Yeah, sorry. Nah, nothing’s really noticeable yet, although I have a bit of a sore throat. I’ve heard a lot of guys say that they got that - vocal chords doing stuff and everything.”

“Cool.”

“Hey, can I meet up with you and Blaine some time to you can help me train my voice to sing lower?”

“Won’t it just do that naturally with testosterone?”

“Yeah, but I need to train it properly. I want the male lead. I need to show that I’m committed to it. Finn doesn’t do any practice outside of glee, and he doesn’t have the range to sing Broadway, and he just thinks he doesn’t have to try. He’s pretty good, but he doesn’t even begin to compare to her. I mean, I’m never going to be good enough for her either, but I’m damn well going to be better than Finn.”

“Are we still talking about singing?” Kurt asked knowingly.

“What? Yes, of course! Anyway, are you going to help me or not?”
“Yeah sure. Blaine’s coming over to my place tomorrow at one. Why don’t you come over then?”

“Or, tell you what, why don’t I come over at three so you and Blaine can have some ‘alone time’?” Quinn teased.

“Quinn! My dad will be here!” Kurt sounded shocked.

“I’m still coming over at three. You two can get your lovey-doveys out before I get there.”

When Quinn arrived at Kurt’s place the next day he was jumping with excitement. As soon as the door opened he burst out with “Kurt! Blaine! I’ve found it! I’ve found the perfect song!”

“That’s great!” Blaine said, with an over-exaggerated burst of enthusiasm. “The perfect song for what?”

“The perfect song to sing for glee to audition for the male lead,” Quinn supplied.

“He means the perfect song to sing to Rachel to get into her panties,” Kurt amended.

“Kurt! I don’t want to get into her panties!”

Kurt looked at him pointedly.

“Well, I don’t just want to get into her panties,” Quinn mumbled, flushing. “I actually like her. Okay. I admit it. I like Rachel Berry.”

“Duh,” was all Kurt had to say.

Quinn wanted to talk about Rachel’s eyes and her skin and her hair, the way she moved, the special smile that made you feel like you were the only person in the world. He wanted to talk about how smart she was, how she had dreams that were bigger than she was, how she made everyone want to be better, if only to keep up with her. He even wanted to talk about the things that drove him crazy, like her tendency to use four sentences when one would do, which he found simultaneously annoying and endearing. But one look at Kurt and he knew that anything he said would only leave him open to a world of teasing. So he settled for saying: “I just want her to see me as a legitimate male lead. And to do that, I don’t just want to sing at her, I need to get her to sing with me.”

“You’re right, you know. She gets so involved with whoever she’s singing with that she even got a crush on Blaine,” Kurt joked.

“Hey!” his boyfriend gave him a gentle smack on the arm.

Kurt ignored it and continued: “So, what song have you chosen?”

“Music of the Night from the Phantom.”

“Oooh, that’s perfect!” Kurt gushed.

“I know.”

“I know Rachel likes all sorts of music, but her first love really is Broadway, so you’re right to pick a Broadway number.”

“I know.”

“Oh, and it’s a seduction song, too!”
“I know.”

“Oooh, and you want Rachel to see beyond the fact that you were born a girl, and the song’s about getting a woman to look past the physical.”

“I know.”

“It’s a tenor part, so even if your voice doesn’t drop very much, you should still be able to manage it.”

“I know.”

“And it’s challenging enough that Rachel will see you as a real contender.”

“I know.”

“And Barbra’s done a version, so Rachel won’t be able to resist getting up and singing it with you if you ask, and of course she’ll know it.”

“Kurt! I know! That’s why I picked it!”

“Oh. You know, sometimes you surprise me with your intelligence.”

“Gee thanks, Kurt,” Quinn drawled.

Kurt ignored him and continued: “So, we probably want to wait until your voice is a bit lower before we tackle that one, but we can do some exercises and some less challenging songs and work our way up to it.”

“Yeah, in the Warblers we learned a lot of exercises to stretch your vocal range,” Blaine added.

“Thanks guys. And thanks, Blaine. Because, no offense Kurt, but Blaine’s got more of the range I’m going for. I’ve already pretty much got the same range as you.”

“Actually, Quinn, I think mine is a little higher,” Kurt replied snootily.

So over the months of the holiday, Quinn spent a lot of his time practicing with Kurt and Blaine. He also spent time running and working out. He’d always kept his fitness up - Coach Sylvester had seen to that - but now he added a lot of strength training, wanting to look more muscular, and so he worked out most days.

Of course, it wasn’t all work and practice. He spent a lot of days hanging out with his friends, playing video games, dancing, or finding someone’s pool to swim in. He got to try out his new swimming costume of board shorts with a rash guard over his binder, and found that it worked really well, although Santana and Brittany, in their tiny little bikinis, looked at him oddly, and the other boys showed off, strutting around with their shirts off. Except for Kurt, who wore a rash guard as well, since as he said, his skin was far too precious to risk sun damage, which Quinn translated as ‘pasty’.

When Mercedes was there they didn’t avoid one another, but she was still very awkward around Quinn, and Quinn missed the closeness they’d had.

Sometimes Rachel was there as well. On those occasions, Quinn mostly kept his mouth shut, because he was certain that if he didn’t he would quickly insert his foot in it. If he wasn’t already crushing on her, he certainly would be after the way she glared at anybody who got his pronouns
wrong, and kept lecturing anybody who would listen about acceptance for gender diversity. He was kind of glad that she didn’t actually give a PowerPoint presentation on it though.

A couple of weeks after his first shot of testosterone, he noticed his voice starting to break. Most of the time he sounded normal, but occasionally it would let out this embarrassing squeak, especially when he was trying to talk loudly. Santana thought it was hilarious, and kept pretending she didn’t hear him so he would have to speak up.

Embarrassing as it was, he also found that the lower registers were starting to come more easily. He didn’t know how much of it was the T and how much was the practice he was doing with Kurt and Blaine, but God he thought it sounded good. When he could stop it from squeaking.

Quinn and Kurt went along to the GLBT group twice more over the holidays, both times finding Rachel there with her dads. Quinn found that he enjoyed talking with Leroy and Hiram, even though he constantly felt like he was trying to impress them, to prove to them that he was good enough for their daughter.

By the last week of the summer break, his voice was still cracking, but it had certainly dropped considerably. If he really, really concentrated, he could make it through a song without squeaking. He thought it would have to do. His face had also changed shape a little, or at least Quinn thought it had, though nobody else could see it. But as excited as he was by the changes, as the first day of school drew nearer, his excitement was slowly being replaced by dread.

He was really second-guessing his decision to start T while he was still at school. There had been enough changes that it was probably too late to change his mind. But he could still transfer to Dalton, couldn’t he?

But then he thought about being at Dalton. He could join the Warblers, but he’d be singing backup for a long time, and he wanted those solos. And he’d have to wear the same uniform as everybody else, and he wouldn’t be able to wear the great new clothes that he’d bought with Kurt.

Oh, who was he kidding? If he went to Dalton, he wouldn’t be able to sing with Rachel. And he thought that he could put up with all the slushies in the world if he could do that.

That still didn’t stop the anxiety bordering on a panic attack every time he thought about school. The night before the first day back, he couldn’t eat, he couldn’t sit still, he could barely breathe. His Mom stayed out of his way for the most part, but after he’d walked through the living room for the fifth time, she said: “Quinn, honey?” Are you sure about tomorrow?”

“No,” Quinn replied honestly, flopping onto the couch with a huff.

“It’s not too late to transfer somewhere else if you want.” Judy sounded like that was what she’d prefer that he do.

“I know, Mom. I just... I can’t run away. I feel like it’s something I’m going to have to deal with for the rest of my life. So I might as well start now. Get some practice at it.”

“Oh baby. I wish... I wish... I’m happy that you’re being true to yourself. But I wish you didn’t have to go through so much to do it, baby.”

Quinn started to cry. He’d never cried about it before in front of his mother. He’d always tried to be brave for her. But now, he just couldn’t hold it in. He threw himself into his Mom’s arms, sobbing helplessly, like he hadn’t since he was little.

Judy just held him, not knowing what to say, not able to do anything but hold on, whispering “Oh,
Quinnie, oh my baby,” which only made him cry harder.

Eventually he cried himself out, but he just lay still in his Mom’s arms, for once putting aside his armor and being a little kid again, the little boy that he hadn’t been allowed to be when he was a child.

“Thanks Mom,” he sniffed. “I’m okay.”

Judy gave him an extra hard hug, tears in her own eyes, before allowing him to stand up.

“I’m just going to go make a phone call. Love you, Mum.”

He went upstairs and washed his face, then sat in his bedroom looking at his phone for a moment, before finally dialing the number.

“Hi, Rachel? It’s Quinn,” he started nervously.

“Hello Quinn. Not that I don’t appreciate your call, because I do, but it’s quite an unusual occurrence, after all, you’ve only called me once before, and that was for glee, and since glee doesn’t start until school starts, and school hasn’t started yet, this phone call can’t be glee-related, so to what do I owe the honor of this call?”

Quinn laughed, immediately feeling better just at the sound of her voice.

“I was wondering if I could ask...?”

“Yes, Quinn?”

“Could you... could you come with me to school tomorrow?”

“Of course Quinn! I don’t want to sound patronizing, but... I think you’re very brave.”

“I -” he broke off. “Thank you. But I’m not really brave. I’ve been hiding a big part of myself for so long, just to try to fit in. You’ve never been anything but yourself.”

“Who else would I be?” Rachel seemed genuinely confused.

Quinn laughed again, and they made plans for Quinn to pick Rachel up on his way to school. Suddenly it didn’t seem so terrifying any more.

When Quinn arrived at Rachel’s place the next morning, the girl seemed obnoxiously chirpy as she leaped into his car.

“This year is going to be the best year ever, Quinn, I can feel it. I’ve spent all of the holidays working on songs for glee. I can just picture it. I know we’re going to make it to the top ten at Nationals this year. I can’t believe we’re not having glee practice until Friday. Don’t they realize that we need to start rehearsing now? Thorough preparation is absolutely essential. We can’t afford to be wasting a week like this!”

Quinn smiled, ridiculously happy despite the anxiety gnawing away at him. “Rachel, we’re going to be great. They just want to give everybody time to settle in, and post sign up sheets for new members.”

He didn’t actually expect Rachel to be mollified by that, so he was surprised when she sighed and said: “I guess you’re right. Anyway, are you ready for school?”
“Yep. Mom’s talked to Figgins about me, and I’ve got five changes of clothes.” He grinned nervously, indicating his overstuffed schoolbag.

“Oh, Quinn, I’m sure you’re over-reacting. I’ve never been slushied more than twice in one day.”

“Still,” was all Quinn said.

“If you don’t mind me asking, why did you ask me to accompany you into school for your first day as a male? Why not Kurt or Santana and Brittany? Don’t take this to indicate any reluctance on my part, as I am more than happy to escort you, in fact I am honored that you asked me, but I am curious, as there are other people with whom you have closer relationships.” Quinn hadn’t questioned why she had been the only person he had thought to call, so he wasn’t sure what to say. “I... I’d like to change that. I’d like... to have a closer relationship with you,” he said, the closest he had come to telling her about his feelings. He was glad that he wasn’t looking at her, and he could focus on the road to hide his blush.

“Oh, Quinn, I’d like that too,” Rachel said instantly, and covered his hand on the gearshift with her own. Did she...? Was that...?

“I... I’m sorry. It’s my fault that we haven’t had that before.” His head drooped with shame.

Her hand squeezing tighter around his, she replied “Quinn, I understand.” He was rather afraid that she did.

“You’re...” he broke off. Dammit, he wasn’t ready to talk about relationships and feelings and stuff, but it seemed like he was going to have to. “You’re the only person that didn’t bat an eyelid when I came out, that sees me as male with no qualifiers.” He coughed, his voice thick. “Well, Kurt does, but he also sees me as ‘Dress-Up Ken’, which is not what I was going for this morning.” Unable to bear the seriousness, he had to break the tension.

“I can imagine...” Rachel smiled, taking the change of mood in stride. “Although he does do a very good job. He helped me pick my outfit for the end of year party.”

“I know,” Quinn gulped. “You looked... I’m sorry I didn’t tell you then, but you looked... exquisite.” Dammit, he was blushing again.

“Thank you,” Rachel said, a blush on her own face. Quinn chanced a glance over at her. He couldn’t quite place the expression on her face, but she was smiling up at him, and when she saw him looking at her, she turned her face away shyly.

Emboldened, Quinn turned his hand over where it lay under hers and gave her hand a gentle squeeze. It was so tiny! Then he lost his nerve and didn’t know what to do with his hand. Should he turn it back over, or would she feel rejected? Should he lace their fingers together, or would that be too much? Should he just leave it where it was? His hand was starting to sweat; what if she got grossed out? He was relieved when they approached the school and he had to turn his hand over to shift gears.

In the car park they stood beside the car staring at each other for a moment. Then, with a deep breath, Quinn turned aside, squared his shoulders, and, with Rachel following close by him, walked towards the school entrance.

They made it ten yards down the hall before people realized that Quinn was not some random new freshman boy. The first to comment was Azimio Adams: “Yo Fabray! What you wearing, girl?”

Quinn froze. He could feel Rachel’s supportive presence behind him, but she said nothing, sensing
that he needed to do this himself.

“First off, I’m a guy, not a girl. And second off, why would you care what I’m wearing? You
wouldn’t fit anything in the store where I shop.” He may not be head bitch anymore, but he could
still be bitchy.

“What the?!” Azimio goggled. “Hey Karovsky! Fabray said she’s a guy!”

At that, everybody in the hall turned and stared. Quinn could barely think he was so frightened,
and all he could hear was a buzzing in his head. “Yeah?” he said, as nonchalantly as he could,
trying to use his deepest register. “Yes, I’m a guy. Is that a problem?”

The shocked silence gave way to laughter. Soon the hall was roaring with it. Quinn frowned a little.
Were they laughing at his transition, or did they think ‘she’ was playing an elaborate joke? Well,
when he kept showing up in guys’ clothes, they’d soon figure out he was serious.

He walked through the crowd of students, pretending that he didn’t care what they were thinking,
that he didn’t notice them staring at him, that he didn’t hear the comments. Behind him, he could
feel Rachel practically quivering with her need to say something, but she kept her silence, and he
was grateful.

God, why didn’t he go to Dalton?

The classes were a little better, since nobody could say anything openly, but everyone kept staring
at him, whispering behind their hands. The teachers had all been told, but none of them seemed to
know how to treat him, so they essentially ignored him, which also meant ignoring the other
students’ comments.

He didn’t share either of his first two classes with Rachel or Kurt, but Santana was in the second,
and she glared daggers at anyone she caught whispering about Quinn. Quinn wanted to reach over
and squeeze her hand, but figured that would probably get her looking daggers at him. So he just
whispered “Thanks. Breadstix tonight? My treat.” Santana’s only response was “Damn straight.
You’re treating Britt too.” Quinn couldn’t complain.

The first slushie attack came at morning break. He found that just because he had prepared for it
didn’t mean he was ready. He froze in shock, at the cold, at the stinging in his eyes, but most of all,
at the fact that somebody had actually slushied him. Why didn’t he transfer to Dalton again?

He saw Azimio grinning at him, and he could hear people laughing, and some shocked gasps at the
slushying of Quinn Fabray, former queen bee. He slowly walked away with as much dignity as he
could muster, and went to clean up in the bathroom in the nurses office, since Figgins had told him
that he couldn’t use either the girls’ or the boys’ bathrooms. In this instance he was glad enough,
since he could store his spare clothes there and there was a shower he could use.

The second slushie attack came at lunchtime. The routine went exactly the same, except this time it
was Karovsky instead of Azimio. He stoically ignored the bigger boy and went to clean up. Was it
too late to transfer?

The day ended better, though: he shared his last class with Rachel. When the bell signalled the end
of the day, he got up the nerve to ask if she’d like to join him and Santana and Brittany at
Breadstix.

“Why thank you, Quinn. I would be delighted to accompany you.”

“Um, since I picked you up this morning, would you... would you like to hang out at my place
Rachel beamed at him: “That would be lovely! I know, we could practice for glee!” The girl bubbled with excitement.

“I um... I’ve kind of... got something special... that I’ve been practicing... that I want to sing for you in glee... and I’ve been working on my voice... but I’m not quite ready... and I don’t want to... spoil the surprise,” he mumbled, blushing helplessly. God, he would swear there was something in his testosterone: he never blushed this much as a girl.

“Oh, Quinn! That’s so sweet of you!” Rachel rushed and enveloped him in a hug. He wasn’t sure what to do with his hands, but she kept holding him, so he slowly wrapped his arms around her, tentatively flattening his hands against her back. She gave a happy little sigh and tucked her head under his chin. He raised one hand to the back of her head and stroked her hair in wonder.

When she finally pulled away from him - because, God knew, he wasn’t going to let go first - she smiled brightly. “Let’s go!”

He couldn’t stop grinning the entire car trip home. When they got there, he opened the door chivalrously, and then, playing the perfect host, offered her a drink and a snack. He had bought special vegan cookies, and he wasn’t sure whether he was relieved or disappointed that she didn’t ask why he had them.

They decided to watch a movie, Quinn, in deference to Rachel’s tastes and telling himself that he wasn’t whipped, suggesting that they select from his mother’s collection rather than his own secret stash of action films and science fiction.

It had just finished when they heard the door open downstairs as Quinn’s mother arrived home from work. Rachel insisted that Quinn take her downstairs and introduce her so, helpless to resist, that’s what he did.

“Hi Mom,” he greeted. “This is Rachel Berry from glee club. Rachel, this is my Mom, Judy Fabray.”

“I’m very pleased to meet you, Mrs Fabray,” Rachel put on her most charming smile and extended her hand.

“Judy, please,” she said, taking Rachel’s hand.

“Mom, you go sit down, you look exhausted. I’ll bring you a cup of tea.”

“Thanks, Quinnie, I will,” she said, moving into the living room.

“Do you want something Rachel?” he asked, putting the kettle on and getting out mugs.

“Yes please, but do you have herbal tea? Since I only drink my tea with soy milk.”

“I um, actually we have soy milk,” Quinn said with a blush, moving to the cupboard to take out a long life carton of it.

“Quinn! Did you buy that for me?” Rachel’s smile was brilliant.

“Um, maybe.”

For the second time that day, Rachel wrapped him in a huge hug, this time leaning up to place a
quick kiss on his cheek. Quinn just stood there grinning and blushing, unable to move or speak, until the kettle boiling snapped him into action.

He poured tea for the three of them and, repeatedly glancing over his shoulder at Rachel, took Judy’s drink into her.

“Thanks, Quinny,” she said, sighing and wrapping her hands around the soothing warmth of the mug. “So, is that the girl you’re not interested in?” she asked teasingly.

“Um, yeah. Only I, um, actually, am interested in her,” he admitted.

“I know, sweetie,” Judy smiled at him softly. “She seems lovely.”

“Thanks Mom. Hey, I’m going out to dinner tonight with Rachel, Santana and Brittany, but I’ll take that left-over lasagne out of the freezer and whip you up a salad before I go.”

“You’re a darling, Quinn. Rachel’s lucky to have you.”

“Mo-om!” he said, embarrassed.

“Well, she is. Now go and talk to her so she doesn’t feel neglected.”

“Sure Mom.” He went back out to the kitchen and smiled at Rachel. “I’m just going to put together some dinner for Mom. Do you want to chat with me, or would you rather go upstairs? I can put on another movie.”

“Oh, you’re so sweet, Quinn. Of course I’ll chat with you. I’ll even help. What do you want me to do?”

“Uh, you could chop some of the salad veggies. Thanks,” he said, smiling at her unexpected offer of help.

Since dinner was just a matter of microwaving leftovers and chopping a salad, it took them no time at all. Rachel went with Quinn when he took it in to his Mom.

“Thanks Quinny, you’re a good boy.”

“Mo-om!” Judy seemed determined to embarrass him. “And anyway, Rachel helped.”

“Well, thank you Rachel. You didn’t have to do that.”

“My daddies brought me up to be a good house guest.”

Quinn had a moment of concern at how his Mom would react to learning that Rachel had two fathers, but he needn’t have worried. Judy had been like a different person since separating from her husband.

“Well, they did a good job. You’re very sweet.” Now it was Rachel’s turn to be embarrassed, and Quinn was secretly glad.

“Anyway, Mom, we’re going to head out. I won’t be back late; it’s just dinner. I’ll see you tonight.”

“You kids have a good time.”

They were pretty quiet in the car ride over. When they got there, they walked into the restaurant to find Santana and Brittany already there. They waved hello.
“Hey, Treasure Trail!” Santana called, laughing. She didn’t seem to be getting over that joke any time soon.

Rachel had long gotten used to the fact that the other girl was no longer directing that insult at her but at Quinn, and had stopped startling when she heard it. Quinn, however, was heartily sick of it, and decided to try to take some of the wind out of Santana’s sails.

“Why Santana,” he smirked, and pulled up his shirt and binder to reveal a soft, downy trail of blond hair that had grown on his stomach over the past couple of months on testosterone. “I didn’t know you were interested.”

“Oh, that’s so cute!” Brittany squealed. Santana just goggled. “Can I touch it?” the blonde asked.

“Britt!” Santana squawked, outraged. Rachel burst out laughing at the other girl’s discomfiture, but wisely decided not to say anything in the face of Santana’s well-known ire.

“Oh, fine. I’ll stop calling you that. Just... cover yourself up. Please. And you can stop laughing too, Berry.”

Quinn pulled his clothes back down and grinned.

The rest of the night went surprisingly smoothly after that. Rachel only went off on a paragraphs-long soliloquy once, and Santana only threatened Rachel with bodily harm once, the two events not unconnected.

They had all finished eating and were just hanging around talking over drinks when Quinn felt a small hand slip into his. He jumped, and then glanced over at Rachel, who just smiled up at him shyly. He laced their fingers together and gave her hand a gentle squeeze, concentrating on keeping the idiotic grin off his face in front of Brittany and Santana. Maybe he didn’t need to sing that perfect song to Rachel after all. He was still going to, though.

When it came time to pay the bill, Quinn insisted that he was paying for everybody’s meal. After all, he was paying for Santana’s and Brittany’s; it would be churlish to ask Rachel to be the only one to pay for her own. And, well, this felt like a date. Or, almost a date. And he wanted to pay for her.

In the car on the way to Rachel’s house, he didn’t know what to say. He almost didn’t want to say anything, in case it jinxed it. But he kept smiling across at her, unable, now that he was out from Brittany and Santana’s curious eyes, to keep the grin from his face.

When they reached Rachel’s house, Quinn got out and rushed around the car to open the door for her with a sweep of his arm. She giggled at him. He walked her to her door and then stood around looking awkward, staring at his shoes. Rachel didn’t say anything either.

Suddenly, greatly daring, he leaned over and gave her a quick kiss on the lips, then, all bravery abandoning him, turned and fled back to his car. Rachel’s silvery laughter followed him, and he could tell that she wasn’t laughing at him, but rather seemed enchanted by his shyness. So when he reached his car he looked back across at her and smiled happily and, still rendered mute, just waved at her as he got in and drove off.

The next morning he got up earlier than normal and drove around to Rachel’s house to make sure he got there before she left. He knocked on the door, which was answered by Hiram Berry. “Um, hi, Mr Berry, Hiram. I’m here to offer Rachel a lift to school.”

“Hi Quinn, Rachel didn’t tell me you were coming today.”
“Um, I decided to surprise her.”

“Well, I’m sure she’ll appreciate it,” Hiram said, smiling at him a tad knowingly. “Rachel, sweetie! Quinn’s here to pick you up for school!” he called up the stairs.

“Quinn?!” came the squeak from upstairs. “Daddy, I’m not ready!”

“You heard the lady,” Hiram said. “Why don’t you come in and wait for her?”

Quinn accepted the invitation but when offered a seat, sat on the very edge of a kitchen stool, nervously afraid that Hiram was going to ask what Quinn’s intentions were towards his daughter.

The older man sensed his nervousness and seemed to guess the reason for it. “Relax, Quinn,” he chuckled. “I’m not going to give you The Talk. You do like her, though, don’t you?”

Quinn nodded wordlessly.

“Are you going to treat her like she deserves?”

Again a vigorous nod.

“Okay then. Would you like some orange juice while you wait?”

Still voiceless, Quinn nodded again, and when the glass materialized in his hand, he downed it in three big gulps. Hiram laughed gently at him and he smiled sheepishly.

Just then Rachel came down the stairs and Quinn’s sheepish smile turned into an adoring one. “Hi. I thought you might like a lift to school again today.”

“That’s so thoughtful of you, Quinn,” Rachel beamed. “Bye Daddy!” she said, kissing him on the cheek, then she grabbed Quinn’s hand and rushed him out of the house. “I’ll see you this evening!” she called back through the closing door.

In the car, neither of them could really think of anything to say, which Quinn found endearingly unusual for the normally verbose girl. When they arrived in the school car park, Quinn rushed out and opened the door for her again, earning another pleased giggle.

Quinn felt like he was on top of the world, walking into school with Rachel by his side. His high was rudely ripped away, however, with the shock of icy cold slushie to the face. He burned with shame, not from being slushied, but from being slushied in front of Rachel. He looked up at a grinning Karovsky with a burning glare and stalked away. Damn, he really should have transferred to Dalton.

Rachel rushed after him. “Quinn? Do you... do you want help getting cleaned up?”

Quinn forced himself to calm down, not wanting even the tiniest bit of anger to show. He didn’t ever want her to hear anger in his voice when he talked to her. “No, thank you, though,” he said softly, still ashamed that she saw that. “Figgins won’t let me use the guys’ toilet, says I have to use the toilets in the nurse’s office, but it has a shower. I’ll be all right. You go to class, okay?”

“You’re sure?”

“Yeah, you go. I’m fine,” he reassured her.

“Okay. Meet me at morning break?” she asked, smiling hopefully.
“Of course.”

He showered quickly, and made it to class only a little late. Karovsky was in the class, so any thought of mentioning to the teacher that he was late because he’d been slushied went out the window in the face of his pride. The other students were still whispering about him behind their hands, and the teachers still didn’t know how to treat him. He wished he was at Dalton.

His second class was better: some of the glee kids shared the class with him, and he sat next to Brittany, who treated him as if absolutely nothing was different, and near Tina and Mike, who had managed, with a little difficulty, to start using male pronouns with hardly a slip-up by the end of the summer break.

When the bell for morning break went, he excused himself from his friends and went to meet Rachel outside her class. When he got there, she was nowhere in sight, and when he looked in the window, it seemed the whole class had been kept in. He walked a little way back down the corridor and waited in the door alcove of an empty classroom.

A minute or so later, the noises of chairs being pushed back issued from the room and he stepped forward a little, ready to greet Rachel when she came out. The door opened and a flood of students, annoyed at being kept in, came rushing out. Rachel was among the last out the door, and Quinn just stood there unnoticed, watching her. God, she was beautiful.

Suddenly that beautiful sight was eclipsed by a wash of purple as Karovsky passed by with a slushie and tipped it all over the girl. Quinn heard her gasp, and then a wave of rage filled him and he launched himself at the bigger boy.

Karovsky was much bigger, much heavier and, despite Quinn’s workout regime over the break, much, much stronger. But he hadn’t been expecting an attack, and what Quinn lacked in strength and skill he made up for in the sheer frenzy of his assault. Karovsky hadn’t even had time to land more than a blow or two before Quinn had facedown him on the floor, mashing his face into the slushie-covered lino.

“You will apologize to her. Now.” Quinn used his grip on the bigger boy’s hair to emphasize his point.

“Get off me, you psycho!”

Quinn wrenched his head back and then whacked it against the floor. “Repeat after me: Rachel Berry, I apologize for my rude and uncouth action. It won’t happen again.”

“Fine! Sorry Rachel,” he mumbled.

“I don’t think she heard you properly,” Quinn said with another whack of the boy’s face into the floor.

“Rachel Berry, I apologize for my …” he trailed off.

“Rude and uncouth action.”

“Rude and uncouth action. It won’t happen again.”

“Thank you Dave. That wasn’t so hard.” Quinn got off his back and let him go.

“Whatever. Tranny freak.”
Quinn ignored that, because from the embarrassment all over Karovsky’s slushie-covered face and the way he was walking away, it was obvious who had won that altercation.

He turned to Rachel: “Hey.”

“Quinn!” Rachel sounded a little scandalized.

“Do you want to get a shower in the nurse’s bathroom?”

“Yes please.” They walked in silence for a moment, before: “Quinn, it’s not that I don’t I appreciate you defending my honor, because I do, in fact that’s the first time anyone’s ever done something like that for me, but I was brought up to believe that violence doesn’t solve anything, and I don’t condone its use in negotiating inter-personal relationships.” Quinn thought that only Rachel could appear so serious while dripping purple slushie.

“I’m sorry,” he said sincerely. “It’s just... I wasn’t really thinking when I saw him do that. I just got so mad.”

“Well... I have to admit... it was kind of hot seeing you prevail over that great big gorilla,” Rachel giggled. Quinn turned bright red and didn’t manage to say anything for the rest of the trip to the nurse’s office.

When they got there, Quinn regained his voice enough to say: “Why don’t you get in the shower, and I’ll go to your locker and get your change of clothes?”

“Thank you Quinn, that’s very gentlemanly.” Rachel gave him her combination and then closed the shower door behind her.

Quinn sprinted to Rachel’s locker as fast as he could, grabbed her bag, and then sprinted back again. Thanks to his workout regime, he was barely puffing when he got back to the nurse’s office.

He could hear the shower going through the door. “I’ve got your bag,” he called.

“As you know I keep an emergency slushie repair kit in my locker at all times.”

Quinn fell silent, deep in uncomfortable thoughts.

“Quinn?”

“Rachel, I... I haven’t said this before, and I kind of hoped that you knew that I meant it, but I should have said it. I’m really, really, really sorry that I ever did that to you.” He hung his head in shame, even though she couldn’t see it.

“Oh, Quinn. Thank you. I did know that you were sorry. And I understand why you did it.”

“Do you? Because I don’t. I never would have believed that I could be that kind of person. But I just got so wrapped up in the image and the popularity, and I...” he trailed off.

“Quinn, you were struggling with a body that didn’t reflect who you were. You were just trying to make other people feel as bad about their bodies as you did about yours.”

“Maybe that’s a reason, but it’s sure not an excuse. So I’m... just... sorry. I wish I could say something else, but I really am sorry.” He spoke up, needing to be heard over the sound of the shower.

“I forgive you, Quinn.” The words sounded magical to his ears. There was a pause, then: “So...”
the teasing voice let Quinn know that Rachel was about to try to lighten the mood. "Are you picturing me naked right now?" she said, turning the shower off.

"Rachel! No!" Quinn was utterly flabbergasted that she would say such a thing. There was an uncomfortable silence.

"Well, I wasn’t, but I am now," Quinn muttered quietly. A wicked laugh let him know that he hadn’t been quiet enough.

"I never realized how easy you were to tease, Quinn."

"Shut up."

"You’re blushing right now, aren’t you?"

"Shut up."

"You’re adorable."

"Shut up."

After his near-death from embarrassment, the rest of the day went by without incident until after the end-of-school bell had gone. Rachel had made arrangements to talk to one of her teachers after school, so Quinn told her he would wait for her in the car park. He was leaning up against the bonnet of his car listening to his iPod when suddenly he was pushed to the ground.

He flailed and quickly sat up to see Karovsky, Azimio and two other jocks looming over him. All four boys were about twice Quinn’s size, and they did not look happy. Karovsky’s face in particular was full of rage as he spat: "So, what are you? A dyke or a faggot?"

Quinn leaped to his feet. "Which are you, Karovsky?"

"You what? You did not just say that, freak," Karovsky raged, landing a punch in Quinn’s stomach. He doubled over, fear spiking through him.

"Yeah, bitch? You think you’re a boy?" Azimio added.

He forced himself to stand up, wheezing. "I know I’m a boy,” he said, getting right into Azimio’s face. “Only I’ve got one big advantage over you."

"Yeah? What’s that?” he sneered.

"This." With that word, Quinn brought his knee viciously up into the bigger boy’s groin causing him to drop to the ground in pain.

"Bitch!" Karovsky burst out. "Hold her!" The two other boys grabbed him by the arms, and Azimio managed to get to his feet and wrapped his arm around Quinn’s neck. "You’re not going to tell us whether you’re a boy or a girl, we’re going to find out for ourselves," he said, and grabbed hold of Quinn’s belt buckle. Already afraid, Quinn was suddenly more frightened than he had ever been in his entire life.

He said the only thing he could think of that might make them stop whatever they were planning:

"Why are you interested, Dave? You gay or something?"

It seemed to work, because Karovsky’s face went purple and he let go of Quinn’s belt buckle and
hit him in the face. And Quinn was glad. Glad for the pain, because it meant that they weren’t going to try to strip his clothes off, or worse.

Suddenly another voice cut in: “Hey! What are you doing?!” Quinn recognized Finn’s voice and was filled with relief. “Yeah, real big of you guys. Four huge guys against one girl,” he said, barrelling into the melee.

Quinn was suddenly angry at Finn. But most of all he was angry at himself, that he needed another boy to bail him out. The anger started overwhelming the fear.

“Get lost, Finn!” The bigger boy turned at looked at him in confusion. “I keep telling you: I’m not a girl!”


Quinn wrenched himself free of the arms holding him and started punching indiscriminately, hitting Finn as often as the other boys. “Dammit Finn. How often to I have to tell you?!”

“Quinn? What the hell?”

“God, how hard is it to get it right? Do I sound like a girl?”

“I’m sorry!” Finn managed, before getting hit in the head by a fist from one of the other boys. “Ow!” he said, and started hitting back, ignoring Quinn.

The jocks had taken advantage of Quinn’s fight with Finn and were trying to grab Quinn again. He shook loose, quivering with rage, and started punching back, fists flying with a complete lack of skill, but a strength and speed born of fury. Finn started hitting back at the jocks too, and then the two glee boys found themselves back to back, fending off blows.

Quinn got a fist in the face and he felt his eyebrow split, blood dripping down into his eye. He managed to land a punch in someone’s face and caught his knuckles on their teeth, tearing them open. The boy - Karovsky - stumbled back in pain, hand to his face, swearing.

Suddenly he heard his name being called, piercing through his berserk rage: “Quinn!” He recognized Rachel’s desperate shriek, her vocal training carrying her cry over the sounds of fighting. “Everybody stop! I’m calling a teacher! I’m calling a teacher right now!”

Karovsky and the other boys turned and fled, vanishing from the car park, leaving Quinn and Finn leaning weakly against each other, back to back. Rachel rushed over, reaching the two boys just in time for Quinn to double over retching in delayed reaction to the punches to his gut. He was really, really wishing he’d switched schools.

“Oh, sweetie!” Rachel rubbed his back while he heaved, stomach burning with pain. He finished, and when he straightened up, Rachel took off her cardigan and wiped his face clean with it, wetting it down with some water from her bag. She patted at the blood oozing from his eyebrow so gently he could barely feel it. He hadn’t even realized that his lip was bleeding until Rachel started to clean it up, but once he noticed, all he could taste was blood. Only when Quinn’s face was tended did Rachel turn to Finn.

“Are you okay?” she asked him.

“Yeah,” he said, and he had certainly come off better than Quinn. All he had was a graze across his cheek that looked like it would bruise impressively. He turned to Quinn.
“Dude, I’m sorry. You were awesome! You totally messed up Karovsky’s face!” Quinn gaped at him in shock. “I’m like, totally sorry I called you a girl, because you totally rocked that. Karovsky’s totally going to go crying to his mama after that punch you landed! But, uh, we’ve totally got to work on your blocking skills,” he added, looking at Quinn’s bleeding face. “Wanna come over some time and use my punching bag?”

Quinn nodded, bemused and grinning lopsidedly, wincing as the smile reopened his split lip.

“Finn!” Rachel berated, outraged, then: “Quinn!” she added as she saw him nodding.

“Rachel, it’s a guy thing,” Finn informed her pompously, then held his fist out for Quinn to bump. He did so very carefully, using the hand that wasn’t bleeding.

“Boys!” Rachel huffed. “Quinn, I’m taking you home. You are not driving in that condition. Finn, thank you for your assistance, I can take things from here. Quinn, get in the car.” Rachel was brooking no argument, and Quinn just looked at Finn, shrugged, and did what she said. “Give me the keys.”

Rachel was silent as she drove, her lips white and jaw clenched. Quinn noticed that they were heading the wrong direction for his place. A few minutes later they pulled up, and he realized that they were at Rachel’s house. Rachel got out and then opened Quinn’s door and hauled him inside. She sat him down on the couch and then left, returning holding a large first aid kit.

She put it down on the coffee table and sat in the chair opposite, just looking at Quinn’s face. Then all of a sudden she burst into tears.

“I’m sorry,” she sobbed. “God, I saw them hitting you, and they were so big and there were so many of them, and, and, and... your face... and I was so worried, and you’re bleeding, and I didn’t know what to do, and I was so scared, and you, you, you...”

Quinn stared at her in astonishment, then tentatively dropped to his knees in front of her and enveloped her in a hug. That only made her sob harder, but she wrapped her arms around him, oh so gently, mindful of any rib injuries, and buried her face in his shoulder. He held her and suddenly he didn’t notice the pain in his face, hands and stomach. All he could feel was her arms around him, her hair covering his hands, and her breath on his neck.

“Hey, it’s okay, I’m okay,” he whispered. “You scared them off, Rach, you scared them off. I’m here, I’m okay, it’s okay.”

“No! It’s not okay! You could have been seriously hurt! I’m going to report them to the principal! I’m going to report them to the police! That was a hate crime! Bigots like that shouldn’t be allowed to get away with it!”

“You’re right, Rach, you’re right. We will. We’ll stop them. It’ll be okay.”

She stayed in his arms until her sobs ceased, and then, still hiding her face in his shoulder, pressed her lips to his neck. “I don’t know what I’d do if you weren’t okay.”

“Rach?”

She brought one hand up to his hair and started kissing a trail up to his ear. “Is this... okay?”

Was it okay? Was it okay? The girl of his dreams was kissing his neck and she wanted to know if it was okay? Unable to form words, he just nodded his head vigorously, realizing belatedly that it made him seem like an idiot. She chuckled, delighted at his enthusiasm.
“Should we... talk about this?” she asked. His nodding turned into just-as-vigorous shaking. Then, although part of him was still convinced that he was reading things completely wrong and was about to make a giant fool of himself, he tilted her head back and placed the softest of kisses against her lips. He could feel her mouth curl into a smile and he pulled back and looked at her, a wide grin gracing his own features, but then winced as the smile re-opened his lip.

“Oh, Quinn, I’m so sorry!” She opened up the first aid kit and grabbed some clean gauze, dabbing gently at his lip. Quinn didn’t care, though: Rachel had kissed him!

She was fussing over him, repeatedly apologizing, when the front door opened and Hiram Berry walked in. “Daddy! Daddy, Quinn’s hurt, it was four boys from school, and they beat him up, and we need to go to the police station, but I thought we should wait for Dad, because he won’t let them treat Quinn badly, and I’m trying to apply first aid, but I’m so worried I’m going to hurt him, even though I do have senior first aid qualifications, but my hands are shaking, so could you please fix him, Daddy?” Rachel managed in seemingly one breath.

The smile of welcome that Hiram had been wearing when he walked in the door instantly turned into concern as he hurried forward in full doctor mode. He noticed his daughter’s hand in Quinn’s out of the corner of his eye but decided that it wasn’t the time to bring it up. “You did a good job cleaning his face, pumpkin,” he said, reaching for some antiseptic and some steri-strips to hold the cuts closed.

“Where else?” he asked. Rachel held Quinn’s bleeding hand out to her father and he cleaned and bandaged that too. “Anywhere else?”

Quinn started to shake his head, but then Rachel cut in: “Your stomach and ribs.” Quinn looked at her and then at Doctor Berry, extremely uncomfortable.

“Quinn, it’s okay if this is too personal and you don’t want to show me, but you should see a doctor about them. I can take you to one of my colleagues at the hospital if you’d like?” he suggested sympathetically.

Quinn took a deep breath. “No, it’s okay.” He pulled up his shirt and the bottom of his binder, carefully not raising them too high.

“Oh, Quinn!” Rachel said in dismay, seeing the ugly red bruising all over his stomach and the bottom of his rib cage.

“It’s okay, Rach. You made it feel better.” He chanced a cheeky grin at her but couldn’t quite manage a wink, even without his eye swelling shut.

“I’m sorry Quinn, but I’m going to need to touch you. Is that okay?” Quinn nodded at the older man’s question and submitted to the examination, only wincing slightly when he hit a sore spot. “I’m pretty sure nothing’s broken. You should get an X-ray to be certain.”

“It’s fine,” Quinn denied.

“Quinn Fabray! Don’t you dare try to pull that guy ‘it’s fine’ thing. If Daddy says you need an X-ray, you’re going to get an X-ray!” Quinn looked over at Rachel, chastened, and nodded.

“I’ll take you after we go to the police station. I’ll call Leroy and get him to meet us there. Have you called your Mother?”

Quinn’s face fell as he realized his Mom didn’t know. “I’ll call her now and ask her to meet me there too.”
“I should probably call Finn as well,” Rachel added. “He was there too, Daddy, he helped Quinn.”

They made their arrangements and then Hiram drove them all to the station, and on the way Quinn and Rachel told him what had happened. When they got there, Judy was already there, having rushed straight over as soon as Quinn called.

“Oh baby!” she burst into tears as soon as she saw him. “Quinnie, you didn’t tell me it was this bad. What did they do to you? Who are the boys who did this to my little baby?” she cried, wrapping him in her arms.

Hiram walked over. “Mrs Fabray. I’m Hiram Berry. I’m Rachel’s father, but I’m also a doctor: your son is all right. Quinn’s going to talk to the police and make a statement, and the boys who did this will be caught and punished.” He sounded very reassuring, and it seemed to work because Judy calmed down a little and loosened her grip on Quinn. “We were going to wait for my husband: the police don’t always have a good record dealing with transgender people. Leroy is a lawyer: he’ll be able to make sure Quinn’s rights aren’t violated. I’m not trying to be alarmist - they may well be perfectly reasonable. But I’d prefer to have Leroy here.”

“What could the police do to my little Quinnie?” Judy asked.

“They could ask all sorts of inappropriate questions, or they could ignore his complaint entirely. But we’re not going to let that happen.”

Quinn was suddenly afraid. “Mom, I really don’t want to do this. But I know if I don’t, they’ll hurt somebody else. They already hurt Kurt. Stay with me, Mom?” He was embarrassed to realize that he was crying a little. Dammit, why hadn’t he transferred to Dalton?

“Oh, Quinn,” came the twin dismayed cries from Judy and Rachel, who wrapped him in a double hug. “You didn’t tell me...”

“I couldn’t...” he started, but then broke off, shivering. His Mom and Rachel just held him until his shakes subsided and he could continue.

By the time he had finished giving his statement, Finn had arrived and had told his version of events. They ran into him in the waiting area. “Thanks, Finn,” Quinn said quietly.

“Yes, thank you Finn. I have to apologize about being so abrupt after the incident. As I’m sure you can understand, it was quite an emotional situation, and I’m afraid that I was not giving a sufficient amount of attention to my manners.”
“It’s okay, Rachel.”

“Well, I’m afraid we have to go. Quinn needs to go get an X-ray. Thank you for coming down and giving a report. And... thank you... for helping out this afternoon.”

“No sweat,” the boy was cheerful, although his cheer dropped when Rachel grabbed Quinn’s hand as they were leaving.

By the time they reached the hospital, Quinn was dead on his feet, so he was very glad that Hiram fast-tracked his way through an X-ray. His estimation had been correct and nothing was broken, so he sent Quinn home with his mother and some painkillers. They arranged to leave Quinn’s car at the Berry’s so that Rachel would drive it to pick Quinn up the next morning. Just as Quinn was leaving with Judy, Rachel stopped him and walked up to him. She wrapped her arms around him and placed a soft kiss on his lips. “I’m so glad you’re okay.”

The adults all smiled indulgently as Quinn’s face went bright red.

He was grinning in the car as Judy drove home, a little dopily as he’d taken one of the painkillers. “You’re looking a little chirpier than I would have expected,” Judy teased. “Something good happen?”

“Yeah,” Quinn managed blearily. “If I’d known all it would take was getting beat up, I’d have done it a long time ago.”

“Quinn! Don’t joke about that!” Judy chided. “But, if she makes you happy, then I’m happy.”

“She does, Mom.”

That was the last thing he said, as he fell asleep soon after. Judy had to drag him out of the car and up the stairs, upon which he collapsed on his bed and fell instantly back to sleep.

The next morning when he woke up, his body hurt so much he could barely move. He had some breakfast, wincing as he tried to eat with his busted lip, and then took some of his painkillers, but they barely took the edge off. There was no way he’d make it to school today. He rang Rachel and told her, feeling guilty when he heard her disappointment.

“Well, you take care of yourself, have plenty of rest, drink lots of liquids and don’t do anything strenuous. I’m going to come around after school to check on you.”

“You don’t have to do that,” Quinn protested.

“I want to,” she replied softly.

“Thanks.”

Neither of them wanted to hang up, but neither could they think of anything to say. They sat in silence, listening to each other breathe, until Quinn overheard Rachel’s Dad calling: “Pumpkin! You’re going to be late!”

“I guess you better go,” Quinn said reluctantly.

“I guess. I’ll see you this afternoon.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

Quinn spent most of the day asleep - at least that way he didn’t have to feel his cuts and bruises. He
made sure he set his alarm for three o’clock, though, so he could take a quick shower and make sure he was presentable for Rachel. Not that he was nervous or anything. It would be the first time they’d really been alone since she’d kissed him yesterday. And he wasn’t in a fit state to do anything about it.

When the doorbell rang, he ran down the stairs, but paused a little at the bottom so he didn’t look like he’d been running before he answered the door. “Hello, Quinn.”

“Hi,” he said, smiling goofily.

He stepped forward and chanced a kiss. Rachel sighed sweetly and kissed him back, just a touching of lips, but when he started to deepen it she pulled back: “Oh, Quinn, your lip! I don’t want to hurt you.”

“It doesn’t hurt! Seriously! It’s fine!” he tried, embarrassingly close to begging.

She laughed at him. “Don’t worry, there’ll be plenty of time once you’re healed,” she said coyly, winking at him over her shoulder as she pushed past him into the house.

“You’re going to kill me...” he muttered. She just laughed harder.

For the rest of the afternoon, Quinn tried to keep his desires in check. He certainly didn’t want to be like Finn or Puck, always pressuring a girl for more. When she pulled back from their kissing again, he sat back on the couch in haste: “I’m sorry, Rachel. I didn’t mean to push.” He dropped his gaze.

“Quinn,” Rachel started. “Quinn, look at me. You’re not pushing. I’m enjoying this as much as you are,” she confessed. “Remember, women want sex just as much as men do. I simply don’t want to hurt you. Your lip looks so painful.”

“I really don’t feel any pain when you’re touching me,” he confessed with a chagrined smile. “Um, I think you short-circuit my nerves or something.”

“Gosh, you say the sweetest things,” Rachel laughed. “But, no, you’re not pushing, and yes, I do want this. And more. I’m not yet ready to have sex, but I do want to do participate in more intimate activities with you.”

Quinn reddened; growing up in a Christian household, he was not at all used to hearing sex talked about so frankly. “Um. I’m not ready to... to do... that either. I can’t... I can’t even take off my clothes in front of people.” His embarrassment turned to shame and he hung his head.

“Oh baby,” Rachel murmured, pulling him into a hug.

“God, do you know how much I hated wearing that Cheerios’ uniform? With everything showing? I swear that was why I was such a bitch all the time,” he muttered. Then he pulled back a little bit from the hug, looking at her. “I’m going to get surgery as soon as I’m eighteen. Then it’ll be better.”

He forced himself to cheer up. “And I was hoping... that maybe...” he put on a cheeky grin. “Maybe we don’t have to wait until we’re twenty five.”

“Quinn Fabray!” Rachel feigned shock. Then: “You’ll just have to wait and see,” with a cheeky wink of her own.

Judy arrived home a few minutes later and called up the stairs. Quinn pulled himself away from
Rachel and they went down to greet her.

“The police station called a few minutes ago to tell me what was going on, Quinnie.”

“Should I leave?” Rachel asked hesitantly.

“No, Rachel, please. Please stay.” He grabbed her hand. “What did they say, Mom?”

“The four boys have been arrested and charged with assault. Since there were three witnesses, they all pled guilty, and have been released until sentencing in two week’s time. The school was informed and they will be expelled.”

Quinn sat down at the bench, pensive.

“Quinn, honey?”

He shrugged, helplessly, not sure what he felt. Happy that they’d been arrested and expelled? Guilty that he’d gotten them arrested and expelled? Scared that they’d been released? Angry at himself for being scared?

He stood up again and started pacing.

“Quinn? Are you okay?”

“I’m not scared. I’m not scared. I’m not scared,” he started repeating to himself, over and over. He started shaking. “Dammit, I’m not scared!”

Judy started towards him, but Rachel beat her and wrapped her arms around Quinn’s rigid body. He stopped pacing and stared at the floor.

Judy hovered around the two teens, unsure what to do. “Honey, do you want to stay home for two weeks?” she asked uncertainly.

Quinn raised his head. “No. No. I’m not going to let them scare me! I’m not scared!” He was shouting at this point and then, to his very great embarrassment, he burst into tears. “Dammit! Damn them! Damn them for making me feel like this! God, look at me. I’m crying like a girl!” he spat, bitter with self-hatred.

He tried to run away, but Rachel held on to him. “Quinn, you’re right. You’re right. Damn them. It’s their fault. It’s their fault. Not yours. And anybody would be crying after what happened.”

His expression didn’t change, so Rachel tried another tack: “And I’ll have you know: crying is not reserved for girls, and it’s quite sexist of you to say so! Why, my fathers both cry more at Beaches than I do!” She stepped back and crossed her arms.

Quinn goggled at her for a moment, his breath hiccupping in this throat, before a laugh burst free from him. “Rachel, I can’t believe you! I’m in tears, and you’re lecturing me on sexism!”

“Well, you’re not crying any more, are you?”

Quinn started in surprise. “I guess I’m not.”

Judy looked on with a bemused smile. “Rachel, would you like to stay for dinner?”

“I’d like to, Mrs Fabray, however I have to tell you that I’m a vegan, so I don’t want to put you to any trouble.”
“Quinnie, is this why you’ve been buying all that tofu and things like that?”

“Mo-om!” His face, already red from crying, blushed even brighter.

“Oh, that’s so sweet!” Rachel threw her arms around him, recapturing him in a hug.

After dinner, which Quinn cooked most of after seeing his mother looking rather baffled by the vegan ingredients, Rachel drove home with a plan to pick Quinn up the next morning, since his car was still at her house. By this time Quinn was tired and everything was hurting, but he couldn’t keep a goofy smile from his face after seeing Rachel off at the door.

The next morning when he woke up, he was glad to find that he was much less sore than he had been the day before. He was determined that he was going to return to school. He was not going to let them scare him into turning himself into a prisoner in his own home. He was ready and pacing nervously downstairs by the time Rachel arrived to pick him up.

When they arrived everyone stared at him in shock at his appearance. Within a few minutes Santana, Brittany and Finn had found them and were forming almost a flanking guard, scowling at anyone who came too close.

“Damn, Q, I didn’t realize how busted up you were. Finnocence here made it sound like it was all a jolly little scrap. Everyone was ticked at you for getting the guys expelled, thought you were being a total pussy crying to the police.”

“Santana, I told you he was all messed up! But he gave pretty good! You should have seen the fat lip he gave Karovsky!”

Rachel chimed in: “Finn, it wasn’t a fight; it was an assault. A queer-bashing. I know Quinn acquitted himself admirably which, while I’m philosophically opposed to violence, I do find surprisingly exciting, but discussing Quinn’s exploits in those terms gives the impression that it was a fair fight, which it most certainly was not.”

“Sorry Rachel.”

“Wait, what?” Santana stopped and turned to stare at Rachel.

“What, what?” Rachel sounded confused.

“Don’t worry, Rachel. San’s just confused because she didn’t believe me when I told her you liked Quinn. I think it’s exciting too that he can beat up guys twice his size,” Brittany explained calmly.

“Quinn, you stay away from my girl!” Santana rounded on him angrily. “And Britt! I beat up big guys all the time!” she added, a touch of a whine in her voice.

“I know, Sanny, and it’s exciting! I like it when you beat up guys that call me stupid, and then we go back to my place, only we don’t usually make it and we have to stop the car and-”

“That’s okay Britt!” Santana practically shouted. “I like that too, but we don’t need to tell everyone about it.”

“Thank Armani for that,” came a new voice. “I don’t think my tender sensibilities would have survived a detailed account. Dear God, Quinn, you look awful.”

“Hi Kurt. Nice to see you too,” Quinn deadpanned.
“No, seriously, I didn’t realize you were hurt that badly. Finn said you’d just got into a little fight.”

“See, Finnpeit, I told you!” Santana smacked the bigger boy.

The rest of the day passed oddly smoothly. People were still treating Quinn strangely, but were much friendlier than they had been at the start of the week, and there were no whispered comments. He figured it was partly sympathy for the state of his face, and partly the fact that the attack seemed to have separated the issue into two sides, and nobody wanted to be on the same side as people who would beat up a girl? boy? person? that badly. Whatever it was, he was glad of it, and hoped it wouldn’t wear off.

Even though Quinn was being left alone, that didn’t apply to everybody else. When he met up with Rachel at the start of lunch, he noticed that she was wearing a different outfit than she had been at the end of morning break.

“Who?” he ground out, taut with cold fury.

“Now, Quinn, I don’t want you-”

“Who. Was. It?”

“Quinn, you’re injured, and I don’t want you going off and getting hurt and-”

“Rachel,” he started, his voice icily calm. “If you don’t tell me who slushied you, first I’m going to ask all of our friends if they saw it, then I’m just going to start punching people, starting with the biggest, meanest guys on the wrestling team, until somebody answers my question.”

“All right, I’ll tell you, but I really don’t want you to hurt anybody. I’ve told you: I’m philosophically opposed to violence. I don’t want anybody to get hurt because of me. It breeches my code of ethics. So you have to promise me you’re not going to hit anybody.”

Quinn paused and looked at her stonily.

“You have to promise me.”

“I promise I’m not going to hit anybody.”

“Or kick, wrestle, headbutt or otherwise injure or attempt to injure anybody, or employ any method of physical violence whatsoever.”

“I promise.”

“Okay, it was Stephanie Jenks, the new Cheerios captain. Remember, you promised not to hurt anybody!”

He sat thinking, still coursing with rage, his mind ticking over ideas.

“Quinn? Quinn? What are you going to do? Quinn?”

“Rachel, I’m sorry, but I have to go. I promised I wouldn’t hurt her and I won’t, but I can’t let her get away with it.”

Rachel looked at the expression on his face and seemed to decide it was better to leave him alone.

He walked off in search of the AV club: they had something he would need.
On the drive home Quinn was casual and chatty, but Rachel seemed to sense he was still preoccupied. “Quinn, what are you plotting? I don’t want anybody to get hurt,” she said tensely. Then her voice softened: “Especially you.”

“Thanks, Rach. I promise nobody’s going to get hurt. I’m not even going to hurt Stephanie. But I also can’t let her do things like that. You’ve been bullied enough by obnoxious Cheerios captains,” he said ruefully.

“Quinn, I already forgave you for that. You were just feeling awful about yourself and taking it out on everybody else. I understand.”

“Actually, it wasn’t really everybody else,” he confessed guiltily. “It was mostly just you. I... um... hadacrushonyousincefreshmanyear. I was kind of... punishing you... for making me feel something I wasn’t supposed to feel. And also sort of... prodding you... until you paid attention to me.”

“Quinn! That’s so sweet. But also so... so... aggravating! I’m not sure whether to kiss you or smack you!”

“I’m injured, remember? No smacking.”

“You’re also driving, so no kissing, either,” Rachel added pointedly.

“Damn,” Quinn pouted. “But, again, I’m really sorry I was such an ass. I’d like to make up for it now. By not letting anybody get away with hurting my... my...” his voice trailed off. “Are you... my girlfriend?” he asked in a small voice.

“Do you want me to be?”

Quinn nodded vigorously, aware but not caring that he looked pathetically eager. “Yes. Rachel Berry, will you be my girlfriend?”

Rachel’s brilliant smile was his answer. “Only if you’ll be my boyfriend.” Suddenly his smile matched hers, his split lip barely registering. They spent the rest of the drive home grinning like idiots.

When he dropped her off, he said apologetically: “I’m afraid I won’t come in. I have to go home to work on something. I told you: I’m not going to let anybody get away with hurting my girlfriend.”

“Okay. You promised nobody was getting hurt and I trust you, so I’m not going to ask. I’ll see you tomorrow morning, boyfriend?”

He nodded, and they shared a lingering kiss, before he drove off, a little regretfully, but determined to complete his plan.

He worked on his plan on the computer for most of the evening, using the materials he’d gotten from the AV club. He worked through dinner, begging his Mom to make an exception to the dinner-table rule and let him eat in his room, and was still working at eleven o’clock. It had to be perfect, otherwise it wouldn’t work. By the time he finished, it was a work of art. He saved it, printed it and made sure it was in his bag, then, after a quick wash up, fell straight to sleep.

The next morning when he picked Rachel up he was hopping with excitement. Or possibly nerves at the upcoming confrontation. But he was going with excitement. It sounded less sissy.

He walked Rachel to her locker, then to her home room, then said he had to go take care of something. He dashed through the corridors, heading for the Cheerios’ locker room. He burst in,
prompting several shrieks from the girls inside. “Stephanie. I need to talk to you. In private.” She tried to stare him down, but Quinn scoffed internally - she was using the head bitch stare, and even as a boy, he was better at it than her.

After a brief stand-off, she folded: “Fine. Girls, leave me alone with the freak.”

He ignored that and waited for everyone to leave.

“Stephanie, I’m going to show you something, and you’re going to look at it while I tell you what I want.” He got out what he had been working on for so long the previous night and put it in her hands.

“This isn’t real! This never happened!” she panicked.

“Of course it didn’t. Did you know I took extra credit computer graphics all last year? It’s amazing what you can do with Photoshop, isn’t it? Take a good look. It’s perfect. It would take more of an expert than anyone at this school to tell it was fake. So you’re going to listen to me.”

Stephanie stared at him in fury.

“You are never, ever again going to slushy Rachel Berry. Or me. Or any of my friends. Or anyone from glee club. Or anyone at all. None of your cheerios are ever, ever again going to slushy Rachel Berry. Or me. Or any of my friends. Or anyone from glee club. Or anyone at all. And this does not just apply to slushies. There will be no more physical attacks, from you or any of your cheerleaders, towards anybody in this school.” Quinn’s voice was implacable as she gaped at him.

“And you will apologize to Rachel Berry for your slushy attack yesterday.”

“No way! I’m not apologizing to that loser!”

“You will apologize to her, or that photo of you kissing Jacob Ben Israel goes public. Starting with his blog. There will be full sized posters of it on the bulletin boards. There will be stickers of it. There will be fridge magnets. There will be flyers in every single locker in the school.”

“Nobody will believe it!”

“Really? I’m pretty good. Take a closer look. Can you see how I did it?”

“He raged impotently.

“So you will call off the attacks, and you will apologize to Rachel, by the end of the day, or I will hear about it.”

“What the hell is your problem anyway? You were the one who started throwing slushies!”

“And now I’m the one who’s going to get it to stop.”

“What if I can’t get my cheerleaders to stop?” Stephanie pleaded in agitation.

“Then you don’t deserve to be head bitch. You stop and they stop. One more attack and that photo goes public. And if it’s one of your cheerios, I can come up with something equally embarrassing for them. You can keep that photo, by the way. I have copies. Many copies. Lovely doing business with you.”

He walked out just as the bell was ringing, head held high. He had initially felt a little bad about using Jacob Ben Israel that way, but figured that the boy would actually consider it a favor if such
a picture were to come out.

He was feeling pretty pleased with himself all through his morning classes, and when the bell went for break, he hurried out to go and meet Rachel outside of her class, but by the time he got there the room was empty and she was nowhere in sight. He figured she must have gone ahead to the cafeteria.

He found her there sitting at a table with Kurt and Mercedes and waved to them before walking over to join them.

“Quinn, I just had a very strange experience. Stephanie Jenks just apologized to me. She didn’t actually sound sincere, but she made a respectable effort. Do you know anything about this?”

Quinn just smirked.

“What did you do to her?”

“Nothing. I told you I wouldn’t hurt her and I didn’t. We just had a... conversation.”

“Wait, are you telling me you got Stephanie Jenks to apologize to Rachel?” Mercedes chimed in, impressed. Quinn shrugged modestly.

“How the hell?”

“I told you. We just had a conversation. And if anyone sees her or any of the Cheerios slushying or bullying anybody, I’d like to know.”

“Quinn, what have you got on her?” Kurt asked shrewdly.

“Nothing,” Quinn said, which was kind of true - since all his evidence was fake. “We just... came to an understanding.”

“Wait a minute,” Mercedes interjected. “You got Stephanie Jenks to apologize? To Rachel Berry?”

“Um, yeah?”

“Stephanie Jenks?”

“Yeah?”

“Apologised?”

“Yeah?”

“To Rachel Berry?”

“Yes. I got her to apologize. What’s the big deal?”

“She’s like... the old you. Only even more horrible,” Mercedes said in hushed tones.

Deciding not to be offended, Quinn merely scoffed: “Please, like she has any moves that I didn’t teach her.”

“Quinn’s right, you know,” Kurt added. “Bitches are like poisonous snakes. They’re immune to each other’s venom. What?” he asked at Quinn’s scowl. “I’m speaking from personal experience.”
There wasn’t really anything to say to that so an uncomfortable silence fell, before Rachel broke in. “So, is everybody ready for glee next lesson?”

Quinn’s heart thumped: what with everything that had happened; starting back at school as a guy, getting together with Rachel and getting beaten up, he’d kind of forgotten that he was going to be debuting his new voice. To Rachel. He wasn’t ready! His voice was still cracking! He hadn’t practiced enough! He’d be singing to Rachel! He so wasn’t ready!

Kurt seemed to sense his panic, and leaned over to whisper into his ear: “Quinn, you’re going to be fine. You’re ready. We practiced and practiced and practiced, and you are perfect. Even I couldn’t do a better job.”

“Yeah, but you sing like a girl. And I emphatically do not want to sing like a girl.”

Kurt didn’t seem offended. “Fine, Blaine couldn’t do a better job.”

Quinn wasn’t reassured. Kurt turned to the others and said: “Quinn and I have been working on something, so I’m afraid I’m going to have to take him off for a quick warm-up,” grabbing Quinn’s arm as he stood.

“Wait,” Quinn stopped the other boy, noticing Rachel looking a little hurt. He walked round the table to her and knelt next to her. “Rach, this is something I wanted to do to surprise you. It would hardly be a surprise if I worked on it with you, would it?” The smile returned to Rachel’s face. Quinn leaned closer in and whispered in her ear so nobody else could hear: “Even though you are better than Kurt.” His reward was her delighted laugh and a lingering kiss. Kurt and Mercedes goggled.

“So...?” Kurt drawled once they were out of earshot of the others. “It looks like you don’t actually need this seduction song. So? Dish,” he commanded.

“Um...” Quinn didn’t quite know how to start.

“Boys! Useless at gossip!” Kurt despaired. “Okay, let’s try an easy one: when did this start?”

“Tuesday night.”

“After you got beat up? Yes, Finn said she chased those boys off. Was she all like: ‘poor wounded boy, let me kiss it better’? I can see that. She is a sucker for the underdog. Oh, this is so dramatic and romantic. Go on, do tell.”

“Uh...”

“God, you’re hopeless! I’m going to have to get all the details from her, aren’t I?”

“I think so,” Quinn said, happy for a question he could answer.

“So, you don’t need the seduction song?”

“I still need to prove to her that I can be good enough for her. Or at least as good as I can be, since nobody’s good enough for her. So yes, I still need to sing it for her. With her. Thank you so much for helping me out Kurt. You really are the best male voice in glee.”

“Darling, it’s kind of you to say so but, while I am the best, I don’t exactly have a ‘male voice’,” Kurt smirked. “I actually think you are going to be the best male voice in glee. You’re not quite there yet, but with a bit more practice and once your voice settles down, none of the others will be
able to touch you.”

Quinn stared at him, shocked and flattered beyond words.

Once they reached the choir room, they ran through the warm ups without speaking. Quinn’s stomach was twisting too much for talk, and he figured Kurt was probably feeling in need of some smelling salts and a nice lie-down after paying out such a big compliment.

They’d just wrapped up when the other kids started arriving. Kurt took his seat, but Quinn stood around waiting for Rachel, and when she arrived they took seats together.

Mr Schuester arrived a few minutes later and welcomed them all back to glee after the summer break. He was about to launch into a long discussion about the upcoming year when Quinn felt a sharp kick in the back of his chair. He looked back to see Kurt gesturing at him and hesitantly raised his hand.

“Mr Schuester? I’d like to audition for a lead role.”

Schue looked at him uncomfortably. “Well, we already... Rachel...”

“Mr Schuester,” Rachel interrupted patronizingly. “Clearly Quinn wants to audition as a male lead.”

The teacher looked even more uncomfortable. “Great, Quinn, why don’t you come on up?”

He rummaged in his bag for the sheet music and stood up, taking the pages over to Brad and the band. “This song can be sung as a solo, but it’s better as a duet. I was hoping...” he started shyly.

Exactly as planned, and luckily for his fragile ego, Rachel jumped up and volunteered.

“Rachel, you don’t even know what she’s singing!” Mr Schue cut in.

Quinn winced. “I’m pretty certain she’ll know it,” he ignored the pronoun.

Rachel didn’t: “Mr Schuester, I know that Principal Figgins sent around an email informing all of Quinn’s teachers about his preferred pronouns. If you’re having problems adjusting, you’re welcome to come along to a GLBT support group that I attend with my fathers. Or I’m sure Miss Pillsbury has some brochures,” she said, the sweetness not disguising the underlying steel. Quinn was simultaneously embarrassed and delighted by Rachel’s defense of his gender.

“Sorry, Quinn,” he mumbled. “So, what are you singing?”

“Music of the night,” Quinn answered simply. He saw Mr Schue frown doubtfully but Rachel, whom he was watching closely, looked surprised but showed no such doubt.

She smiled happily. “Of course I know that! I have at least three versions of it on MP3 at home! Oh, Quinn, are you thinking of Barbra’s duet with Michael Crawford?”

He nodded, his nerves returning full force. After all, while Rachel stood equal with Barbra Streisand, he was certainly no Michael Crawford. But Rachel just smiled at him with such confidence, believing that, if he said he could do it, he could do it.

He nodded to the band to start and, once he started singing, his body remembered the hours and hours and hours of practice he’d spent with Kurt and Blaine. He looked towards Rachel and his nerves disappeared.
“Night time sharpens, heightens each sensation.

“Darkness stirs and wakes imagination.”

The minute she heard his singing voice, his new, deep, testosterone-enhanced, extensively practiced voice, Rachel’s eyes widened in wonder and she smiled delightedly. It was possibly the most wonderful expression Quinn had ever seen, and his confidence soared.

When they reached the soprano’s lines, Rachel took over, looking not at the audience as she usually did, but straight at Quinn, her eyes never leaving his.

“Slowly, gently, night unfurls its splendor,

“Grasp it, sense it, tremulous and tender.”

This. This was why he had practiced so long, so hard. This was why he couldn’t leave McKinley. This was why he couldn’t wait ‘til college to transition. This. This absolute connection that he’d craved ever since he’d first heard Rachel sing.

Nothing else in the world existed, except the music flowing through him and the perfect woman gazing up at him, sharing it.

As the song drew to its finale, Rachel stepped towards him, her hands reaching up to grasp his shoulders. He raised his own hands to cover hers. They sang the last few lines together:

“You alone can make my song take flight.

“Help me make the music of the night.”

As the music faded out, Quinn dropped his hands to Rachel’s waist and they stood panting, foreheads resting against each other.

The rest of the club was silent.

“Wow,” Kurt whispered. This seemed to break the spell, and the entire club burst into applause.

“It looks like we have another male lead!” Mr Schue exclaimed excitedly. “Quinn! You’re exactly what this club has been missing! A male lead for Broadway numbers! Nationals, here we come!”

“Dude!” Finn slapped Quinn on the back. “You rocked that!” He started elbowing Puck and Sam, who awkwardly got out of their seats and came over.

“Quinn, you never sounded like that in rehearsals!” Kurt said in his ear.

Quinn barely noticed the noise around him; he was still staring into Rachel’s eyes. He leaned forward and took her lips in a kiss, and the rest of the club started hollering and hooting.

Brittany came over and wrapped them both in a huge hug: “Oh, you guys are so adorable!”

Santana followed more slowly: “Eh, Q. Not bad,” which, from her, was high praise indeed.

Tina and Mike were slapping them both on the back, Artie and Finn were fist-bumping Quinn, and Kurt started talking animatedly to Rachel.

The press of their friends broke them apart, and Mercedes approached Quinn hesitantly: “Okay,
I’m convinced. There’s no way that voice is a mistake,” she hugged him. “It may have taken hormones, but that is God’s blessing. I’m sorry it took me so long to hear it.”

Lauren walked straight into Rachel’s personal space: “So, if Quinn here is running for Prom King, you’re going to be my competition.” Rachel squeaked and ran back to hide behind Quinn, who glared. Lauren grinned. “Kidding.”

Quinn turned around to wrap his arms around Rachel and, flushed with the success of becoming the newest male lead, surrounded by his friends who accepted him and supported him, and with the most amazing girl he’d ever known cuddling into his embrace, Quinn knew, for the first time in his life, that he was exactly where, and who, he was supposed to be.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!