We Might As Well Close Our Eyes

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Summary

When Kurt's bullies cuff him to the wire fence, there are unexpected consequences. Puck intervenes to keep Kurt safe. Bondage, Dom/sub, eventual Puck/Kurt/Finn.

Notes

A meeting of minds! We decided that we being awesome, and these boys being awesome, and Puck needing some love, we would give him some. Enjoy!

Here's the playlist for the whole story: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLc72s_nGT2ySF0pfeKRwDehatLb5VFz8I

-amy and gala
It occurred to Kurt one morning, as he was being walked bodily toward the dumpster, that the state of construction on the east wing of the building was going to pose a whole new set of problems for him. It wasn't just going to be his wardrobe at risk anymore. He could actually see shards of ceramic and lengths of sharpened metal rebar, mere inches from his face. So this time, before Mercedes and Tina pulled him out, he got out his phone and took a picture of the contents of the dumpster.

"Don't you think I could threaten Figgins with a civil lawsuit if I'm in this kind of danger?" he demanded, showing them the photo.

Tina looked dubious. "Figgins doesn't care about anything else that's going on at this school. I think you'd have to involve your dad if you really wanted to stop anything."

That decided it for Kurt. His dad had been upset enough by one fag phone call; he wasn't going to find out what kind of reaction he'd get from him if he found out Kurt was still being thrown into trash receptacles. He was going to have to deal with this on his own.

The next time Rick and Lipoff seized him under the arms and started the long walk across the school grounds to the dumpster, Kurt was prepared. "Hold on," he said, not struggling, because he knew from experience that would just make them cackle and he'd lose their attention. "I'm sure you've noticed by now that there's some construction happening. Which means the contents of the dumpster have changed. Have you considered what implications this has for the bunch of you?"

Rick didn't pause in his mission, but Lipoff seemed uneasy. "What do you mean?"

Kurt pushed his advantage. "I'm not trying to quash your freedom of speech here, because I understand this action is a protest of sorts against people like me... but honestly, you could get into a lot of trouble if I got tetanus, or... or glass in my eye, or something." He hoped the bullshit dropping from his lips didn't smell too suspicious.

Rick didn't seem to understand what he was getting at. Kurt sighed inside his head, where it was safe. He wasn't sure how much more he could dumb this down. Maybe he should speak in caveman voice. Blood poisoning bad. Gay kid sue.

Thankfully Lipoff took care of it before he could say something that ended with a punch to the gut. "Dude, there's rebar in there. What if we chucked him and he landed on it? If it went through his chest there'd be blood everywhere. He'd like, puke blood and die."

"Huh."

Kurt could tell by Rick's expression that the hockey player had a full Saw franchise gorefest in his head, starring Kurt Hummel, dying horribly. For a moment he had a truly terrified feeling, people like Matthew Shepard coming to mind. His bloody death might not be considered a bad thing. Then Rick let go of his arm. He shoved him into the nearest car, and over the sound of the car alarm shouted, "Don't think we won't figure something out."

Kurt was well aware that they would. It was statistically impossible for him to go a single day without being harassed. He just didn't see the point of being on edge every minute. He had no Alastor Moody shouting "Constant Vigilance!" into his ear. Mr Schue blathering about eighties
soft rock didn't count, even if it felt equally annoying. So when the hockey team passed him a few times in the hall between periods looking menacing as usual, he readjusted his bag and refused to whimper.

It took Rick until lunch to approach him with intent. There was a smile on his face - a fully toothed smile, though Kurt took joy in imagining him with broken teeth and a permanent concussion - as he leaned in. "Guess what the Cheerios had?"

Kurt's first thought was that they were going to make him wear the uniform to humiliate him. Except that didn't make sense because none of them would want to actually touch him to strip him, in case The Gay was catching. He discarded that idea as Lipoff steered him down the hall and outside. That sort of humiliation would have begun in the bathroom.

"Six dozen bottles of chemical hair remover," Kurt guessed, though he was loathe to plant suggestions in his head. Rick smirked.

"I can spare you the fireman's carry if you follow me outside, behind the cafeteria."

Kurt almost wanted to let him give it a try, because the Manolo Blahnik oxfords he was wearing had particularly sharp toes, and it would have been especially satisfying to dig them into Rick's kidneys. But he looked down at his Joseph Abboud blazer and sighed. A couple jabs to the Neanderthal's abdomen wouldn't be worth two hours repair work at the sewing machine. "Lead the way," he said in a monotone.

But he didn't bargain on Rick pulling out a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. When Kurt saw them, he forgot his blazer, forgot everything else except the obscured distance between the chain link fence and the school door, which would almost certainly be locked from the outside anyway. Rick grabbed him by both arms and shoved him face-first up against the links, making them ring. He used his elbows to force Kurt to stand flat, and before he knew it, Kurt's wrists were fastened securely by the cuffs to the fence above his head.

"You're never going to get away with this!" Kurt yelled, but Rick ignored him, dodging Kurt's attempts to kick him in the shins.

"Now stay there," Rick hissed into his ear. "And don't think this is some kind of negotiation, because it's not. I'll come uncuff you when I'm good and ready."

Kurt spent the first minutes of his captivity hyperventilating. He hadn't been hit, but there was still a strong comparison to be made with what had happened to Shepard, and that hadn't ended well. Dying in Lima, Ohio appeared nowhere on Kurt's list of life goals. He was too good for Lima. The idea of being stuck here, his body rotting in Ohio forever, was terrifying.

Once he'd been standing for five minutes without interference, violent or otherwise, he started to think more logically. His cellphone was out of reach in the normally accessible front pocket of his backpack. His foot was close enough to the strap that he could probably hook it and kick it closer, but with both his hands bound there was no way to get the phone out. Instinct told him to scream, but only ten percent of McKinley students would be amenable to helping him, at best. The rest would ignore him, or use the opportunity to get their own hits in. It would be safer to wait. Mercedes and Tina and Artie would notice when he didn't show up in the cafeteria. He was expected; he'd never failed to show up without a valid excuse. They would come looking for him. He just had to wait. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. *Stay calm, and wait it out.*

There was something about being silent and stuck in one position that made it easier to think about his body. Kurt generally lived the life of the mind. Without a boyfriend to draw attention to the
way things felt, Kurt tended to focus on the way his body seemed. It was the difference between using five skin care products to aim for smooth radiance, and some pretty boy rubbing his face on his thigh. Standing like this he could feel his arms get heavier, his weight shifting, minutely but constantly. And he could feel himself start to get hard.

It was a reaction that catapulted him from his newfound body awareness, straight back into his head. A running commentary rose up, a good half of which was *oh my god*. It was a phrase he tended not to use, his atheism not allowing for it, but he was panicking. What was *wrong* with him? Who got an erection when they were being bullied? The only thing that made sense was some sort of Stockholm thing, like he was the next Elizabeth Smart. Well, Kurt would put a stop to that before it grew any stronger. He wouldn't let his body betray him like this.

When Rick appeared fifteen minutes later to un cuff him, Kurt was barely thinking about what might have motivated him to show up, or anything other than *don't let him notice how tight my pants are*, with a healthy side of *why did I wear the skinny jeans today?* Luckily, Rick wasn't paying much attention to anything. He just muttered something about Kurt watching his step, and let him go free. Kurt went to the girls' restroom and stood alone in one of the stalls, rubbing his wrists for a good ten minutes before he felt safe enough and in control enough to return to class.

But his subconscious apparently hadn't gotten the memo that it wasn't *okay* to be turned on by teenage terrorists, because that night he woke, sticky and flushed, his dreams crystal clear in his memory. He couldn't do anything other than change his pajama pants and hope that such nonsense would be gone from his mind by morning.

Puck didn't have any desire to throw kids into the dumpster anymore, but he was aware it was still happening. He'd noticed Hummel stopping Rick and Lipoff to argue with them, and really, he had to give the guy some credit for standing up for himself. But he wouldn't have noticed Kurt being handcuffed to the fence if he hadn't followed Rick out there that first time.

At first, he thought he'd have to storm the cafeteria to confront the assholes in front of the whole school, but one little handcuff key was easy to lose. So he ended up standing there in the shadow of the smelly kitchen dumpster, watching Kurt for a few minutes. Part of him found it funny, the way Kurt was just dangling there from his wrists, looking helpless. But mostly he thought it was a dick move on Rick and Lipoff's part. At least when it came to the dumpster, Kurt always had a chance of being able to get out on his own. *What the fuck's he supposed to do now?* he wondered in annoyance. *Rick didn't always think this shit through.*

But even after he left to go find Rick and kick his ass a little, even after Kurt had been disconnected from the chain link and was safely in Glee, the idea stayed with him. He thought it must have bothered him more than he'd realized - until he was in the middle of making out with Penny Rogers, and the image of Kurt's wrists cuffed to the fence appeared in his mind, and suddenly he was Finn Hudson thinking about the mailman. He had to call a time out to get himself back together. *What the fuck?*

The next day Puck went back to the fence to see if Kurt was there again. He was, though Lipoff had cuffed him face-forward this time, both hands linked through one chain segment, above his head. Puck went back and forth between the school and the kitchen dumpster three times before gritting his teeth and making himself walk away. This wasn't his fight; Rick and Lipoff were way beyond his ability to control. The best he could do was try to get them in trouble, and, failing that, make sure Kurt got out okay. He considered telling Finn, because Finn had more social capital than he did when it came to school officials, but things between him and Finn continued to be awkward and strained since he found out about Quinn and the baby.
And there was this added layer of weird, the one in which Puck saw Kurt Hummel suspended by handcuffs from the chain link fence and ended up needing to find a quiet corner in which to beat off. There wasn't anything that would make him tell Finn about that.

Kurt was there the next day, too, and Puck decided sitting in the shadow of the garbage dumpster and considering what to do was getting old, and not a little stalkery. He went up to Kurt and said, "Hey."

Kurt's eyes widened, his face going immediately crimson. For several seconds he said nothing, and Puck almost smiled.

"You here to laugh at me too?" Kurt finally asked.

"I'm not going to do anything like that," Puck promised. "I just wanted to make sure you were okay. Like, your wrists. Your skin's kind of soft." What the fuck did he mean by that? That was about the douchiest of douchebag things to say. He sighed and went on. "I'll go make Rick cut you down as soon as they're done with lunch."

Kurt looked suspicious. "Why would you do that?"

"Because I've been doing it for the last three days. You think Rick's been uncuffing you out of the goodness of his very small heart?" He tried not to look directly at the cuffs, but he got close enough to reach out and touch Kurt. Which he did, just a hand on his shoulder, which he thought would be kind of innocent, right? But that wasn't the way Kurt was looking at him. Or, if he had to be honest, was probably the way he was looking at Kurt either. He took his hand away. "So, I should go get him now."

"Yeah," whispered Kurt. "That would be... thank you."

Puck frowned, watching the way Kurt was straining to get his wrists down, not wanting them to dangle and chafe, but making an effort to hold his arms like that must be wearing on him. Not that Kurt didn't have strong arm muscles. Not that Puck would have noticed whether or not he did.

"You look kind of uncomfortable, is all."

"You think?" snapped Kurt. But he wasn't looking at Puck, and whatever he was focusing on wasn't really working very well, because he was breathing a little hard, and Puck thought his chin might be wobbling a little behind that determined expression. Puck wasn't going to touch Kurt again, but he absolutely hated the prospect of walking away and leaving him alone like this.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone. "Who could I text?"

"What?"

"Who. Who'd be the best one to find you like this? I can't tell Finn; he'd go apeshit. So, tell me - Mercedes, Tina, Mr. Schue? Who?"

Kurt was staring right at him now. "I have no idea. Nobody. I don't want anybody to - see me like this."

Puck sighed again. "All right. I'm gonna - just hang on. I mean, I'll be right back, okay?"

He didn't like it, didn't like it at all, but it was better than humiliating Kurt further. Puck took off, jogging around to the side door and letting himself back into the building near the office. Lipoff was the first one he found, standing beside the water fountain with two other hockey players.
"The key," he said. "You got one?"

Lipoff ignored him, until Puck turned on the fountain and leaned on it hard with one thumb, spraying him in the crotch. "What the fuck, Puckerman?" he screeched.

"The key," he repeated insistently. "Give it to me."

The other guys laughed hard enough that they couldn't ask questions, at least, and Lipoff scowled as he dug into his pocket and came up with a small silver key. "I need it back."

"Yeah, well, we can have that conversation when you've changed your jeans," he said. "They sell adult diapers for that problem, you know."

He took the shortcut through the cafeteria and let the door swing shut behind him as he emerged in the yard behind the kitchen. Kurt was, of course, still there.

Puck didn't know when it had happened that Kurt had gotten tall enough that reaching above his head was a stretch for him, but he could barely touch the cuffs with the tips of his fingers. "Fucking Rick the fucking Stick," he muttered, lodging a toe of his boot in the first row of diamonds in the fence and hauling himself up above Kurt's head. Kurt turned his head away from Puck's abs right in his face. He managed to unlock it on the third try, and jumped down, watching Kurt massage his wrists. "Lemme see those."

"I'm fine," Kurt insisted, but Puck grabbed his hands anyway, turning them over to examine the red marks on the heels of his hands. They weren't bleeding, but he guessed they weren't super happy either.

And then he got a look at the crotch of Kurt's tight jeans, and he wondered if he should rethink that assumption. Because... dude. If it were Finn or Matt or one of the other guys, he could make a joke about the size of the meat he was packing, but somehow with Kurt that felt completely the wrong thing to say.

Kurt hadn't missed his glance. He closed his eyes, cradling his wrists to his chest. "Don't - just don't tell Rick about this. Please? I don't think I could handle him having one more piece of ammunition against me."

"What, you mean your boner? Is it the cuffs?" Puck squinted into the sun, looking above them at the links of the fence. "Never would have expected you to be into bondage, Hummel."

"Yeah, well." Kurt sounded weary. "That makes two of us, so."

Puck reached out and took the cuffs from Kurt's loose grasp, considering them. "I've got the key now," he pointed out.

"Yeah. That was really nice of you. Thank you." Kurt crossed his arms and tucked his hands around his ribs, looking defeated. It made Puck a little annoyed to see him that way, because Kurt was a fighter, not a giver-upper.

"And the cuffs." Puck dangled them from a finger, grinning. "Maybe we should grab them and lock them to a fence. See how they like it."

Kurt laughed, shaking his head. "I'm sure I couldn't. But it's a nice thought."

"Or you could take them home. Use them, you know. Yourself."
He watched Kurt's face move from startled to shocked to completely overwhelmed in the space of a few seconds. That look was good on him, actually, pupils blown and mouth hanging open.

"Um. No. Thanks," he managed to stammer out. "I can't anyway. If those troglodytes don't get the cuffs back they'll do something worse."

Puck watched Kurt stalk off. It was kind of insane, how he could see his attitude slot back into place, like armor attaching piece by piece. No doubt by the time he was inside he would be the bitchy queen all of Glee loved and adored. But Puck didn't have time to follow and watch that happen. He needed to come up with a plan. Kurt was right. He was going to have to give Rick something to do, otherwise he'd go back to the dumpster stand-by, and Puck had spent his biology period watching them jackhammer the walkway. Kurt would probably bruise up pretty badly if he was thrown on top of chunks of concrete.

By the end of the day, Puck was pretty pleased with himself. He'd talked up bodychecking in the NHL, so Rick would likely imagine himself a Sidney Crosby and return to shoving Kurt. But better still, when Mercedes and Santana were doing some bad ass bitch song in Glee and Kurt was watching like it was better than porn, Puck managed to get the cuffs and the key into a pocket of his messenger bag.

Kurt was undoubtedly the kind of girly-dude that switched his purse every day. When he did that thing that Puck's mom did, the upending and shaking out ten thousand things to transfer them thing, he'd see the cuffs, and then it'd be up to him if he used them. Puck didn't have a personal stake in the matter. It wasn't like he cared if Hummel got off. It was just an easier problem to solve than Finn's hilarious quick-draw issue, and Puck liked feeling like a problem solver.

When he woke up in the middle of the night, he reached immediately for his phone to see what time it was. Calling Kurt at 1:45 am to check on him might be a stupid idea, but it was hard for Puck to feel rational about any of this, anyway. He settled on sending a text. So how'd you like them? He didn't expect to get a response, but it still took him a while to settle down enough to get back to sleep.

Most days, Kurt went to his dad's garage to study. It was easier to focus in an environment that didn't contain every piece of media he'd rather be consuming. On the agenda today was American history and geometry. He'd claimed the wobbly work table in the back office, and dumped the entire contents of his bag out before sorting through the detritus, his notes and extra pens and the cuffs and -

Wait a minute.

Kurt almost didn't want to touch them, but the chances of his dad walking back into the room and seeing them there were quite high, and he really didn't want to have that conversation with him. He ended up taking his pen and sliding it through one of the loops, dangling it gingerly, like a dead rat, over his deflated bag.

Then he gave himself a stern shake and reached out with the other hand, grasping them firmly. They're just a tool, he told himself. This has nothing to do with your long-standing uniform fetish. He crammed them into his back pocket and tried to forget about them while he opened his geometry textbook.

This was easier said than done. The afternoon drama with Puck at the chain-link fence kept coming back to poke at him, completely unbidden. Interior angles of polygons, and poke, Puck's hand on his shoulder. Circle area by sectors, and poke, Puck leaning against him as he climbed the fence to
uncuff him. Congruent shapes, and poke. Puck staring at his goddamn crotch. He stopped, resting his head in one hand.

"Everything okay, buddy?" his dad asked, making him jump. He gave him a wan smile.

"It's been kind of a long day," he replied. "I think I might head home early tonight."

The cuffs pressed against his ass as he walked the five and a half blocks back to the house, and by the time he got home, he had a very clear picture in his mind of exactly what he wouldn't be doing with them. Because it would be completely unsafe, for one thing, doing anything like that alone in the house, and because it was absurd to think that it might really turn out to be enjoyable. Not that his persistent hard-on was any indication of that.

Kurt dropped his bag next to his bed and stood in the center of his room, closing his eyes and trying to chase away the plan that had emerged as he'd walked. No. He wasn't going to. There was absolutely no way. He shed his clothes and hung them up, determined not to check the stability of the closet rod, and slipped the cuffs out of his pants and into his robe without looking at them.

Then he freaked out that maybe he'd lost the key, and spent thirty frantic seconds scrambling in the pockets of his bag before he had it again, during which time he gave up anything that looked like sensibility. He wondered, while he brushed his teeth, if it might be better to start by searching the Internet for articles about the sanity of self-bondage or the psychological stability of those who might get hard thinking about it.

Finally, he sat on the edge of his bed, holding the cuffs in both hands, making himself look at them, trying desperately to reconcile his vision of himself as a liberated supporter of equal rights with this new piece of information about what really turned him on. Because he had to admit, it really, really did, maybe more than anything ever had. For a moment, he had a glimpse of what other guys dealt with at school, surrounded by stimulus for their own kinks all the time, and he heaved a sympathetic sigh.

He curled the metal around his left wrist until it latched. If he was going to do this, better to have his dominant hand free. The second cuff fit easily around the rod. When he moved forward a few steps to really stretch his arm the metal skittered on metal. The noise sent a sharp jolt to his crotch. This was such a bad idea. The key was safe in his robe pocket, and no one would ever have to know, and this was still a bad idea, but here he was, giving in. Just because Puck had suggested it - and when had he ever looked to Puck for ideas about sex?

Kurt shook his head. He was allowed to be the stupid one if no one was watching. As long as it didn't become a school wide debacle, it was okay. He ran the fingers of his free hand over his hip once, twice. Enough to wake up his skin, and then he curled his hand around his cock and stroked. Kurt normally masturbated with lubricant. After all, he gave his skin every other liquid it needed in any given situation. That wasn't possible now, he didn't have enough hands, but his dick wasn't complaining about the rougher sensation. And above it all was his trapped wrist. At least half his attention was caught on the warmth of his raised arm, and the way his elbow was strained. He didn't have the knowledge of anatomy to explain it, it just felt so straight that it nearly bent inwards.

He barely needed to touch himself at all. The warmth travelled down his arm and into his shoulder as it spread up from his cock and he bit his lip, not caring if it would leave a mark. He came, not bothering to muffle his groan. No reason for it, not with dad and Carole at work, and Finn at basketball practice. That's when his knees buckled, and Kurt realised two things in quick succession. Yes, he was acquainted with getting off standing up, but masturbation in the shower
allowed for leaning against tile until he regained mastery of his limbs. No such support was available in the middle of his room. Also, his arm didn't stop being attached to the closet rod above his head just because his centre of gravity was suddenly somewhere near the floor. It took all his willpower to spring back to his feet before the dead weight of his body dangling from the closet rod ripped his arm out of its socket.

Later, manically scrubbing the floor, he considered the event. Technically it was a success. There had been no embarrassing emergency intervention by the fire department, and he had climaxed. It was safe to say bondage was a thing he liked, without any unfortunate implications about being turned on by bullying. Still, Kurt wasn't settled. Now, not only did he need to find a mythical second gay man in Lima, he needed to hope said man liked tying others up. It was more than depressing, it was statistically impossible. He went to bed on the verge of angry tears.

When he woke up in the morning and saw the text from Puck, he shoved his phone into his pocket and ignored it as successfully as he had the cuffs the night before. Puck was just going to have to get used to disappointment.

Puck was impatient by the time he got to school the next day. Impatient with not knowing how Kurt's night had gone, and confused-leaning-to-pissed-off about why the absence of texts made him impatient. He didn't even listen to what Jacob ben Israel asked, he just shoved him into the trophy display. Little asshole never had anything good to say anyway.

He wasn't stalking the halls waiting for Kurt. He wasn't, because that would be weird, and gay, and that wasn't who Puckasaurus was. He was just... taking the lay of the land. A man had to be aware of his surroundings, right?

Then the boy in question came walking in, stupidly expensive outfit unmarked. So at least he hadn't been dumpstered yet, which was important. Because Puck had Glee's backs, not because he cared about Kurt's stupid hundred dollar shirt with freakin' rhinestones.

Any question of whether Kurt had done anything involving the cuffs flew out the window when Puck registered him leaning against the wall decked out in Cheerios posters, blushing. On a guy that pale, it was brighter than a cop's flashing lights. Puck wondered for a second how far the blush went down his chest, then stomped on the thought viciously and turned slightly to look at Santana's thighs. They weren't flushed at all, but they were still hot and he was still hard. It was fine.

He minded his own damn business all day. Didn't even walk the hall. Mike and Matt and Finn could punch someone in the face if the need arose. And then it was Glee, and the same words he'd typed out last night were sliding out of his mouth in an undertone, quiet enough that Schue could still talk about songs with the word "hello" in them and think he had the room's undivided attention. Man was a little delusional sometimes.

"So, how'd you like them?"

Kurt kept his eyes fixed on the piano. "Wrong time, wrong place, Puckerman."

He shuffled his feet on the linoleum. "Dude, I'm not scheduling a lunch to talk about this. Just tell me."

"It worked. It's...a thing that works for me."

That wasn't enough detail for Puck, but he didn't really want to think about why he wanted more detail, and sure as shit if he asked for more Hummel would want to know why. So he just said,
"So, all good then."

"Well, until the end." With a smirk and a roll of the eyes Kurt added, "I nearly wrenched my arm."

That made sense. Puck had come close to falling over in the shower before. Attaching yourself to something and then losing the stability of your legs would hurt like a bitch. Before he thought about it, he said, "I could spot you?"

Kurt's eyebrows - plucked like a girl's, and shaped better than half the Cheerios - raised so high they almost left his face. "Excuse me?"

"Kurt?" Mr. Schue paused, with an inquiring look. "Do you... have something to add?"

"Excuse me, I was just trying to wrap my brain around something." His face was closed and his demeanor serene. Nothing of what he'd been showing Puck that morning, with his three-alarm blush, was in evidence now. Puck suddenly found himself wanting to do whatever it took to get Kurt to lose his cool. But he waited until the end of Glee to approach him again, this time by his car.

"I just don't like the idea of you hurting yourself doing something awesome," said Puck. He tried leaning against the Navigator, but moved away again when he caught Kurt's expression. You're clear about how you feel about scratching the paint on your car, but not about how you like to get off? He couldn't help but thinking this was kind of sad.

Kurt picked at the buckle on his messenger bag. "You... think that's awesome?"

"I'm in favor of things that feel good." Which wasn't really an answer, but maybe he wasn't quite ready to give one yet. "And, if you didn't notice, I woke up in the middle of the night wondering how you were doing. I guess if I'm going to be doing that, I might as well be... right there with you. While you're doing it." And fuck, he wasn't thinking about that.

They stood there for a few moments, breathing in unison, before Kurt cleared his throat. "You want to do that. For me?"

Puck tried not to glower at him. "What do you want, an engraved invitation?"

Kurt had no such compunction. He glared right back. "I want some kind of assurance that this is not a practical joke, or a gag of any kind, or some way to humiliate me."

"Well, it's not," snapped Puck.

"Fine," Kurt snapped back.

Puck was about to continue the snapping when he paused. "You... fine, as in you understand that I'm not trying to humiliate you, or fine, as in...?"

Kurt sighed, squeezing his forehead between two fingers. "Fine. Yes. God, I can't believe this. I'm saying yes."

And now Puck had to scramble for words to reply, because Kurt was opening the door to his Navigator and climbing in and closing it again, and maybe he didn't actually want to do this because he was having trouble with that breathing in and out thing, and didn't you need to keep doing that when you were putting handcuffs on someone?

Kurt knocked on the window, gesturing with his head: Get in.
They'd already driven three blocks before Puck realized he'd left his truck at school. "Um," he began, but Kurt cut him off.

"You're going to have to excuse me if I'm a little nervous. I've never - I mean, ever. With anybody else. I even turn my stuffed animals around to face the wall. So this might not actually work at all with you there." He hunched forward in his seat and gripped the steering wheel more firmly. "And I'm also warning you that I might freak out and tell you to leave."

"That's cool," Puck shrugged. "You don't know how you're gonna react. I'm not interested in freaking you out."

Kurt nodded slowly, breathing out. "Okay. Not freaking out. Just... this. It's hard to accept."

Puck wasn't sure he could coach Kurt through that one, considering he was still feeling a lot of that himself, but he nodded. "Hey, you know, athletes have spotters, too. It's a safety thing. And all this stuff, I've done it before, so you don't need to worry."

Kurt gave him a strange look. "You've arranged opportunities to assist other boys with bondage."

"Not - exactly, but... you're going to have to reach pretty far to find something I haven't tried at least once." Puck wasn't going to get detailed unless Kurt asked for it, but between cougars and Cheerios, he'd had plenty of willing test subjects for those times when he'd said, Hey, have you ever...? "But, okay, it's all been with girls."

"Believe it or not, boys have wrists to put in handcuffs too."

Puck rolled his eyes, but the words made him feel a bit better. Snarky Kurt he knew how to deal with better than a possibly traumatised Kurt. "I'm not saying it's all that different, I'm just..." He paused, thinking it through. Huh. Maybe it wasn't all that different? He shrugged. "I'm not here to criticise your technique or anything."

"One time doesn't a technique make. I'd take suggestions. Probably. We're nearly here. Leave your shoes at the door."

"Then... turn left, or...?"

Kurt rolled into the driveway and gestured to the garage door, opening in front of them. "Private entrance."

Puck wanted to roll his eyes again, because even Berry didn't have a private entrance, and she was queen diva. But if Kurt saw him doing that in his peripheral vision, or in the rear view mirror, he'd get all sensitive, and Puck had a feeling Kurt was the sort of person for which a one-step-forward, two-steps-back interaction would not be acceptable.

He followed Kurt through the door into the basement room, decorated in pale grey and muted tones, and watched while he unlaced his boots. Puck heeled off his own and left them by the door, peering around in curiosity. "Kinda pictured you for a little more color in your bedroom."

Kurt's nose tilted up ten degrees. "Not everyone can pull off Dior Grey."

He was as cool and collected as Puck had ever seen him. But Puck was starting to understand that wasn't really what was going on inside Kurt, when he got like that. Once again, he resisted the urge to try to get past that veneer of confidence.

"So I don't see a lot of exposed pipes, or a four poster bed. How'd you do it last night?"
Kurt hesitated only a moment before going to the corner and opening the closet door. He gripped the rod with one hand. "Here," he said, his voice low.

He had to give the guy credit for creativity. If he was trying for the whole suspension experience, this was a good way to get it. Puck took off his letterman jacket and tossed it on Kurt's dressing table. "Where'd you keep the cuffs?"

Kurt fished out one of the bottom pillows from the ridiculous stack on his bed, shoving his arm down inside the pillowcase. "My dad never comes in, but. I wanted -"

"Parents should be separate from the sex life. No teenager would say anything else, dude."

"Parents should be separate from the sex life. No teenager would say anything else, dude."

He had plenty of experience talking girls down from their freak-outs, but the easiest way to get one of them to shut up was to kiss them. It wasn't any different here. Kurt's mouth was just as soft and pliant as any girl's, and the way he responded to Puck's light pressure and hint of tongue felt familiar. None of that explained why Puck was suddenly rock-hard and guiding Kurt toward the bed. He made himself let go, and tried his best calm smile in response to Kurt's thunderstruck expression.

"Calm down, dude." Puck said it half for Kurt, half for himself. First guy kiss and all, things would fall to shit if he didn't listen to his own advice. "I'm going to sit on your bed, and I dunno, see if I can figure out why you need ten million pillows. You put your handcuffs on and jerk off. And if you fall, I'll catch you so you don't rip a tricep. Everything's cool if everyone's calm."

That last part was definitely for himself, and he repeated it to himself several times as he watched Kurt take off each piece of clothing. He kept his hands firmly on the bed as it became increasingly evident that a naked Kurt was wholly unlike a naked Any Other Guy Puck had ever seen. Not that he'd ever had the opportunity to really stare at another naked guy before, but he was pretty sure none of them had skin that looked like that, or that kind of an ass, or moved the way Kurt did. He was kind of glad he didn't have any kind of a speaking part in this play, because he'd definitely be ad libbing all kinds of embarrassing comments about Kurt's body, and no, that wasn't gay at all.

Kurt picked up the cuffs from the side table, leaving the key there while he fastened them around his left wrist, then moved slowly toward the closet, reaching up to hook the other end to the rod. Puck was sure he'd be able to close his eyes after this in any circumstance, ever, and identify the sound of metal cuffs on metal. But for now, he was going to stay right here, with his eyes open, because he was here for Kurt, to keep him safe. It didn't matter that this was feeling more complicated with every moment he sat there on Kurt's bed. He was going to stick with the simple explanation, because that was what he had. He reached out and picked up the key, feeling its solidity and sharp edges in his palm.

Kurt's hand was on his own ribcage, just his fingertips lightly gliding over them. It was the kind of thing that shouldn't be hot. No director would ever bother to put it in a porno. But the touch made Kurt flush, his face and neck and down to his collarbones, and it was seriously a pleasure-kick straight to the balls. Puck bit down on the insides of his cheeks, and didn't move otherwise. Even if he wanted to do something, like unhook his own belt buckle, this wasn't about him. His job was to be a good bro and spot for potential injuries.

And then Kurt's hand moved lower, wrapping around the base of his cock and beginning a slow,
steady rhythm. Puck looked at the union for a second, Kurt's hand on Kurt's cock, then moved his gaze back up. Kurt didn't jerk off like he did; there was a complete lack of thumb on the slit of his dick. But that really, really wasn't any of Puck's business.

"Could you not look me directly in the eye while we do this?" Kurt's voice was hoarse. "It's disturbing."

Fuckin' Hummel. It wasn't like there were a hundred different things to look at, and if he didn't want to be supergay and stare at Kurt's dick, well, his pretty girly face would have to do. Feeling absurdly defiant he kept looking at Kurt's face. It was how he caught the bite of lip a few minutes later. Instinctually, before he could explain to himself why, Puck was on his feet, rushing forward. And good thing too, because Kurt's knees buckled and it was only Puck holding him with a hand on either side of his stomach that kept him from dangling all his weight on his bound wrist.

"I've got you," he said, as quietly as he could, so as not to interrupt the moment. Nothing worse than being stopped in the middle of everything, but as far as Puck could tell, Kurt was done. He gave one little gasp and threw his uncuffed arm around Puck's neck, his entire body shuddering before it went still and slack against him.

One thing that absolutely had not occurred to Puck before that exact moment was to wonder what guys smelled like when they came. It was definitely on his mind now, though, as Kurt's sticky hand fluttered in the air inches from his face. He wasn't exactly bothered by it, but it was strong, and completely unexpected. Another thing I'm not going to be able to forget about this whole experience. He reeled a little, trying to stay steady on his feet. It wouldn't do at all for the spotter to go down.

He wrangled the key from his palm to his fingertips, then reached up to unlock the cuffs from the closet rod. As soon as Kurt's arm was free, it came up to join the first around Puck's neck, clinging tightly. Puck didn't worry too much about what parts were pressing up against him, or the hand that brushed against Kurt's bare ass as he helped him stumble toward the bed.

"Come on. That's it - on the bed." Puck had to give him a little lift, half like a push and half like a scoop, to get him onto the mountain of pillows. Then he realized he should have pulled the covers down beforehand, but really, lying in Kurt Hummel's bed with the covers at the foot implied a whole different set of expectations than lying on top of it. He managed to lift Kurt off the bed, still not thinking too hard about what he was grabbing while he did it, far enough to get the covers over his feet. Kurt closed his eyes and let out a long, shaky sigh.

Whatever instincts were telling Puck to stroke his hair away from his forehead and kiss his neck were completely off-base. He needed a minute to clear his head. "How about I get you a glass of water?" he said, standing and backing away from the bed. "Kitchen's upstairs?" He fled the room before Kurt could even give him an answer.

Puck was relieved to find the upstairs empty, because he really wasn't ready to answer the kind of observations that might come up at this moment. Questions like, hey, Puck, where'd that white stain on your thigh come from? Or, dude, why are you looking so freaked out? Or especially, you're hard enough to cut glass, who's the chick? Because the chick was currently lying in Kurt Hummel's bed downstairs. Which maybe was where he'd like to be just then, but there wasn't any provision in their agreement for cuddling. Too bad for Kurt, because Puck was damn good at it.

He found an empty glass tumbler in the cupboard and poured himself a glass of water, drinking the whole thing down before refilling it for Kurt. He was pretty sure Kurt wouldn't mind his mouth being on it, considering his mouth had just been - on Kurt.
Then he had to pull out a kitchen chair and sit down for a few minutes while he worked hard on not hyperventilating. *First guy kiss* was feeling like a whole lot bigger deal than he'd anticipated, especially following the witnessing of said guy getting off. The handcuffs were nothing by comparison. If it had been anyone other than Kurt down there in that bed, Puck might have considered heading quietly out the front door and hoofing it back to McKinley to pick up his truck.

But it **was** Kurt down there, and Kurt wasn't in any goddamn shape to come upstairs to get his own water. Hell, he probably couldn't lift his arms up high enough to reach the glasses. Puck stood up again, taking the water in one hand, and made his way down the staircase back to the bed where Kurt was waiting for him.

The room was quiet, and darker now that his eyes had adjusted to the light of the ordinary upstairs. This was Kurt's private sanctuary, and he could feel the responsibility Kurt had placed on him - not like a weight, but definitely something delicate and important and valuable. "Kurt?" he called quietly. But Kurt didn't respond. When Puck got back to the bed, he realized why.

Puck had been taking care of his little sister since she was a baby. It didn't feel so different, here, to brush Kurt's hair off his face, and pull the covers up closer to his chin, gently lifting his arms to tuck under the blanket. Kurt didn't wake, but he stirred a little, making small, peaceful noises under his breath. They dug in under Puck's skin, giving him a pleasant itchy sensation.

He figured Kurt wouldn't really want to leave the cuffs attached to the closet rod, so he unhooked them and stashed them deep inside the same pillowcase Kurt had shown him when he'd arrived. The key he placed in the drawer in the table next to his bed. He didn't spend any time dwelling on the diary or the bottle of lube he found in the same drawer, and he closed it quickly.

Puck considered the pros and cons of waiting for Kurt to wake up, and decided that until he'd personally been introduced to Kurt's dad, it would be better for him not to be found there accidentally. It was pretty impossible for Kurt to not be out to his dad, but there was a world of difference between that and meeting a significant other. Not that he was. This hadn't been a date. This had been him helping Kurt out, because Kurt so obviously needed help, and Puck was the guy that stepped up when others couldn't get the job done.

And if he was maybe going to text and see if Chelsea from the Cheerios wanted to use those pink fur covered cuffs tonight, well, it had fuck all to do with dating Kurt Hummel.

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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsZldat2QCg

*Late night*

*Step on the carousel*

*And spend all night*

*Spinning round and round*

*Hold tight*

*And no don't you let go*

*Until daylight*

*Pours through your window*

*I long for the smell of your hair,*

*The smell of your hair*

*And all this time*

*In a hiding place, in a hiding place*

*All our lives, with a melody all our own*
All this time
Yeah we might as well, we might as well
Close our eyes, singing a melody all our own

Sometimes
We talk on the telephone
Running dry
The conversation slows
Red lights
And plans not set in stone
Well I'm up all night
Until you get home
I long for the smell of your hair,
The smell of your hair

And all this time
In a hiding place, in a hiding place
All our lives, singing a melody all our own
All this time
Yeah we might as well, we might as well
Close our eyes, singing a melody all our own

- Morning Parade, "Carousel"
Holding out for change I know we never stood a chance

(Authors' note: this story seems to have struck a chord with readers. There won't be any more public humiliation for Kurt, but there is plenty of angst to come for Puck. Enjoy! -amy and gala)

Kurt seldom slept too long into the morning. There were too many things to occupy his attention for him to waste time on unnecessary sleep. But the basement environment, lacking windows, didn't give any clues as to the time of day. Which is why, when Kurt blinked sleepily and looked at the digital clock beside his bed and saw that it was 10:43, he thought the power must have gone out and messed with the time. Eventually he roused himself enough to slip on a robe and climb the stairs to the front hall.

His dad was in the dining room, taxes spread out on the table, and grinned at him. "Good morning, sleepyhead. Practically afternoon, actually. Up late last night, huh?"

"Not... exactly." Kurt stared out the window at the bright sunlight. Had he really fallen asleep after school? After... he crossed into the kitchen to avoid his dad seeing his blush. There wasn't any context for him to talk to his dad about this, but there also wasn't any way he wasn't going to notice that something was up. Kurt could lie through his teeth, but his skin always told the truth.

Halfway through breakfast, he stopped, pushed his eggwhite omelette aside, and gasped out, "Scuse me a sec," before dashing back downstairs. The cuffs weren't, as he'd feared, dangling in plain sight from his closet rod. Which begged the question, where were they? Had Puck taken them with him? Was he going to use them on someone else? The idea made him unreasonably angry.

He went through all of his drawers and every container in his bathroom before remembering the pillowcase. Then he sat holding them for another forty-five seconds before shoving them back into the same pillowcase and slamming all the drawers. His phone remained silent in his robe pocket.

Taking a shower didn't help at all, and he went back and forth between ignoring his erection and pressing his left wrist up against the shower head, the stimulation rough and stinging against his mild abrasion. Finally he masturbated furiously for less than a minute without paying any attention to what he was imagining while he did it.

There were still no messages, text or otherwise, on his phone once he had dried and styled his hair, and Kurt decided this was just not acceptable. Whatever had occurred yesterday might have meant nothing at all to Puck, but that didn't mean he got to slink away as though it hadn't happened.

Because Kurt, meanwhile, had had his first kiss, been naked in front of another guy and had wiped his come on the collar of said guy's shirt, all in the space of a half hour, and he was feeling - a lot. He was feeling a lot of things, and he didn't know what to do with any of them, except for the angry fuck you Puck feeling, which he thought he knew how to handle.

How was your walk of shame? he stabbed onto the tiny keyboard. Did you remember to tie your shoes before you sprinted out of my house?

He probably hadn't. He'd probably crammed his feet into his shoes without even untying them first, completely destroying the heel collar. Puck was the type.

Hope I made a good kinky story to titillate your cougars.

And then a quickly typed follow up. I'm sure you'll be happy to share. After all, it's not like you
had a big gay freak out. 'Everything's cool if everyone's calm', right?

Kurt almost turned off his phone rather than ruin the rest of his day waiting for a reply that wasn't going to -

The phone buzzed in his hand, and he closed his eyes tight, keeping them shut for a good twenty seconds and trying to calm his heartbeat before opening them again to read the screen.

I left you a glass of water by the bed. You were already asleep, so I didn't bother waking you. Cuff key's in the drawer.

You're not a dirty story to tell old women.

Kurt was still gaping at this response when a third one came through: Had some ideas for next time, so lmk when you wanna. I'll be around today or tomorrow.

He'd already typed in the reply, Thanks, when he thought better of it. Instead he modified it to say: Thanks, but I'm sure you have better things to do with your weekend.

Not really.

Even so, Kurt did all the rest of his homework, including the odd problems in geometry which weren't required, before grabbing the phone and responding: If you're still around, everybody else is gone for an hour. His reply was an hour and fifteen minutes late, but he still was holding on to the idea that Puck had done something wrong, so he felt justified that he'd made him wait.

Be there in ten.

Kurt spent those ten minutes wondering what ideas Puck could have possibly had. Were they the kind of ideas that would involve him, or Puck, or both? If he stuck to the firm belief that Puck was not out to humiliate him, and if he took into consideration the entirely adequate kiss Puck had delivered the night before, the ideas became intriguing and numerous. When he heard the soft knock on the door, he felt almost reluctant to answer it, not because he was afraid of what Puck would do, but because he needed more time to dwell on the ideas.

"So I was thinking," said Puck, pushing past Kurt into the room and sitting down to untie his boots (Kurt cursed his assumptions), "that you hanging like that from one wrist is a really fucking bad idea. Like, colossally dangerous, if you're planning to do anything besides stand around and look pretty in Glee."

So far, Glee's choreography hadn't been all that taxing. Kurt was really going to have to bring up his baton-twirling and skills in gymnastics, and - what had Puck said? But he was moving on. He swiveled on the spot, tracking Puck as he moved around the room, depositing his coat here, acquiring the cuffs from the pillowcase there, taking off his ohmygod he was taking off his black Henley, leaving him in a white undershirt Kurt refused to call a "wifebeater."

"Kurt." Puck recalled his eyes from where they'd been fixed on the outline of Puck's nipple ring through the tight fabric. His expression was calm. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Why are you taking off your clothes? If I freak out again, do you plan to kiss me, and would that be a reason to do it or not to do it? How many times am I going to replay the memory of you running to catch me as I'm coming? None of these questions could be asked aloud, so he stuck with an easy one. "So what's your solution?"

"Both arms. Cuff both wrists. Assuming you're digging the suspension angle,"
Kurt stammered some vague affirmative, but even as the idea was making him hard, the practical problem inherent in that scenario became clear. "And how do I -?"

"Let me jerk you off."

He closed his mouth with an audible snap, watching the little thinky furrow on Puck's forehead grow more pronounced.

"You got a better idea?" Puck said, sounding aggravated.

Kurt didn't. The word better, or possibly best, might be a very appropriate one to apply to the idea of another guy's hand on his dick, even if that guy wasn't necessarily - that is, even if he didn't -

"Do you want to?" Kurt asked.

Puck frowned. "It'd give you more stability. Distribute your weight better."

"Not an answer to my question." He put hands on both hips, and watched Puck's own eyes zero in on the right one. This made him feel inexplicably better. "Fine. One try. If you can deal, I can."

Puck looked a little startled. Maybe he wasn't expecting a green light from Kurt, or maybe he thought Kurt was going to make him answer or tell him to leave. You've been my first everything else so far, he thought, feeling the roiling anticipation in his gut. Why break the pattern? Puck followed Kurt to the closet, watching the motions of Kurt's hands as he unbuttoned his shirt.

"I noticed you did it different than I do," he said. "Yesterday."

"Of course yesterday, as opposed to all those other times you watched me masturbate? But Kurt's attention was fixed on the idea that Puck had not only witnessed, had not only been there to catch him, but had noticed how he jerked off. His hands stuttered to a halt halfway down his shirt.

Puck's hands came up to meet them, brushing Kurt's aside, and continuing unbuttoning as though it had been planned that way. "Just, if you want something different than what I do," he added conversationally, "you can tell me."

"O-okay." Puck's fingers tucked into the sleeves of his shirt, pulling them down off his shoulders. Kurt shivered, but he didn't even think to ask to keep his shirt on. He just held up his wrists for Puck to undo the buttons on the cuffs. Puck's restless energy appeared to have quieted, and he completed this task in silence. He apparently wasn't going to offer to undo Kurt's jeans, thank Gaga, instead retreating to the bedside table to retrieve the cuffs and the key.

Maybe Kurt's comment yesterday about not staring him in the eye had gotten through to him, because Puck's attention was definitely not on his face. Kurt wasn't sure it was any better to have him staring at his crotch, but his dick definitely thought so, judging by his state of arousal by the time he got his jeans off.

"Figured you for a stop-and-fold-everything kind of guy, Hummel." Puck's voice was soft, reaching for one wrist, then the other. He walked Kurt a few steps back into the closet, but Kurt wasn't going to dwell on that visual metaphor, because there was plenty to pay attention to right here, god, absolutely, like the way Puck tugged a little on his arm to straighten it before looping the cuffs over the clothes rod and fastening them together.

Or the way he gave Kurt's naked body a once-over, completely impassively, from head to toe. That was enough to make Kurt's knees go weak all by itself, but Kurt wasn't going to lose his balance yet, not before he'd even done anything at all. Or had anything done to him. He closed his eyes.
He could feel Puck tuck his own body in behind him in the closet, resting both hands on his hipbones, flexing his fingers. Puck gave him another little tug, but this time the trajectory was calculated to throw him off balance, and he gasped as the cuffs caught his wrists. But he didn't fall, because Puck's thigh was right behind him. Kurt didn't have the wherewithal to protest.

"You're gonna have to say something if you don't like it," Puck reminded him, as one hand crept across his stomach. The other stayed where it was, gripping his hip, and Kurt felt that as a solid anchor, something that made sense. *Puck's holding me up by my hip,* he could think, instead of *Puck's hand is around my cock.*

Puck didn't start with a light touch. Except that was a lie, wasn't it, because he was touching Kurt everywhere, and none of it was fast or frighteningly passionate. Puck just knew what he was doing, somehow. His stroke was barely there, and all around the head of his cock. Then his thumb pressed down on the slit of his cock and the surprising pleasure of it made Kurt's arms jerk. The restraints didn't let him get far and he couldn't prevent the moan as the curve of metal dug into his wrist.

"Hot," Puck muttered in his ear.

Kurt didn't know what he was referring to, if Puck liked him being vocal, or if Puck liked the lack of movement too. He just knew he agreed. Everything about this was so hot that it didn't matter that it didn't make sense. And then Puck hitched him up on his leg a little, his arm encircling Kurt's waist as he stroked, and Kurt could feel precisely how Puck was reacting to this whole scenario. He made a tiny, incoherent sound, to which Puck responded with an explosion of air on his neck, to which he arched his back into Puck's touch. It was like everything one person did was calculated to produce the greatest response possible in the other.

Puck pulled him in a little more securely. Kurt felt that iron heat pressing against his bare behind once again. "You close?" Puck asked, a little unevenly.

Kurt nodded, biting his lip.

"Me too. I'll go first. Not to not be a gentleman. But once you finish I've got a job to do."

That made an odd amount of sense. And it was nice of Puck to tell him, because he didn't feel ignored when Puck's hand faltered on his dick as he rutted against him. When Puck came his fingers slipped, grabbed for Kurt's hips and ground a circular rhythm against him. The loss of stimulation didn't matter in the least. Kurt could feel heat, then wetness bloom across the small of his back. It was just as much of a turn on as being touched, if not more. He'd *caused that.* Puck touching him was his own choice, one that Kurt had agreed with, wanted - but Puck coming was something *he'd* made happen. It was a heady, powerful feeling to know he'd made someone that happy. When Puck's hand returned to Kurt's cock, it took him less than a dozen strokes for Kurt to reach his own climax.

Being suspended by both arms really was a lot better, but it was Puck's arms around him, the solidity of Puck's leg beneath him, that gave him the courage to let himself fall. He wasn't trying to hold himself up anymore, not at all. Puck had proven himself, and Kurt trusted him not to let him go.

"You okay?" he murmured. Kurt wanted to laugh, or maybe burst out sobbing, but he just nodded as best as he could.
The cuffs were starting to hurt, not in a terrible way, but in a less than pleasurable way; luckily Puck seemed to pick up on this and reached up to unfasten them. He helped Kurt make his unsteady way over to the bed, pulling back the covers before lowering him down on the mountain of pillows.

"How long did you sleep last time?"

"Like, fourteen hours? Longer?" Kurt snuggled deeper into his high threadcount sheets, not sure how he could be so lethargic. After all, he hadn't really done anything all day.

"Okay, then I'm gonna take off. Can't be here that long, my sister wants to have a Disney marathon. But text me when you wake up. Something not bitchy would be cool."

Kurt still felt fully justified in sending his prior comments. Puck walking out without a note deserved a pointed comment or two. But this was almost like Puck was tucking him in. This was a good enough goodbye that he could hardly be upset by it.

The first thing Puck did when he woke up the next morning was to check his phone. Kurt either wasn't awake yet, or he'd been scared off by Puck's actions the previous night. Puck kind of thought it was the first one, though, because Kurt hadn't seemed all that freaked out, even when the Puckasaurus had woken up and decided to get in on the action.

That had been kind of a surprise, and kind of not, but definitely worthy of a freakout. Whatever he was going to make it all mean, the evidence definitely pointed in one direction, and no matter how he twisted it, he just couldn't make it look like Puck gets turned on by everything. Because, no. He didn't like guys, not outside of an arm-around-your-bro kind of way. Which meant, he guessed, that there must be something unique about Kurt and handcuffs and his skin and the way he smelled and the noises he made when he jerked off and - okay, he might not get turned on by everything, but he was definitely getting turned on by that. He stared at his phone again, willing Kurt's words to appear, but the screen remained obstinately blank.

So Puck got up and made pancakes for Sarah with little chocolate chips in them, and argued with her for fifteen minutes about why chocolate chips meant no syrup, but maybe butter, and there was still no text. He did a round of curls and pushups and played around with his secondhand set of free weights for another half an hour, and still no text. He was just about to give up and go for a run in the slush when it finally, finally buzzed.

Good morning.

Well, it was short, but it wasn't anything angry or offended, so that should count for something.

Sup, Hummel? he replied.

Can't see you today. Trying to teach my dad how to cook coq au vin for his date. So hard when you have to be all five queer eyes.

Puck considered replying 'I have no idea what that means', but figured he didn't care enough to sit through what would almost definitely be about two dozen texts explaining it. Good luck man.

I was thinking, as much as I'm loathe to admit it, you were probably right about the closet rod. So if you have the chance, Google alternate strategies? We can talk about them Monday.

Puck wasn't entirely sure how he'd manage that. The one computer was a family computer in the living room. He'd have to use it after his Ma and Sarah were in bed, and then clear the History like
a dozen times. But the other choice was to not plan out different ways of tying Kurt up, and denying himself that seemed pretty stupid, no matter what the difficulty.

He didn't get much sleep that night. He had to stay up even later than normal - they were an entire family of night owls, and making sure his Ma was out cold was no mean feat - and once he'd typed 'bondage' into Google Images, Puck's predawn hours became a massive link spiral. Going to bed turned out not to be synonymous with falling asleep anyway. Puck ended up getting up three separate times out of sheer paranoia to double-check that the browser was cleared.

Much too soon for his liking, Sarah was shouting at him through the door that she was hungry and wanted her pancakes. Not getting up to make them wasn't a choice. Skipping classes to nap could be, but getting up to provide for her wasn't.

His exhaustion wasn't helped by the fact that when he walked into McKinley the intercom system was blasting Madonna. A MILF for sure, and her music wasn't even that bad, but he didn't exactly need it blasted at him after two hours sleep. Especially after Puck considered what it probably meant. The only way this was happening would be Sylvester, which meant that the Cheerios would have new drama, and that meant that one fourth of Glee would be all crazy.

Fuck it. He needed a nap before he dealt with this. After some investigation, the only place he could find in the entire school that wasn't stuffed to the gills with the Material Girl was Ms. Pilsbury's office, so for the half hour she was at lunch with Mr. Schue, he wedged himself under the desk, his feet up on the side, to think. He already had half a grocery list in his head to take on his trip to the hardware store. None of this fancy expensive leather, not unless Hummel wanted to spend some of his fashion budget on kinky paraphernalia.

He was still there when Ms. P returned, but she barely batted an obscenely-long eyelash at his presence under her desk. "Um, Noah; this is a surprise. Is there anything I can help you with?"

"Nothing you could help with, Ms. P," he assured her, "but thanks. It's cool."

She traded places with him, seating herself in her desk chair. "I'm a good listener, no matter what's bothering you."

He thought about this, wondering about the implications, but in the end he had to shrug and assume she knew what she was getting into. She heard everybody's shit, after all. "Well, okay. So there's this guy." He paused. "I'm not into guys. I like girls. Girls are awesome."

He could see her getting all ready to be understanding, and give him the line about everybody has fantasies about, and it doesn't mean you are, and he really wasn't going to sit through that. "And," he cut in, before she could speak, "he likes being tied up."

The words stopped in her mouth and didn't go any further, even though her mouth stayed open for a good five seconds. "Well," she said weakly.

"So I told him I'd help him out with that, because he was totally doing it in an unsafe way, you know? I don't mean like he was trying to choke himself or anything, just..." Okay, that was not the road he wanted to go down in Ms. P's office. He clenched his jaw and tried to focus. "I was worried - he could have hurt himself, and -"

Her eyes were already starting to clear, and she was nodding. He had to hand it to Ms. P for rolling with it. "You care about him."

"No, it's not that." Puck shook his head, trying not to snap at her. She was nice, and none of this
was her fault at all. "It's just, you know. My job. Watching out for people, you know?"

She looked like she might be trying not to smile, but she nodded sympathetically. "So you're having... a problem with this?"

"No. Yes. I don't know." He frowned. "I. I'm trying to figure out which parts of it I like and which things are just, like, the parts that have to be dealt with. I mean, it doesn't really matter, I have to deal with all of it anyway. But I think it would maybe be easier if... if I knew what was what."

"That makes a lot of sense, Noah. Figuring that out will help you set boundaries."

He scowled at her. "I wasn't having a meltdown under your desk or anything. It's the only place in the whole damn school Sue hasn't targeted. It's hard to think when you're imagining Madonna and Britney making out."

"You don't have to explain. Actually, I think it's better if you don't explain. The fewer details, the better." She pressed her lips together. "But it's all right to feel responsible. Just, don't forget to think about what you need, too. Okay?"

Puck wasn't sure he really wanted permission from anybody to do what he was doing with Kurt, but it felt nice to hear a grownup telling him he should think about what he needed. Too bad that was probably the hardest part of this whole situation. "Uh, actually... I kind of need a private place to talk to him. You think you could help me with that?"

After getting his sincere promise that he wasn't going to do anything inappropriate at school - not that the idea hadn't crossed his mind, but he wouldn't do that to Kurt - Ms. P unlocked one of the conference rooms on the second floor. "Just turn out the lights when you're done," she said, handing him two hall passes.

He stared down at the second slip with Kurt's name on it. "But I never," he said.

"You didn't," she agreed.

Kurt was appropriately annoyed at being pulled out of French, but he followed Puck without argument through the silent hallways. He waited until they were upstairs, away from the classrooms with floor-length windows, to move beside him. "Do I want to know where you got the passes?"

"They're totally legit, dude." He ushered Kurt into the conference room, closing the door behind him. He tried not to appear to be considering whether sitting across from him or next to him would be better, and ended up standing while Kurt pulled out a chair. "I asked Ms. P for a place to talk in private, and she delivered."

"You are resourceful." Kurt raised his eyebrows.

"So, I researched, like you said." It sounded better than saying he'd looked at a lot of pictures of porn. And maybe a video or two, except most of them had the bound person being hit, and Puck had clicked out of all of those, not ready to add another slice of potential drama onto their plate. "What I saw mostly involved rope."

Kurt smiled, half dreamily. "Yes, weren't they beautiful?"

Puck was thinking more hot, but Kurt was Kurt, so of course beautiful was in his vocabulary. "So I'll read like tutorials and shit, try to figure out that stuff. But if you can spare a few bucks, I
was thinking you might want to get a pair of leather cuffs. Less chance of leaving marks, and you do wear a lot of short sleeves. Unless you don't care. But San's definitely going to ask, and probably the rest will too. Glee's a group of nosy fuckers."

"Are you planning on leaving marks?"

Puck didn't go wide eyed, or flail, or anything stupid. He'd just answer this, and then stuff all of that into the Don't Think box. "Those handcuffs are thin, really hard metal strips. It's kind of a miracle they haven't already left marks."

Kurt smirked. "Well, it's not a kind of shopping I ever imagined myself doing, but I guarantee you, if you give me four hours and a credit card my dad isn't tracking, I could find the best deals and the highest quality merchandise."

"That's the spirit, dude." There, done. He didn't have to consider bruising Kurt any longer. Bruising, or welting, or a handprint - all of it went into the Don't Think box to wait for some distant future, when it might not seem completely insane or overwhelming. "So, I think until you can find something a little kinder on your wrists, you might not want to do the suspension thing."

Kurt's smile slipped off his face, and he gazed up at Puck with a certifiably pitiable expression. Puck added quickly, "There's other stuff you can try, though. I know what kind of rope to get, and the tutorials... it looked easy enough."

Kurt blinked several times. "I don't know if -" He broke off, looking distraught. "Rope, it might not work. The same way."

"Or we could use the handcuffs, just not with suspension? There were a lot of kneeling poses. That would cause less strain." And if Kurt didn't like that, he'd come up with something else. He would find something that worked. Because the one thing Puck knew was that he wasn't ready for this be over. But Kurt was listening, nodding rapid agreement. Watching him. Following his lead. Puck licked his lips. "And, um... yeah."

"All right," said Kurt. "After school?"

Right now? Puck wanted to say, and he fought his conscience for a few futile moments before he masked a sigh and nodded. "Yeah. No problem."

Madonna was the background for rest of the day. And it didn't stop when they got into Glee, because Schue had somehow done a 180 and decided that Sylvester was right about something. Then Finn asked if they could do the guy version of Madonna and all he could think about for a second was Gene Simmons in a cone bra, before he got jolted out of the image by Schue calling them out for all being douchebags to the girls. Which, whatever, he hadn't even done anything to anyone.

"I'm still not down with it. And no chick intimidates Puckzilla. I just don't think her music translates to showchoir." If they sang Like a Virgin Figgins was going to get a stick up his ass, and it would be the Push It disaster all over again. Puck was not spending the rest of the year singing preapproved Christian rock.

Of course Rachel had something to say about Puck's opinion. Ten minutes later, all the guys were sitting in the auditorium as the girls did whatever backstage so that Rachel could prove her point. They eventually came out in semi matching outfits. The song was decent enough, and Brit's on the fly choreography had been picked up pretty well. It was one good effect of three of the six girls being Cheerios, and another being an insane diva: they knew how to dance.
The truth was, though, that Puck wasn't really watching the girls 'express themselves.' Out of the corner of his eye he could see Kurt chair dancing to the song. If a girl had been doing the same it would have been cute, but on Kurt it was just really distracting. Enough so that when they finished Puck sort of forgot to clap until it was too late to be anything except awkward.

Finally, finally it was time to leave. Normally Puck didn't have much better to do than whatever lazy dumb thing he was doing at the time, but when he had something to anticipate, being trapped somewhere else always seemed like torture. This time it was worse than most. Kurt was so close, and there were so many ideas from last night in Puck's head, and he could do absolutely zero of them until he got the fuck out of the auditorium and the fuck into his car, and the fuck over to Kurt's house.

It was definitely a bonus, though, that Kurt seemed in a rush too.

Puck had to park down the block while Kurt pulled into the garage, which meant Kurt was inside before he was. He slipped through the front door, which Kurt had left open for him, closing it behind him, and hurried down the stairs.

"Your dad's not coming home anytime soon?" asked Puck. Kurt shook his head, hanging up his coat.

"The house is usually empty until after six."

Puck nodded, feeling the lack of etiquette in this situation. It wasn't like he could ease the tension with some making out, or crack a joke, because the tension was part of it. Kurt needed that. "Well," he said, "you can... get started, whenever you're ready."

Kurt continued standing there, watching him, for several long moments before letting out a soft sigh. It wasn't until he began to unbutton his shirt, however, that Puck understood what Kurt wanted. He moved in close, putting a hand on top of Kurt's, and Kurt dropped his arms to his sides while Puck undressed him.

Puck's eyes were on Kurt's chest, watching his breath move in and out, paying attention to the things that made it stutter and speed up. His knuckles, brushing against the nape of Kurt's neck. The heel of his hand on Kurt's ribs. His fingers encircling his wrists. Kurt unbuckled his own belt and took off his own jeans, though Puck fought the urge to tell him to let him do that, too.

"Where...?" asked Kurt, and Puck nodded to the bed.

"You'd be most comfortable there as anywhere, I think."

Kurt laughed, a little shakily, but he moved to kneel on his bedspread. "I'm not sure comfortable is really my goal here."

"Your knees," Puck tried to explain, but then he stopped. They weren't going to get anywhere by arguing. "Just - give me your wrists. Here, behind your back."

That stopped him talking for another good three minutes, and he appeared to be willing to let Puck try a couple different angles with his hands and arms before settling on something like a triangle, his wrists cuffed together. By then, Kurt was leaning forward on his knees, his head bowed, very obviously as turned on as Puck was himself. Standing beside him as Kurt knelt there, he watched Kurt's eyes, still cast down but stealing little glances at Puck. He wondered if Kurt would get upset if he started to jerk off. Puck took one quick swipe of his hand across his crotch, just enough to give himself a little room to move, and Kurt stopped breathing entirely.
"Yeah, sorry," he said, but Kurt shook his head, worrying his lip between his teeth. "If you wanted," said Kurt. "I could. Blow you. If you want me to."

Kurt, naked and on his knees, with his hands cuffed behind his back, offering a blowjob. He watched Kurt's restless, anticipatory mouth, his focus entirely narrowed to that one point of reality in this whole fucking impossible situation.

"Yes," he muttered, unbuckling his belt in the same motion as he stepped forward, running his hands through Kurt's hair, "yes yes yes, the answer is yes, fuck."

Puck had had his share of blowjobs. Most girls were willing to offer them, at least the girls Puck had done stuff with. It wasn't something he'd ever had to ask too hard for, and even a bad blowjob was still pretty damn good. But there was something about the way Kurt was watching him as he kicked off his jeans, his avid attention on Puck's erection, his clear, absolute desire to do this that Puck had never experienced before. I think he might actually be salivating, he thought, with a rush of brutal desire. He gripped himself, bringing his cock close to Kurt's face.

"You want this," he said, not really asking. Kurt didn't look away, but he made a little gasping noise, nodding emphatically. Puck rested the head against Kurt's cheek, watching his eyelids flutter closed with a sense of odd satisfaction. He didn't ask him again.

In one corner of his mind, though, he felt kind of bad, that this was Kurt's first experience giving a blowjob. Because hands were kind of crucial, fingers for touching and fists for gripping at the base so you didn't choke on the deep strokes. So she wouldn't, his brain insisted, even as he directed his cock into Kurt's waiting mouth. Not so I wouldn't. Not that I would ever want to do this to someone... oh god.

So it was really out of concern for Kurt that he kept his hand there on his cock, steadying Kurt's motion with his other hand, trying to be encouraging without grabbing his hair and fucking that perfect mouth. He could be thoughtful about this, no matter how much Kurt's performance here was eliminating his capacity for rationality. It wasn't skilled, or particularly technically notable. It was just the hottest fucking thing he'd ever experienced in his life. He heard himself, from a distance and with a vague sense of chagrin, making these kind of amazed "oh" noises, over and over again.

And then it occurred to him that Kurt was kneeling there, working his cock, without getting any kind of stimulation for himself at all. Puck was pretty sure that was more than a little selfish of himself. But the expression on Kurt's face was telling a completely different story, one he never would have believed if he hadn't seen it for himself. You see, this guy, he's sucking you off, and he's not just loving it, but he's completely worshipping you with his eyes while he's doing it. There's nothing else he'd rather be doing. Just making you come so hard, you might black out.

"Close," he said, not really trusting his voice. Kurt's gaze flickered up to meet his when he said it, and he managed to give a brief nod of acknowledgement without interfering with the rhythm of his head. "I'm gonna pull out, okay, but - not because it wasn't awesome, because - fuck, Kurt, this was so awesome - but because I don't really want to choke you."

He really didn't, but the sudden clear image of his hand on Kurt's throat, making him take it deep, was a giant push off the edge. Puck almost didn't make the transition from his cock in Kurt's mouth to his cock in his own hand, stroking off onto his chest. Kurt gave a rasping, low moan, watching him do it, and struggled a little in his bonds. It was the first sign he'd given that he wanted anything other than to stay like this forever. Forever. Puck closed his eyes for a few indulgent moments, feeling Kurt's hair in his hand and his cock in the other and and the possibility of a forever like that,
before crouching down in front of Kurt.

"So hot," he promised, reaching for his erection, grasping Kurt's neck with the other hand to bring him in close, "And - I'm gonna kiss you, because you - you really need something in your mouth when you come."

Kurt's moan might have been outraged, but Puck preferred to think that this was nothing but Kurt losing his cool. He thrust his tongue into Kurt's mouth, feeling him sucking it, just like he'd been doing with Puck's very lucky dick. Kurt gave half a dozen erratic thrusts forward with his hips, and a second moan, this one a third lower, before coming all over Puck's fist.

Puck leaned in to catch him, feeling Kurt's angle pitch him forward onto Puck's shoulder, and he just held him there for several minutes as he shook, and wished once again he'd thought to pull the covers down before starting. He considered wiping his hand on Kurt's sheets, but he figured the ten-second jaunt into the bathroom to wash it off would be better than risking his wrath later. There wasn't a boy alive who didn't know just how hard it was to wash come out of his sheets, but he suspected Kurt would have stronger feelings about his sheets than most guys.

"Yeah," he said, hearing his voice come out rough and thick and way too emotional, but he just wasn't going to care. "That was fucking amazing."

He felt Kurt's head shift on his shoulder, felt him nod. Felt, too, the wetness on his shirt where Kurt's face had pressed. Dismayed, Puck reached up to touch his cheek.

"Hey," he said. "Babe... you're okay, this was fine. More than fine." He wasn't going to spill his guts about how this was the best thing ever and oh my god and he would totally do this anytime Kurt wanted, seriously anytime, because Kurt didn't need to hear all that shit. He carefully avoided touching Kurt's skin with his sticky right hand, which was starting to feel cold, and eased him down onto his side while he uncuffed him. While Kurt stretched his limbs, Puck managed to get the covers down.

"I'm okay," said Kurt, massaging his wrists. "Really. It was..." He closed his eyes, took a long breath. "It was so much better than I ever thought it would be."

"I didn't really know what it was going to be like." Kurt accepted the glass of water with a little nod, and sipped it. "But not - like that. Not like something I really wanted."

Puck grinned in spite of himself. "That's cool." He sat on the edge of the bed, watching as Kurt first moved in closer to him, then apparently thought better of it and moved away. Puck didn't even care that he didn't have any pants on; he just wedged himself against Kurt's side and flung an arm around him, pulling him down abruptly to rest against his chest. Kurt's hand immediately tucked under his t-shirt, palm against his sternum.

"You're warm," Kurt said quietly, sounding a little amazed again.

They sat like that - just sat, not cuddled, because cuddling implied some shit that Puck wasn't quite ready for - for an unobserved amount of time. Puck didn't see a clock anywhere, and he wasn't really looking. He didn't have anywhere to be. Sarah had a house key and could take care of herself until dinner. He didn't say anything, and neither did Kurt. It was quiet, until Kurt's phone rang, and with that came the squeak of the mattress as Kurt pulled away to retrieve it. It didn't take a genius
to figure out the R.E.S.P.E.C.T. ringtone was Mercedes. Of course he was going to answer.

Kurt was obviously planning on talking for a while. Pressing the phone to his ear with one hand, he started getting dressed with the other. He was oddly capable at this. It didn't make sense until Puck remembered the time that Clyde Sanders had thrown a stick in front of Kurt's bike in freshman year, before he had a driver's license, and it got caught in the wheel and Kurt tumbled off. Wearing a cast for six weeks no doubt had given him time to get used to doing things with one hand. Meanwhile Puck was still sitting on the bed with his pants off like a fucking idiot.

Well, shit. It wasn't like he was with San, or Matt. No one would question things if his voice showed up in the background of their phone calls, but he had absolutely no reason to be in the background of Kurt's, and Mercedes was the kind of girl that would interrogate until she knew why. For as long as Kurt was on the phone, there was no reason for Puck to be there, and it seemed like it could easily take an hour. The only thing to do was get his jeans back on and take off, with a wave in lieu of a spoken goodbye.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEqQ6L50nTg

It's funny what you know and still go on pretending
With no good evidence you'll ever see that happy ending

You were looking for your distance
And sensing my resistance you had to do your will
I had to learn the hard way
We were just an empty dream too big for hope alone to fill

I know I'm a dreamer, so I'll give you that
Still I hope I'm more than just a place you laid your hat
You're a land of secrets, its only citizen
And though I paid my dues I was never allowed in

And so I am a stranger but especially today
As I get sad and lonely and you get your way

Holding out for change I know we never stood a chance
So I could only wait and watch you slip right through my hands

- The Indigo Girls, "Hope Alone"
Kurt wasn't ignoring Puck. He wasn't, and the insinuation would be ridiculous. He was busy with the Madonna project, that's all. It had seemed like such an obvious thing when he'd suggested - no, told Mr Schuester how he was going to participate. Madonna was a visual powerhouse, and nothing short of a full imitation music video would be enough.

He still believed that. Their project was nearly done and Kurt didn't regret starting it. He just knew he would never, ever offer to do another video. The entire process had taken at least a dozen times longer than he thought it would. Thank god that Mercedes had managed to talk Artie into helping; without his editing ability and organisational skills they'd be drowning in AVI files.

Not all the thanks could go to her, though. Mercedes owed him for the spark of inspiration that led to them recruiting Coach Sylvester. It had just come to him, standing there in the hall, watching Mr Schue finally lob back an insult after six months of taking it. She had this odd old-young look, the same way Madonna did, like she was just too energetic and powerful to age normally. He hadn't expected it to go as easily as it had, but somehow listening to a sob story and sassily promising a makeover had been enough.

Casting the video was greatly simplified, once Sylvester was on board. Instead of Kurt having to beg the male Cheerios to dance in three piece suits, Coach Sylvester ordered them to do it. Five of the six showed up (and Kurt was positive that Derek would regret his no-show by the end of the week). The whole thing was fantastic, and he was especially proud of the way the lighting had come out.

And regardless of whether or not Sue decided to ever actually use any of the Madonna-inspired hairstyles they'd created for her, she'd given them something in return: an invitation to be popular, for once in their lives. Kurt thought an opportunity like that might be worth missing out on a little casual fooling around. But even so, he and Mercedes decided they would keep the news about joining the Cheerios to themselves until the pep assembly that week. Just imagine Mr. Schue's expression, Mercedes had whispered to him, but that wasn't who Kurt had been thinking about. He really had no idea what kind of reaction he was going to get from Puck.

"I am not down with this," Puck growled. "I like being a dude."
And when Kurt announced to the ensemble that he was an *honorary girl*, Puck looked like he might want to throw something. Kurt stared back at him. "This team shouldn't work - but it does because we respect each other's talent. And if we want to take it to the next level, we have to start respecting each other as individuals. Really seeing each other."

Puck was quiet for the rest of Glee, but he caught up to walk alongside Kurt as they headed toward the parking lot.

"Is that how you want me to *see* you?" he demanded. "As an honorary girl? You're not any kind of fucking girl."

"I have no illusions about my masculinity," Kurt replied coolly. "I've never gotten a phone call from a stranger who didn't think I was my mother. This sweater? I got it at Macy's. In the women's department. Well, okay, the juniors. But, really?" He stopped beside his driver's door, glaring at Puck, gesturing to himself. "Not an ordinary boy. I have to own that."

"I never said you were ordinary. I don't - you don't need to be ordinary. Ordinary is totally lame." With each sentence, Puck's volume and emphasis jumped another level, until by the end, he was shouting at Kurt. "You're a guy. Whatever shit you're into doesn't make you a girl or a guy. You have a dick, so you're a guy, and that's just fucking great."

Kurt could make a point about transgendered people, but that would turn this argument in another direction, and whatever Puck's problem was, it needed to be dealt with, not redirected. "I don't understand why you're upset. I-"

"Kurt, you're a guy. I'm doing stuff with a guy, and if you haven't noticed, I'm liking it a fuckton. So you saying that you might as well be a girl is pretty much bullshit, and it's throwing everything we're doing in my fucking face."

Kurt frowned suspiciously. "Oh, so this is the belated gay freakout?"

"Oh, my god," Puck muttered. "I swear, I'm going to fuckin' smack you. Just cut that shit out, okay? You're a dude, no matter how many times a week Tina and Mercedes take you shopping. Deal with it."

They were starting to draw attention from the few remaining students in the parking lot. "You want to yell at me about how you're enjoying fooling around with me inside my car, instead of out here where anyone can listen in?"

Puck crossed his arms. Kurt was used to the position looking menacing, but the way Puck's hands were clutching his elbows it seemed almost defensive. "I don't want to yell at all. I'm done with this stupid conversation. I'm going home now."

"All right. I'll see you at the pep assembly tomorrow morning?"

"Fine. Whatever." Puck wheeled around, hiking his bag up higher onto his shoulder, and stalked across the parking lot without a second glance. Kurt watched him go, but he resolutely tried to put him and his insistence about Kurt being a guy out of his mind. Whatever anger Puck was experiencing, it wasn't his to deal with.

So, okay, maybe Kurt was testing him a little. If Puck didn't walk out when he witnessed Kurt doing the most feminine sport at McKinley, Kurt would have a better sense of their future. They were nominally lovers, even if Puck didn't actually love him. And if Puck could handle him being a Cheerio, Kurt wondered if they might be able to be something like friends. As it was, Kurt hadn't
really felt the need to reply to Puck's texts over the last few days. They hadn't been sent by a friend; they'd been sent as a booty call, albeit a kinky one. It didn't matter that Puck was pissed at him right now, but things might change if Puck could be his friend.

The prospect of an afternoon at home alone didn't sound all that appealing to Kurt, either, so he wasn't surprised to find himself pulling into one of the two staff parking spots along the back of Hummel Tires and Lube. The back door was open during business hours; Kurt could easily have just set up his books on the table in the break room and done his homework in peace. Instead he walked around to the front entry bay, pausing inside the garage as his dad talked to Luke. Burt caught Kurt's eye, nodding at him, and after a few more minutes joined him beside the platform lift.

"Jesus, Kurt, if he makes one more crack about his girlfriend's butt while on the floor, I'm going to be hunting for a new mechanic." His dad set his jaw, glaring at Luke's coveralls.

"We're doing songs this week in Glee to help us deal with our internalized misogyny. Madonna, the power of music, all that. Maybe Luke needs to sing about it."

His dad snorted. "Yeah, no. Trust me, I hear him singing while he's working, and it's not something you would want to encourage him to do more. But internalized misogyny? That doesn't sound much like you, Kurt. I mean, if I understand that right, you're talking about how guys treat girls?"

"It's more than that, Dad." He hesitated, but his dad wasn't caring what else was going on around them; he just was listening to Kurt. It gave him the courage to keep talking. "It's more about how we think about the role of the feminine in our culture. The way it's reflected in our curse words, our music and television and humor... we don't respect the feminine."

Burt nodded slowly, watching Kurt's face. "Did something happen at school? Is it that Karofsky kid again?"

"No," he assured him. "It's something else. There's... a boy."

His dad took his arm and drew him through the working floor to the break room, where Kurt already regretted not heading upon his arrival. He wondered which piece of news was going to be more shocking to his dad. He decided to derail the first conversation and hit him with the second.

"I was asked to join the Cheerios," he said.

Now his dad's expression looked more familiar. He grinned. "You're a cheerleader?"

"Fraid so." He kept his chin up. "What's one more thing they can crucify me for? And it might give me some leverage."

Burt nodded again. "So this boy... he's also on the Cheerios?"

"No. He's not a Cheerio. Just - forget I said anything. It doesn't mean anything, anyway."

His dad's suspicious face was even more familiar than the grin. "Sure, Kurt; whatever you say. You gonna stay and do your homework?"

"I might as well," he sighed. Whatever else was happening tonight, it wasn't likely to involve Puck. He stayed there in the break room until closing, keeping his mind occupied, but when Mercedes' ringtone sounded, he just thumbed his phone off and set it aside. He was already nervous enough about tomorrow.
But the morning pep assembly, complete with him and Mercedes singing 4 Minutes to the accompaniment of the entire brass section, ended up going perfectly. It was the first time Kurt had really experienced the rush that came from standing before a cheering crowd, applauding for him. Sure, there was Glee, but he'd seldom been more than a background singer in an ensemble number. One summer he'd gone to theater camp that had ended with a performance night and fifty parents with video cameras - but this was different. Applause from friends and parents wanting to get their money's worth was nothing compared to practical strangers being in awe of something you'd just done.

Of course, the high died a bit when he turned to see Schue yelling at Coach Sylvester. If there was ever an appropriate time to burst into "Don't Rain On My Parade," it was now. He wouldn't, because he wasn't Rachel, but the thought was there as the Glee teacher did his best to make them feel bad.

Mr. Schue was only the first person to approach them. After he and Mercedes laid down the line and walked away they got about five steps before Puck ran down the bleacher steps, feet clanging on the metal, to intercept them.

"Holy shit, dude. You strutted. That was so -"

"Mercedes, can you give us a moment?" And oh, he was so going to pay for this, judging by the way she was looking at both of them. But there were only so many ways Puck's sentence could end, and Mercedes didn't need to hear any of them.

"Okay, Kurt. If you're sure."

"Did the song sound okay?"

"I wasn't listening. I was watching. You're so fucking hot when you look like you could kick everyone's ass."

Kurt wasn't sure how to reply. That wasn't really how he'd felt, performing. He'd mostly been focused on getting the routine right, aware that Sylvester would crucify him if he messed it up. But Puck's expression was hungry, and not subtle in the least. Which kind of proved Kurt's point about everyone liking him better when he was being feminine, but he wasn't going to say that and rehash yesterday. "What do you think we should do now?"

"I kinda want to come all over you." So much for no eye contact, because Puck was looking right into his when he said it. Kurt just stared back at him, until he added, "What? Too much?"

"Uh. It's just really... not how I thought you would respond."

Puck was barely listening. "Do you have to do another routine? Or can we bail? Now?"

In any other situation, Kurt would have been appalled at himself for how long it took to reengage his brain. He was supposed to be possessed of a quick and flexible wit, after all. But the only thing that ate through the brain-fogging shock of Puck's words was his body shouting at him that yes, going somewhere with Puck was the right thing to do. "There's another song in twenty minutes, but we could - um, my car's right outside...?"

"We'll set alarms on our cell phones," Puck said, tugging his arm insistently for Kurt to follow him out the side door into the parking lot.
The back of the Navigator was spotless, and Kurt might have suggested they fold down the seats if Puck had let him come up for air at all in the first five minutes. At this rate, all they were going to do was kiss, and Kurt was pretty sure that wasn't what Puck had come out there for. "Hang on," he said, trying to struggle out of the tight Cheerios top, but Puck stopped him, eyes restless.

"Just - push it up," Puck had his hand in his jeans already, stroking. "Your stomach, just... that's enough, right there."

"Oh, no," Kurt insisted, "there is no way I'm going to let you get come on my uniform, especially not when I have to go back out there in... twelve minutes." He managed to haul the shirt off without disturbing his hair too much. As if it wasn't already going to be obvious to everyone looking at him what he'd been doing in those intervening twenty minutes, instead of sitting on the bleachers with the rest of the squad. He glanced around, trying to figure out how to use the space on the bench seats when Puck lunged for him, pushing him down flat on the upholstery. He made a little squeak, feeling his dick jump. "What -"

"Hands. Above your head." Puck's words were clipped, riding the tension, which only doubled when Puck leaned over his face and grasped his wrists in one hand. His other hand was taking his cock out of his jeans and working it, fast and rough. Kurt tried to ask him what he could do, because why was it fair that Puck should have to do all the work, but Puck cut him off. "God, you have no idea what you do to me. That, you out there, the way you were moving, your attitude - I don't care what song you were singing. I'd listen to Madonna every day if you were the one doing it. All I could think about was you, on your knees, those goddamn cuffs..."

He broke off with a groan, and Kurt turned his head to the side, arching into Puck's stroking hand and catching his come on the side of his face. It was blisteringly hot, so much more than it should have been, but at this point Kurt was ready to give up on the shoulds and take it the way it was.

Puck had scarcely finished before he'd released Kurt's wrists and was dropping down between his knees onto the floor. "Take your pants off."

"Oh," Kurt said, and that was about all the words that were coming out, but luckily his hands were in action. He got the tight red Cheerios slacks over his hips, and Puck's hands yanked them down the rest of the way. His expression, before he took Kurt in his mouth, was one of complete predatory anticipation.

Anyone passing by the Navigator would definitely have heard Kurt's noises of enthusiasm, but Kurt didn't think about that until later; nor did he think about the seconds ticking away on Kurt's phone timer, nor even whether Puck knew what he was doing. He sure felt like he knew what he was doing. When Puck did something with his tongue, Kurt's volume and tempo increased rapidly. *He's going to let me come in his mouth,* was Kurt's initial terrifying thought, followed by another surge of blinding lust. *He's going to let me come in his mouth.*

Puck didn't even hesitate; he just took it all, Kurt's writhing on the bench, his embarrassing sounds, the speed and force of his climax - all of it. Kurt was sure he'd never come so hard in his life.

There was nowhere for his legs or arms to go, so he just left them where they were on the seat, heavy and tingling. He felt Puck's hand on his stomach, cleaning him up with a tissue. "Wet wipes in the middle compartment," Kurt offered, but Puck shook his head, grinning.

"No time. You've got to get back in there. Two minutes." He grabbed Kurt and kissed him again. It wasn't the first time Kurt had tasted his own come, but it was the first time on someone else's lips.

"You - didn't mind that?" Kurt touched his mouth, watching Puck's grin falter. Before he could
berate himself for bringing it up, Puck shrugged.

"It was hot. All of this. Guess I'd better own that."

He felt himself flush. "Um. Do you think you'd let me do that? Next time?"

"Let you." Puck's blank stare lasted all of two seconds before he smirked. Kurt laughed nervously as his eyes roved over Kurt's bare chest. He reached out and rubbed a spot of dried come off Kurt's jaw with his thumb. "Babe, I think I might make you."

The words made him shiver, but it was the gentle expression in Puck's eyes that froze him to the spot. "You wouldn't do that."

Puck handed him his shirt. "Only if you asked me to. I'm not interested in giving you orders you don't want to follow."

Kurt thought about this as he carefully put his shirt back on, inspecting the margins of his skin for remaining bits of Puck's come. "I tend to get annoyed when people tell me what to do," he said. "But I... it's a thing that works for me?"

"Apparently," Kurt sighed. "Don't take advantage of it. You're not going to get anywhere by pissing me off."

He made it back into the gym less than a minute before Sylvester called for places, taking the microphone in his hand and setting his show face. He didn't really expect to see Puck in the audience; sitting through more Madonna performances couldn't be at the top of his list of things to do on a Tuesday morning. But halfway through "Hung Up," he spotted him sitting next to Finn. He looked entirely uninvolved, leaning in to talk to Finn about something else, but Kurt thought he knew better by now. When he caught Puck's eye a few minutes later, he brushed his chest with one hand, and had the satisfaction of watching him blanch.

Puck wasn't eating in the cafeteria today. He was patrolling the hallway. He'd reverted a bit, maybe. That's what Rachel would say anyway. Half-lunging forward any time someone walked past him and getting a tiny thrill out of said person scurrying away made him no different from the bully he'd been in September. The thing that Rachel wouldn't get was that doing that was honestly the best way Puck had of dealing with shit. He was pissed as hell, and he wasn't dumpstering anyone, or fighting a hockey player, or setting something on fire. He was just startling people.

The truth was, he'd lasted approximately three minutes in the cafeteria before he'd thrown his meal in the trash. Everything, including the tray, which had made an explosive noise against the metal sides of the oversized can. And then he'd rushed out before he could do something crazy. Like jump up and run across the tabletops to the Cheerios table and cram a fucking doughnut down Kurt's throat.

Fuck, just thinking about it made him want to kill someone. Sylvester had told everyone they needed to lose weight, just because some reporter was coming. Puck hadn't even found out from Kurt. Bored, skipping second period with a bunch of the jocks and Cheerios - Glee couldn't be his only friends, after all, that way lay loserdom - and sure he'd be bored the rest of the day, Puck had offered to take San and Brittany to the arcade after Glee. That when Santana had refused because everything in BlastZone smelled like nachos. After a year and a half of watching both his girls be unhealthy because Coach was insane, Puck knew exactly what that meant. So he'd texted Kurt,
asking if Sylvester'd said anything stupid to him, sure she had but hoping she hadn't.

She'd told him he had hips like a pear. And as much as Puck had tried to explain how goddamn stupid that was, and Kurt had seemed like he'd laughed it off, twenty minutes ago Puck watched Kurt take a single celery stick for lunch.

Kurt wasn't fat. He didn't need to lose weight. Santana and Brittany weren't fat, and they didn't need to lose weight. Mercedes was maybe a little fat, but she was hot that way, and she didn't need to lose any fucking weight either. Puck seriously wanted to shove their faces in some noodle kugel and make them enjoy it. Either that or do something equally heinous to Coach Sylvester. Neither one was really possible, though, so his rage just continued to simmer through the rest of the day.

Mr Schue telling them at the end of practice that they couldn't use the auditorium for the rest of the week because Sylvester was fucking Glee over yet again was the last fucking straw. Puck offered to torch the place, completely seriously. A little gasoline and a lighter thrown with perfect aim and it would be over in seconds. Schue said no, of course, and started up some bullshit speech about adversity. *Fuckin' wuss.*

Puck was pretty sure the only way he was going to feel less pissed off was if he actually got Kurt to eat something. It didn't really matter what, as long as it had flavour, and more than five fucking calories. As Mr Schuester dismissed them his head was full of ideas of handcuffing Kurt in his kitchen and making him kneel. If Mr Hummel wasn't ever home until six or later, it would be safe enough. And then he'd grill something pungent, like marinated portobello mushrooms, and let the aroma fill the room until Kurt was practically drooling. Only when it was perfectly cooked would Puck toss it onto a plate and sit down. With Kurt kneeling at his feet Puck would feed him. Maybe a fork, probably just with pinched fingers so he could feel Kurt's pursed lips on his fingertips. Kurt would be happy, and full, and Sylvester could go fuck herself in the ear.

The problem with the plan was that at the moment, Kurt was standing by the piano, talking to Finn about fabric swatches. It looked a hell of a lot like flirting. A weird topic, yes, one over which there was no chance of connecting with Finn, but flirting nonetheless.

"Take us somewhere that doesn't smell like food, Puckerman," Santana ordered as they continued to walk him out the door.

It was literally the opposite of what Puck wanted to do. But it didn't feel like he had a lot of choice. And, well, if Kurt could get in some meaningless flirting with Super Straight Hudson, Puck could watch San and Brittany make out for a bit. It was only fair.

Finn really needed to talk to Kurt. Whatever was going on between their parents was getting completely out of hand. Luckily, he'd heard Brittany mentioning something about needing a fresh supply of sand to add to her drink. Finn knew Quinn well enough to know what that meant: it was weigh-in time in Coach Sylvester's office. And now Kurt would have to be there, too. He really didn't know what to think about Kurt joining the Cheerios, but there were a lot of things that seemed completely crazy right now, so he guessed one more wasn't a big deal.

He only saw Santana and Chelsea in the Coach's office when he walked by, so he poked his head into the archive room next door, hoping to get lucky. Lucky was not what he got.
What he got was an earful of two voices moaning quietly, one high, one low. Finn probably wouldn't have investigated so closely if the higher voice hadn't sounded so familiar. He even thought, for a minute, that it might be Quinn. That was enough to engage his jealousy, and Finn moved in closer, ready to say something friendly that would completely embarrass whoever was making out with her.

"Not at school," said the voice. Finn stopped. That was Kurt. Kurt was talking to - another guy. They were doing things, heavy breathing and wet noise things. There was a muffled curse, and Finn flinched back a little.

"You really want me to stop?" That was the second voice, and Finn almost laughed, giving it up as a joke or something, because Puck wouldn't be doing anything to Kurt. Finn didn't even think it could be a prank, not after the way Puck had changed, was backing up all the kids in Glee. Then he heard Puck make a strangled gasp.

"Does it feel like I want you to stop?" said Kurt. He sounded angry, and a little bitter, but whatever Puck was doing in there, he really wasn't saying anything about stopping. "Just... I can't."

"I don't care what she told you," Puck shot back. "How are you supposed to have energy to do the fucking routines if you're not going to eat anything?"

"It doesn't matter," Kurt said.

"The hell it doesn't!"

Finn put his back against the wall outside the room, fingers and palms digging into the cinder block. There wasn't one thing about this that made sense. The noises, and the voices, and the things Kurt was saying to Puck, and the way he was responding to Kurt. Nothing fit. He wanted to storm in there and demand they explain it, but he couldn't make a sound, so he carefully stepped away from the doorway, trying not to disturb them.

It was about twenty minutes later that he spotted Kurt alone in the hallway. It was tempting just to head the other direction and pretend nothing had happened, but he needed some answers about what was happening between their parents. Unfortunately, Kurt's answer was when are you going to learn that nothing's impossible when it comes to love, which was exactly the wrong thing for Finn to hear from his mouth right then. Especially when said mouth was rosy and bruised from kissing. Finn couldn't help staring at it in fascination, useless sentence starters flitting through his brain. Did Puck really...? And how did you two...? And how does that...? Something Kurt said filtered through his confusion. "She started selling her bedroom set and my dad's chair, but I stopped her... how do you even know about that?"

Kurt looked wistful. "People our parents' age don't wait around for love to bloom. They know what they want."

Finn edged back as Kurt stepped in closer, rearranging his flannel shirt. This was all way too bizarre. "Screw your swatches and your chez - whatever. I like my house, I'm not moving, and - and she's not selling that damn chair."

He had to make a break for it before he said something completely inappropriate. There's no way you're going to get me to move into your house if you're planning on making out with Puck there. Even if he's not my best friend anymore. He found a space on the wall next to the sophomore lockers to take a moment to breathe and not freak out. And I thought he'd run out of ways to surprise me.
Unlike Santana, Puck didn't think the roller rink idea was that bad. To him it had the same feeling as skateboarding. Strapping something with wheels to your feet and seeing how well you could keep your balance was just another way of being athletic, and sports were kind of his thing. And really, he was pretty sure Santana was just being a bitch out of some combination of it being her normal attitude and because she was starving. No doubt any minute now Kurt would turn into a raging bitch too.

With Oscar award-winning timing, Kurt raised his hand and asked to sing. After getting the okay from Schue he spent a minute calling out people in the club. The Jesse and Rachel thing was pretty dead on, but when Kurt started talking about Finn's 'wholly unnecessary tailspin of despair,' Puck shifted in his seat. Why should Kurt care about Finn's feelings? They weren't friends, not like he and Finn used to be.

"What we all need right now is to explore the idea of a sense of place. And how, if we find that place within, we will get that happy ending."

Kurt gave Brad the key, and then he started singing. It was hard to listen to him, though, to hear the actual lyrics, whatever they were, because Kurt was singing them directly to Finn. And there was this fucking look on his face, one that Puck had only seen once before. Kurt had looked like that when he'd been in cuffs, blowing him, like it was the only thing in the world that mattered. How did Finn merit that look, when Puck knew he wasn't worthy of it? Finn was, if not homophobic, at least ignorant about any kind of sex beyond heavy petting with pretty Christian girls.

Puck twisted in his seat to look at Finn. Finn didn't look all that receptive, but Puck still had to know. He mouthed: Are you gay?

The douche can't answer him. All Puck needed was a simple no to feel better, but Finn didn't say anything. And then the lyrics actually hit, and Kurt was holding out his arm to Finn then pulling it back in to clutch at his chest as he sang about having a broken heart. Puck tried his best to not flip his shit.

When it was over, the room clapped. Puck looked around, and everyone was clapping. Didn't they know what they were doing? They were encouraging him! They were telling Kurt with each clap that it was okay to be in love with Finn. Everyone needed a punch in the face. Maybe double for Jesse, because Puck didn't like that guy at the best of times.

Puck waited for Finn outside in the hall after Glee. He didn't shove him against the wall, but he got in his face a little. "You need to tell Kurt you're straight."

"He knows I'm straight. I've dated a bunch of girls. For Christ's sake, me and Santana, just last week - I mean, does he need more proof than that?"

Puck frowned. "Remind him. Don't be a homophobic prick about it, just... no, you know what? Be as homophobic as you fucking want. Just make him stop."

Finn's glare was full of intent, but Puck had no idea what it was about. "You're awfully invested in what's going on with Kurt. What do you care about - this?"

"Unrequited love is bullshit. It doesn't do anyone any good. You feel good right now about Rachel and Jesse? Of course you fuckin' don't. But you're fucked because everyone in Glee knows you still have a chance with her. That eventually Jesse will fuck off and you'll get her. You're screwed because you have hope. Kurt doesn't need that shit. He doesn't need fuckin' hope."
"Yeah, well, he's the one who's trying to get me to look at swatches in his basement." He scowled. "I've been trying to tell him all day that this is - too much, that I can't deal with him, but I think he might be on some other planet." Then his expression shifted to something a little more hopeful. "Maybe you could tell him for me?"

"Trust me, it's the top of the list of shit we need to talk about."

Shit. Puck curled his fists. He'd just implied a way deeper relationship than he and Kurt should have. His only chance was Finn being his usual oblivious self. But Finn was just watching him, nodding thoughtfully.

"Yeah. Maybe he'd hear it better coming from you. Thanks." He ducked his head, looking embarrassed. "And I think I need to go home and sing this song to my dad's chair."

Puck wasn't even going to pretend that he wasn't following Kurt out to his car. Kurt barely acknowledged his presence; he just thumbed the key fob to unlock the back door and climbed in the back on the driver's side, while Puck went in the other side. He wasn't sure what he expected, maybe a snarky yelling match, or an icy silent treatment - but Kurt falling into his arms and bursting into tears wasn't it.

"Oh," he said unhappily, "fuck."

He just gathered him in close, holding him as tight as he dared, and then a little tighter than that, burying his nose in Kurt's neck and mumbling phrases that he wouldn't be caught dead saying in any other context, and was kind of counting on Kurt to either miss entirely or forget about in a half hour.

"He doesn't... want me... and I know it," Kurt sobbed, through hitching breaths, "but I can't... I can't stop... loving him."

"Yeah. I know. Pretty sure the whole Glee club knows." He tried not to feel guilty about Kurt being a mess on the back seat of the Navigator, while Puck took whiffs of his hair and copped feels through his tight red Cheerios pants. Yeah, it sucked being a consolation prize, but Puck wasn't looking for Kurt to lie to him about what he wanted. He tightened his hand on Kurt's neck, kissing his cheek, and then the side of his mouth, and then his whole mouth, over and over until Kurt was kissing him back.

_Fuckin' Finn Hudson's never going to make you feel like this_, he thought viciously, palming the crotch of Kurt's pants. He felt Kurt coming apart in his arms, his mouth going loose and his breath shuddering in and out. Puck didn't even bother to try to get a grip on Kurt's cock, concentrating instead on his neck, his ears, his wrists - all the parts of him that elicited the greatest response, using his tongue and lips and teeth. Five minutes later Kurt was moaning; in ten minutes, he was shaking. After fifteen, Kurt started to beg.

"The cuffs are at your house," Puck reminded him. "Pretty sure you can't drive like this."

"Anything," panted Kurt, "just - please, let me come."

"I don't think I'm stopping you." But he knew exactly what Kurt meant, maybe even what Kurt _wanted_, even if he wasn't asking for it. "Okay. Get your pants off." He sat there idly stroking himself through his jeans while Kurt stood hunched in the back seat of the Navigator, shucking the tight pants and very brief bikini he was wearing underneath. Then Puck opened his arms again, and the way Kurt came willingly to huddle against his side gave him a startling rush of pleasure.
He held him in one arm, stroking his other hand along Kurt's absurdly soft inner thigh before bringing his fingers to his mouth and spitting on them. Kurt's eyes went round.

"Fuck your hand," he whispered, returning his mouth to Kurt's neck. "Come on; nice and slow."

Slow was all good and fine for a little while, but the moment Puck pressed his wet fingers against Kurt's hole and felt him go slack, heard the incredible throaty whine that came out of him, he had a hard time not making it a race to see who could come first. Only nobody was touching him; it was Kurt's reactions alone that were getting him off, big time. When Kurt buried his face in Puck's neck, Puck pushed one finger inside to the first knuckle, smiling at the flood of words that spilled out of Kurt's mouth. He gave the finger a little wiggle, thinking of the gag he'd seen in one of the pictures. *Maybe one of these days.*

Kurt won the not-a-race, but by bare seconds, Puck shifting in the seat to grind against Kurt's thigh as soon as Kurt's own orgasm had subsided. He hadn't come in his own jeans so many times in a month since he'd been in middle school. They slumped against the seat, wrapped up in each other's limbs, panting hard.

"I know you're all come-headed right now. Not gonna bring you down. But later, Kurt? We need to talk."

Kurt wasn't emerging from his hiding place against Puck's neck, but he nodded. Eventually Puck uncurled him bodily, looking into his red face.

"Dude, you're gay," Puck said, feeling perplexed. "I thought all gay dudes liked having things stuck in their assholes. Come on; don't tell me you've never thought about it."

"Barely. And only very occasionally had it sounded like anything vaguely pleasant."

"Huh. Well, I think you've got your answer about that." Kurt tried to turn away again, but Puck caught his jaw and kissed him. "Hey. Look at me." He grinned into Kurt's tense face. "I'm the one who was having the big gay freakout last week, right? And I got over that. You can get over this. You liked it?"

"God," Kurt muttered, squirming. "Okay, okay. Yes. It was - yes." He took a deep breath, returning Puck's gaze. "It felt amazing, but you knew that already."

"Of course I did. Dude, buttfucking doesn't make you gay. It just makes you awesome."

Kurt gave a reluctant laugh, kissing him again. "I hate to say it, Puck, but all of this... what we're doing...?" He raised both eyebrows. "It's pretty gay."

Puck wasn't going to get into a long conversation about labels; he had more important information to convey. "Whatever. Also, this, what we're doing? Finn's never going to do it with you. You've got to give that shit up."

"I know," Kurt said mournfully. "It's impossible. But - just for a second, today, when I was singing to him? Didn't it look like he, maybe...?"

Puck sighed loudly. "No. No, it didn't, and just... he's not going to want it with you, and if you try to make him want it, it's just going to piss him off. Okay?"

"Okay." It wasn't very convincing, though. Watching him drive off, Puck wondered if he'd just been played.
It's true that I'm a silver shadow
And you are always on my mind
You, you need to get over here
We'll disappear
Your secret's safe

And no one has to know I'm your getaway
And a little bit more than you can take
I can make everything feel so damn good
I could've sworn we disappeared tonight
Come on and dance with me
Come on and dance with me, baby

And don't you know I just appeared tonight
You want to dance with me
You want to dance with me all night
Nobody there will ever see us
Don't talk, don't walk, just the two of us
Dance with me, dance with me
You want to dance with me, dance with me, baby

Soon, we're heading to a place where I'll prove
I'm all you want and more
And you, you need to let it unfold
Just like you're told

- The Cab, "Can You Keep A Secret"
Surprising no one, Kurt was the best dressed person sitting in their booth. He'd let Finn slide in first, as his dad had slid in first across the table, leaving him with a good view of Carole, who was the only other one to try hard to look acceptable. His dad hadn't even consulted him before putting on that hunter green button down, which honestly wasn't his best colour. Finn was by far the worst dressed, in a grey t-shirt, no doubt from Target, underneath a plaid flannel shirt at least two sizes too big.

Nor had Finn limited his show of disapproval to his sartorial choices. He was sulking, hunched over his Pepsi like it was the only thing keeping him alive. He'd already gotten one refill in the ten minutes they'd been here.

Once the waitress wrote down their orders and took back their menus, Kurt clinked his butter knife against the side of his drink. "A toast. Tonight is a momentous occasion. It marks the first real communion between the Hummel and the Hudson clans. I imagine that when the Bouviers and the Kennedys first broke bread there was a similar sense of joy, and urgency. So let me raise my Shirley Temple to our new little family."

Dad and Carole knocked their drinks against his. Finn, on the other hand, with his straw still halfway down his throat muttered, "We're not family."

Carole started to reprimand Finn before his dad stepped in to smooth the conversation over. Frankly, though, Kurt didn't mind if Finn didn't consider them family. Finn viewing him as a brother wasn't his modus operandi. Puck didn't get that, because Puck played the instantaneous game. If the girl - or guy, be as it may - didn't want in Puck's pants as soon as he made the offer, Puck would walk away and find someone else. Kurt, on the other hand, was playing the long game. He'd wear Finn down. Already Finn had done his determined best to handle the issues and petty games of three Glee girls. Sooner or later he'd understand that a fellow man came with less drama.

Then, within the answer to why he liked football more than basketball, Finn said he missed being hit. Kurt couldn't be sure if he was flushed or pale, just knew that his reaction was showing involuntarily all over his face. To cover it he said "pure boyish insanity," and ended with a chuckle that sounded faker than the so-called Chanel bags Willie sold from a tent behind the outlet mall.

His dad threw in a comment about football making him feel alive. Unsettled and not liking where the conversation was going, Kurt brought it back to his wheelhouse. "Why hasn't anyone commented on the new jeans I got Carole? Notice that the waistband falls well below the belly button, a welcome change."

A perfunctory agreement from his father, then he was back to discussing football with Finn, this
time offering him tickets to a game. Dad had never offered him tickets to a game. Kurt would have said no, but that wasn't the point. The point was that his dad wanted to do something with Finn that he'd never even asked to do with his own son.

The point was that Finn was making one of his regular semi-stupid comments, this one about Breadstix breadsticks tasting bad, and both his dad and Carole were laughing, and Kurt knew that a witty comment about the wardrobe of the couple at the table next to them wouldn't get half the acknowledgement.

The point was that he was a failure as a son, and apart from wearing flannel and getting a girlfriend and caring about the Washington Cheeseheads or whoever, there was nothing Kurt could do to stop from being a disappointment.

What he could do was redirect the situation towards something that would make him happy. Instead of listening to Dad and Finn bond, Kurt could retreat into his imagination. Finn had said two minutes ago that he liked getting hit. In context the meaning was clear, but with the last two weeks of activities with Puck it was easy to skew the words. Kurt had hit Finn once, spanked him during the Push It performance. He'd done it mostly because Finn would have freaked out and fallen off the stage if he'd done what he'd really wanted to; get a good grop in. He couldn't really imagine doing it again. But Puck...

It was incredibly easy to imagine Puck and Finn hooking up, in the dirty part of his brain. Puck wouldn't be effeminate enough to scare Finn off, and if it came down to it he'd be strong enough to tackle Finn, hold him down with one hand on the small of his back and make him take it. Kurt had spent more than one guilty morning under the covers, imagining it coming down to something exactly like that.

Kurt got his cell phone out of his pocket, holding it under the table. *I'd be cuffed, with my hands over my head. Not in the closet, there'd be chain and a screw in the ceiling.*

Puck replied almost immediately. His ringtone was the first few bars of Nelly Furtado's Maneater, until Kurt could find something more fitting. For a brief moment the three of them looked at him. Kurt looked at the screen for show without really reading the words, then shrugged. "Tina's having a crisis about Artie. I'll put it on vibrate so it won't bother you, but I have to answer. She needs a male perspective."

"Make it short, Kurt," his dad ordered. Kurt nodded, then pulled his phone out from where he'd left it beside his thigh. They were already back to talking about the Browns, they wouldn't notice if he texted for the next hour. He looked at the text.

*Sexting? Holy shit. Welcome to adulthood, Kurt. Tell me more.*

*Spreadeagle, and naked. I'd be cold, except what you're doing is making me so hot.*

*What's that?*

*You've got this other guy. He wants us so bad. He'd been watching us dirty dancing the whole night. You're so sweaty from dancing your white undershirt is seethrough. Threesomes are awesome.*

Kurt smirked for a second, before remembering he was supposed to be dispensing sober advice to Tina. Of course Puck was into threesomes. He'd probably been with a whole neighbourhood of cougars at once.
You're dressed, he's not. You've got him bent over, hands braced on the wall. You're spanking him, making me count each stroke.

One, two, three...

Yes, like that.

You hard, watching me give it to this random?

So hard. Shifting from foot to foot hoping that my dick will catch on my thigh so I can get some relief.

Fuck, Kurt. So hot. You know I won't let you come until the random starts crying.

Kurt bit his lip, then took a sip of his Shirley Temple. Maybe it was messed up, but he really did want to see Finn cry. For once Finn could feel out of sorts. He could be the weak one, instead of Kurt.

Mrs. Hudson didn't blink an eye when Puck showed up on their front step. "Well, hello, Noah," she said, opening the door and smiling broadly. "It's a pleasure to see you. Finn's upstairs; do you want me to go get him?"

"Sure, Mrs. H." It wasn't like he hadn't been to Finn's house a thousand times before. There was that stupid raku glazed sculpture he'd made in first grade, still sitting on the table in Finn's front hall. He remembered it was supposed to be a Bulbasaur, but it barely looked like an animal from his vantage point of nine years older. No matter how much history existed between him and Finn, things were still tentative between them; he wasn't going to show up in his bedroom unannounced.

Finn found him in the family room, reading Sports Illustrated, just as he'd done for years, because Puck's Ma would never pay for a subscription. "Hey," he said, clearly surprised, but just as clearly pleased.

"Hey." He tossed the magazine on the coffee table, looking at Finn expectantly. "So I talked to Kurt about what you said."

"Oh - uh, thanks." Finn nodded, letting his gaze wander. "Yeah, I'm not sure it helped, but thanks for trying. He did seem a little less touchy-feely and more, like, bitchy tonight."

"Tonight?"

"Yeah, Kurt arranged this dinner at Breadsticks for the four of us? Kind of a date, I guess. For them, I mean. We were, like, chaperones..." Finn's voice trailed off, looking at Puck's expression. "What?"

"Nothing." Puck tried not to grind his teeth. Kurt hadn't been planning to tell him. He was sure about it. And what the fuck, why not, right? Kurt was an independent dude; he didn't need to ask anybody's permission to do anything.

Except you told him not to lead Finn on. You told him, and he went ahead with this stupid fucking double date anyway. Puck wasn't sure what kind of lines had been drawn, or could be drawn, about what kind of things Kurt wanted from him in terms of telling versus asking, but this one had been pretty fucking clear. Puck had said, "do this," and Kurt had said, "okay." And then he'd done the opposite. And now Puck was pretty sure he knew exactly who the random had been in their texting scenario. God, he was never going to get that image out of his head.
"Yeah, I guess it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. Burt's pretty cool. He's going to take me to a Browns game." Finn didn't look convinced, but he wasn't yelling either. Puck really wasn't sure which one would be better at this point. Then Finn leaned forward, his brows furrowed, and hesitated before adding, "I, um. I have to tell you... the two of you, at school. In the Cheerios archives room?"

"Oh," said Puck, casting around for an excuse, something that would make any sense at all, but when he didn't find one, he just shrugged. "Got me."

"Dude." Finn sounded - hurt? Annoyed, for sure. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"What, about Kurt, or about guys? 'Cause I'm pretty sure it's just Kurt. And it's kind of new. A couple weeks. I'm hardly used to it yet."

That was a lie, because if he was going to tell Finn the truth, it was that he was used to Kurt. He was so used to him, he was thinking all kinds of things about what they should be doing together. Not just the things involving orgasms and bondage, but things like watching a movie or spotting him at the gym or playing with his sister. Friendship things. Boyfriend things. Meanwhile, Kurt was making doe-eyes at Finn before he'd even taken Puck's cock out of his mouth. He knew he didn't measure up by comparison to Quarterback Fucking Hudson, not in the boyfriend department, but better a cock in the hand than two in the... well, maybe that saying didn't apply so well here, but whatever. Finn was just staring at him.

"You really like him," he said in surprise. "Like, a lot."

"Fuck you." Puck frowned uneasily. "You don't know dick about what's going on with me, remember?"

Finn laughed softly, which just made him scowl harder. "No, man. I see it, okay? Because I've watched you date a lot of girls, and I'm pretty sure I haven't seen you look like that before."

He sighed, letting his head hang a little. "Shit. It's that obvious?"

"No," Finn said thoughtfully. "I don't know. Maybe I just know you really well."

That was a little kick in the gut, but Puck tried to take it as Finn obviously meant it. "Well... you don't look like you're freaking out about it."

"No. It's fine. I mean, whatever makes you happy." He was still looking at him curiously, as though Puck's feelings were suspended right there on his face for him to sift through. It made him twitchy. "And... I guess, this does?"

"You're telling me." Puck wasn't going to get into more details with Finn, not without a lot of beer. But saying this much to him, hearing him listen and accept this thing with Kurt - that was a hell of a lot more of a relief than he'd expected to feel. He took a second to breathe and close his eyes.

When he opened them again, he caught a new expression on Finn's face. It was just there for a moment before it was smoothed over again by Finn's practiced blank look, the one he'd used since they were kids, with adults, to get away with all kinds of shit. It had been too brief for him to really tell, but Puck thought Finn had looked - angry. No, not angry. Jealous.

"That's cool," said Finn, sounding completely calm. "Do you think you guys are gonna tell anybody, or is this a secret?"

"I have no idea," he admitted. "Kurt hasn't said anything about it, and he's kind of setting the pace."
That wasn't quite true anymore, either. Kurt might be the one saying what he wanted, but Kurt had also been handing him the power, a little at a time.

"I'll assume I shouldn't tell anybody, then, until you or Kurt tells me otherwise. Okay?"

Puck wished he were just a little more girly, because he really wanted to hug Finn, but after the conversation they'd just had, it would have been way too freaking gay. He settled on a grateful smile. "Thanks, man. You're being a lot more awesome about this than I expected."

Finn shrugged, smiling back. "What can I say? I'm awesome."

Puck tried not to dwell on the conversation he'd had with Kurt earlier that week about how buttfucking made you awesome, because that was not an image he wanted to associate with Finn Hudson. That, plus the brewing anger he felt about Kurt basically lying to his face, was enough to put him in a hell of a state by the time he reached the Hummel house. He considered barging through the door without knocking, but in the end stood there while he texted Kurt. I'm in your fucking garage, freezing my ass off. Let me in.

Kurt looked a little startled to see him, too, and he was a lot less happy about it than Finn had been. Kurt and happy weren't commonly seen together. On any other day, Puck would be thinking about what he could do to put the happy on his face, but not today. Today, he was going to get to the bottom of this.

"What were you doing tonight?" He wasn't going to give Kurt any wiggle room, watching his face as he processed the question.

"We went out to dinner."

He sat down on the end of Kurt's bed, watching him pace back and forth. "So that's what you were doing when you were sending me those fucking texts? Really, at the table with your dad?"

Kurt folded his arms around himself. "Can we not talk about this now? I've already had a shitty night."

"Yeah, I kind of think it's about to get worse." He reached out and grabbed Kurt's arm on his next pass. "Don't try to avoid this. You lied to me."

Kurt sneered, but he looked restless, like he might break down at any moment. Puck wondered what he might do to push him into it. The way he'd cried on him in the Navigator after Glee: that had been the first time he'd really felt Kurt depending on him. "I'm sure you've never lied before."

"Not the point, and you know it. I told you what you needed to do with Finn, and you agreed. And then - I mean, what the fuck was that, Kurt? A date with Finn?"

"Well, it's not like I was having a barrel of laughs," Kurt snapped back. "My dad spent the whole evening bonding with him over football and other manly prospects. Treating him like he was better than me..."

"Depends on the meaning of the word better." Puck waited for Kurt to relax his body, to make some kind of concession that he was in the wrong, but he wasn't budging. "Look, just stop." He tugged Kurt until he was facing him, and even then he wasn't quite making eye contact. "I'm seriously unhappy, and you're not fucking listening to a word I'm saying. Unless you say no, I'm gonna show you what I mean."

Kurt's face settled into an obstinate frown. "Really."
Puck could just see the rational, logical arguments marshalling themselves under the command of his intelligence. But Kurt wasn't going to smart his way out of this one. Puck pulled him closer, a hand on his pants zipper. "Yes, really. I'm not fucking around here. And I'm not going to stop until I think you're done, so you'd better really mean it if you say no."

"You can't be serious."

Puck brought his hand back and landed it, hard, in the center of Kurt's ass. The look on his face was priceless; if Puck hadn't been distracted by other things, he might have paused to enjoy it for a little bit. As it was, he wasn't going to make this about him. He schooled his expression. "Last chance, Hummel."

Silent, wounded shock might be the equivalent of a no to his dad, but Puck was taking Kurt literally. Actually he guessed Kurt's dad had experienced his share of manipulation. When Puck gave Kurt's Marc Jacobs pants a yank, he didn't say wait, you'll rip them. He didn't say you're absolutely insane. He didn't say no, stop, I don't want you to do this. Puck gave him a nice, long opportunity to say any of those things, or indeed anything at all, but when he met Puck's challenging gaze with continued silence, Puck was moving right on with consent.

Kurt might be a little smaller than Puck, but he definitely wasn't weak or helpless. When Puck hauled him off-center over his knee, Kurt gave a little yelp of surprise, grasping at the edge of the bed for support. Puck captured his flailing hands, giving them a little shake. "Stop trying to handle this. Just let go. I'm not going to let you fall."

Kurt sagged a little into his grasp, as though he wasn't quite sure if Puck was serious or not, and Puck brought down his hand again onto Kurt's ass. This time it was on bare skin, and the impact was significantly different. Kurt's exclamation was more desperate. "Puck -"

"Dude, I'm not talking to you about this. Just - shut up, okay?"

Kurt relaxed a little more in his arms, moreso with each slap on his smooth, unmarked flesh, until after a dozen or so smacks he was completely limp against the bed. He let out a low groan as Puck moved his hand to the underside of his thighs, leaving a series of shiny marks. The crease under his ass provided a guideline for him to follow as he set up each swath to overlap with the last.

Puck guessed Kurt might be getting hard, but he wasn't going to think about that yet. He readjusted his firm hold around Kurt's waist, hitching him up a little higher on his lap, and resisted the urge to ask him if he were okay. Of course Kurt wasn't fucking okay. Puck wasn't going for okay. This was about - well, he was trying to teach him a -

"Fuck, Kurt," he said, trying not to freak out, because holy shit, that was a handprint. On his ass. And it wasn't going away, and his skin was red, that wasn't going away either. And he was absolutely certain now that while Kurt might be a little hard, he himself was fucking rock solid, and he really wasn't sure what to think about that. What kind of a guy got off on hitting his boyfriend? So much for the fucking Don't Think box.

Kurt shifted, slowly, until he made eye contact. Puck could see his cheeks, shining with tears, biting his lip. "I - I'm sorry," he said.

"Yeah, okay, come on - come here, just, god, Kurt." Puck had let his arms go and was lifting him up, trying to get him up from that position, but Kurt was still moving slowly, his limbs wooden and stiff. Puck finally just picked him up in both arms, an awkward bundle of limbs with his pants halfway down, and set him into his lap. The moment Kurt's head hit Puck's shoulder, he began to sob. They weren't delicate or calculated tears, but big and loud and messy, with way more snot than
he'd have expected from him, but if Kurt wasn't going to care, he wasn't either. Eventually he did
reach way over to the side of the bed for a box of tissues, tucking one into Kurt's hand as it grabbed
Puck's shirt for support.

"Babe," said Puck, attempting to keep calm, "just tell me you're okay."

Kurt was nodding before any words came out, and he blew his nose. "I'm okay. I'm - a little
embarrassed. Okay, a lot embarrassed." The relief his laugh inspired was overwhelming. "That was
- hey!"

"I need a sec," Puck warned, clutching him tighter, feeling his grip on his own voice become
tenuous, "just... let me do this, okay?" He was pretty sure he was going to burst into tears himself
at any fucking moment. Kurt relaxed into his grasp, letting Puck squash him, until the tension
subsided. He sighed.

Puck ran a hand down to Kurt's ass, batting away his protests. "Come on, let me look. I feel like I
was hitting you pretty hard."

"No-ooo," said Kurt, squirming on the bed. "Feels - ohh, feels good."

_Huh._ He supposed it was no different from leaving a hickey, making the skin more sensitive,
Except this skin was pretty close to some other sensitive parts. He dipped a hand between Kurt's
legs, watching in fascination as he raised up on all fours, tensing, and thrust against the bedspread.
"Damn, you are so fucking hot."

Kurt let out an exasperated laugh, looking over his shoulder at Puck, but his mirth quieted when he
saw Puck reaching into the drawer by his bed. "The cuffs are in the pillowcase," he offered, trying
to raise himself up, but Puck put a hand on his back, pressing him back down to lie on his stomach.
He snapped open the tube of lube, spreading some on his fingers.

"I don't really know what to do when you say things like that." Kurt sounded subdued, like the
spanking had tamed all the snark out of him.

"What, that you're hot?" Puck snorted, shaking his head as he laid two fingers between Kurt's
cheeks. He didn't press; he just waited for Kurt to spread his own legs, to seek the pressure himself.
"Think you're pretty clear about that. You know everybody stares at you. Why else would they do
that?"

"Because I'm a freak?" Kurt's response was soft, and maybe a little sad, but he said it like it was a
fact. It pissed Puck off, which he realized was a rather untenable position to be in with his fingers
in somebody's ass. He ran his other hand over Kurt's marked skin while he waited to calm down.

"No, babe. It's because you're hot. I'm sure I'm not the only guy who thinks so. It's just that the rest
of them are too fucking scared to say anything. Is that...?" He pressed his fingers in a little further,
feeling Kurt's body accommodate the greater stretch.

"That's good," Kurt gasped, grinding against him, "yeah, that's - more, please -?"
The please was a hell of a charge, and when Puck gave it to him a little harder, trying to make it a kind of nonverbal you're welcome, Kurt grabbed one of his many pillows and buried his face in it, stifling his moans. He paused, peeking back at Puck, his cheeks flushed.

"Apparently I'm reduced to asking for everything." His voice was ragged. "Can I - while you do that?"

Puck groaned, doing his damndest to unbutton his belt with his left hand while maintaining the appropriate angle with his fingers. "You, asking," he said. "Hot. And yeah, fuck, yeah."

Somehow he managed to unbutton his jeans and work them down over his hips without falling flat on his face on top of Kurt. He didn't feel particularly elegant or coordinated, but Kurt wasn't complaining. No, thrusting into his own fist on the downstroke and back against Puck's two slick fingers on the upstroke was definitely in the realm of not complaining. The sounds he was making were somehow way more inspirational than girls' breathy moans, for all he sounded enough like a girl in other contexts, at that moment he absolutely did not. It had been a long, overly stimulating day, with a decided dearth of coming, and Puck was pretty sure he wasn't going to outlast Kurt if he kept making those noises. He was going to have to do something drastic.

"Tell me if this really sucks," he said, leaning forward for a better angle, and crooked his fingers inside him. Kurt cried out, which Puck had to assume was a good thing, and when he did it again, Kurt stiffened and clenched rhythmically around his fingers as he came. Puck was already very aware of there being nothing but one closed door between them and the upstairs, where he guessed Mr. Hummel was still awake, and he did his best to stifle his own noises, stroking off onto Kurt's reddened ass.

As much as he was reluctant to leave Kurt for even one minute, Puck decided it would be good to wash his hands. He dug in the stack of towels on the shelf in the bathroom for a clean washcloth, and soaked it in hot water before wringing it out and bringing it back to Kurt, along with the box of tissues. He let Kurt roll over while he blotted up the most offensive of the wet spots on his bedspread, wiping him off before giving his own junk a quick once-over. Then he pulled back the covers and helped Kurt take off the rest of his clothes.

"I usually wear pajamas to bed," he said, rather shyly. "But you always put me to bed like this."

"I think pajamas are kind of pointless," agreed Puck. "But I can dig out a pair if you -"

"No, no - I rather like it." He hesitated. "I imagine you... have to go home. I mean, you would get in trouble if you didn't. Right?"

Puck considered Kurt, naked and in his bed, looking at him with that hopeful expression, and weighed it against the screaming match he'd get into with his Ma if he stayed out all night. "I... could probably tell her I stayed over at Finn's."

The way Kurt was smiling at him... Puck thought he would be willing to withstand a lot from his Ma, if he had a chance at having that again. "Yeah?"

He nodded, unable to say any more. Feeling strangely self-conscious under Kurt's awed, watchful eyes, he took off the rest of his clothes, then came to sit beside Kurt on the bed, stroking his shoulder.

"Your dad's not going to come down here and find me, is he?"

Kurt shook his head, smiling. "He only comes down when I invite him. Or when there's a big
problem. I don't think either one will happen in the middle of the night. You might have to get up in the morning and move your truck, though."

He turned down the cover for him, a formal gesture that suited Kurt, and moved to one side, patting the sheets. Puck felt ridiculously fortunate to be the first one, the only one ever, to have been invited into that bed. Kurt smiled as he wrapped him in his arms.

"I can't believe you're actually here."

Kurt's eyes were soft and alight with the same promise he'd shown to Finn when he'd sang to him, but now it was directed at him, at Puck, their faces and bodies so close under the covers. Puck didn't want to turn off the light yet, because he didn't want to stop looking at him, or for Kurt to stop looking at him. He could feel Kurt's legs, Kurt's knees, his thighs against his, the startling sensation of their cocks against one another. Kurt's chest was firm, and although Puck was still of the firm opinion that boobs were great, this was surprisingly great too.

"Thanks for wanting me to be."

Kurt brushed his lips against his. "Yeah," he said. "I really do. You're so..." He glanced down at the things that were mostly covered by the sheets and blankets, and rested a perfectly manicured hand on his chest.

"What?" He was curious if Kurt would say so hot, or possibly so brave.

"So good to me."

Puck didn't even need to move his arms, they were already around Kurt, but he had the overwhelming impulse to pick him up and carry him in his arms, all slo-mo, with a soundtrack. He was pretty sure that was part of the definition of insane.

"You deserve that," he said, when he could talk again. "Definitely. And I love - being the one to give it to you."

Kurt looked inordinately pleased. "That's really sweet. How long have you been sweet?"

Puck rolled his eyes, hoping Kurt couldn't see his blush when he was so close to his face. "I gave it up for fucking Lent, Hummel."

"Well," said Kurt, kissing him again, "it suits you."

Puck might have gone on kissing Kurt until sleep became impossible, but Kurt leaned over and switched off the light before resting his head on Puck's chest, in the crook of his arm. It settled him down, and he felt himself drop off to sleep.

Every time he woke up in the middle of the night, he couldn't see Kurt, because it was pitch dark, but he could feel him against him in different configurations. He decided his favorite was the spoon, and he slipped an arm around Kurt's body before he pulled him close and went back to sleep again.

When he woke up the last time, the light wasn't any different, but he could feel Kurt stirring, too. He guessed it might be morning, judging by how awake he felt. Some parts of his body were pretty fucking awake. On an ordinary day, when he wasn't waking up in another guy's bed, he would take care of that efficiently, but here, it felt a little selfish. So instead of wrapping a hand around his own cock, he wrapped a hand around Kurt's.
"You -" The rest of the blurted sentence, or whatever it was, remained unsaid as Kurt deviated into wordless grunting.

Puck smiled, kissing his neck. "Not a bad way to wake up?" he said into his ear. Kurt responded by twisting his body around halfway at the waist to face him, catching his lips with the side of his mouth, but Puck held him tight in his arms, preventing further movement. He whined. "What, this isn't what you want?"

"Want to feel you. Touch you - let me do that?"

Puck didn't let go, picking up the pace a fraction. His free hand slipped down between Kurt's legs, feeling him still slick from the night before. Kurt's response to the touch was gratifying, but it was nothing compared to the way Kurt reacted when Puck tucked his hard cock between Kurt's ass cheeks. The lube provided just enough slippery surface to make a slick channel between his thighs, and with each gentle thrust, he nudged against Kurt's hole. Puck could feel Kurt's clenching response, and hear his breathless whimpering. "Oh god... oh god..."

"Yeah," growled Puck. "You're definitely gonna get it, just... like... this."

He punctuated his sentence with the movement of his hips, causing further friction and receiving Puck's thrusts. He set up a muttered commentary against his neck as he picked up his pace. "So hot, babe, that's it... so close... you're letting me take it, feels so good... gonna love fucking you even more..."

Kurt responded to the suggestion by spilling over Puck's fist, which Puck expected, but he didn't expect to hear Kurt gasping, "Take it - take it, please - "

"I know, babe." Puck reached for him, fumbling a kiss onto his nose before he hit his target. "I'm not going to rush you."

"No, I mean... I really want that." He sounded so surprised.

"Everybody wants it, Kurt."

"I never wanted it before. Not like that."

Puck reached over and found the light switch, ignoring his sticky fingers, and looked down to see Kurt blinking up at him. "Well, I want it, if you hadn't guessed. Far as I'm concerned, you could fuck me, too." He grinned as the idea hit Kurt, watching his pupils relax. "Yeah, I'd be all about that. But you tell me when you're ready, and we'll do it then, not before. And not in the middle of
Kurt's smile was even better than the one last night had been. He lunged for him, kissing him hard and hauling Puck back down on top of him. "Still sweet," he confirmed. "All right. If I decide I'm ready, I'll be sure to let you know."

When, not if, Puck added in his mind, grinning back. Maybe he was too confident, but Kurt had no reason to stop doing this shit with him. And nobody was a better lay than the Puckasaurus. Maybe he couldn't make Kurt love him, but he could definitely make Kurt want him.

It was just barely light out when he got outside, and he had an hour before they'd even open the doors to the school. If he went home now, he ran the risk of seeing his Ma before work, and he really didn't need to deal with that shit, so he drove across town to the 24-hour Pat's Donuts and Creme for coffee and a bacon donut. Whoever decided Jews shouldn't get piercings or eat pig really had no idea what it was like to be a teenager.

The booth in the corner was taken, but Puck grinned as he slid into the seat across from Mike Chang. Mike looked a little guilty, glancing down at his stack of peanut glazed.

"My dad won't let us have sugar at home," he explained. "I end up sneaking out a couple times a month for donuts before school, usually on days when I have to dance."

"Nothing wrong with that." Puck licked off his fingers. "Folks haven't been eating enough lately. Coach Sylvester's trying to convince Kurt and Mercedes that they need to lose weight, which is just bullshit, but I think they care more about being fucking popular than they do about having enough brain function to make it through a day."

"I don't get why anybody would want to be a Cheerio," said Mike, shaking his head. "Coach Tanaka's kind of harsh, but at least he's not insane."

Puck thought about the expression on Kurt's face the night before, when he'd said you're so good to me, and shrugged. "I guess there are some things that feel worth it, no matter how much shit you have to wade through. I just think that nobody gets to make you feel bad about yourself. I mean, unless you get off on that."

Mike looked at his hands. "My dad," he said. "He's the one who makes me feel worst, but I still work hard every day to impress him, hoping that one day he'll be proud of me."

"Well, that's bullshit," snapped Puck. "My dad was a deadbeat, and I don't give two rat turds for him. I wouldn't give him the satisfaction."

He shrugged. "My dad's a lot of things, but I still respect him."

Puck wasn't sure which would be worse, to have a dad like his that he didn't care about, or a dad like Mike's that he did. They finished their donuts in silence before heading in to school.

He went looking for Mercedes as soon as lunch started, but Artie and Tina told him she'd fainted and ended up with Quinn in the nurse's office. That just pissed him off even more. While he waited outside in the hallway for them to finish up, fiddling with the straw from the juice box he'd appropriated from the cafeteria, he brainstormed ways he could get back at Coach Sylvester for doing this to Kurt and Mercedes.

Quinn came out first. She looked at him suspiciously. "Don't tell me you're waiting for Mercedes."
"I brought her a juice. Calories, yo. Something to keep her vertical, at least until after the pep assembly."

"I gave her a granola bar." She still seemed confused, but didn't seem willing to push it. "You okay? You look... I don't know. Tired."

"Somebody put a pea under my mattress." Quinn would be the last one to support what he was doing with Kurt. For one thing, she barely tolerated the idea of premarital sex, not because it might get her pregnant or because it was scary emotional stuff for teenagers, but because the Bible told her it was wrong. He could only imagine what she would say about his kinky gay exploits with Kurt Hummel. He just waited there on the floor until she walked away. Then he knocked on the door of the nurse's office before ducking his head inside.

Mercedes was there, sitting on the examining table, staring up at the ceiling. When she saw him, she raised an eyebrow. "It must be my day to get visits from people who usually tell me I suck. Don't tell me: you're not going to give me a hard time either?"

"Unless you hate orange juice." He let the door close behind him with a click, then crossed to the table, setting the juice box in her hand. "They were out of fruit punch."

She shook her head, bemused. "Everything's gone weird at this school."

"You don't know the half of it," he agreed. "I'm here to talk about Kurt. Sylvester's got no right to tell you guys what you can and can't eat. I know today's the last day, but she's going to do it again. He wants to be in the spotlight way too fucking much to give it up, but he can't survive on twigs and rocks and Splenda. You've got to talk to him."

Now she looked more suspicious than Quinn. "Excuse me for saying it, because I agree with everything you just said, but since when do you care what Kurt does?"

Puck had known this question would come up eventually, in a context in which he couldn't avoid the answer, and he wasn't willing to lie. He just didn't expect it would happen first with Mercedes. But maybe it was fitting.

"You were in love with him, right?" he said.

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"Just that you might be able to understand why somebody might want to take care of him. Even if he didn't love them back."

Puck waited while she processed this, trying not to be impatient. Subtle had never really been his thing. Finally, she seemed to be getting it. She stared at him.

"You want me to watch out for Kurt? He's pretty tough, you know. He can take care of himself."

But that's not what he needs. Just because he can doesn't mean he should have to. "I think he's letting Coach Sylvester get to him. It would help for him to have somebody else be strong here for him. He gets kind of stuck, and the details don't make sense anymore. He loses his perspective."

He fixed her with his stare. "You think you could help him out with that?"

She smiled. He was a little caught off guard by it. "I think a lot of people could relate to what you're talking about, getting stuck and losing your perspective. Actually, me and some of the other Cheerios had an idea about how to bring it up. I'm not sure Sylvester's going to like it very much, but... it'd be worth it."
He settled down in the chair next to the exam table, kicking his legs up over the arm. "Tell me all about it."

Mercedes wasn't following her cue. Frantic, but trying not to show it, Kurt hissed at Santana, "What is she doing?"

Santana didn't say anything, and Brittany only shrugged. This couldn't be good. Kurt was nearly positive that Coach Sylvester would punish them as a duo. Considering her frequent comments about them getting a sitcom together, he was pretty sure she saw them as two parts to the same person.

Five minutes later Mercedes was at the ending notes of *Beautiful*, and Kurt was feeling like an asshole for spending the last week starving himself. The feeling was in part due to Puck, who, while on the opposite side of the big group of singers, was staring directly at him. As the rest of the students clapped, and Kurt could feel Sylvester's crazy-eyes burning a hole into him, he pushed past Mike and Santana to put an arm on Mercedes' shoulder.

"Thank you. I was wrong." It was hard to say, except for how it wasn't, because he was *so relieved* that he was wrong. He didn't have to starve himself, or feel fat and ugly. There was no way to make the conflicting feelings about being effeminate go away, but fat and ugly were huge weights off his shoulders.

And the hug - fuck, was the hug good. His dad wasn't much of a hugger, and Puck's only came after an orgasm, but Mercedes hugged because she felt like connecting with him. She hugged like there was no reason to ever let go. Kurt needed that, sometimes.

He felt pretty good the rest of the day. He still sat at the Cheerios table for lunch, but he had a sloppy joe on the plate in front of him, and so did Santana. God only knew where Brittany got the box of double stuff Oreos, but she was going through them, cracking each open and scraping off the white centre with her front teeth before putting the chocolate discs in a stack on a napkin. The wafers didn't last long, both Tiffany and Danielle were snatching them up as Brittany discarded them. Evidently swapping spit wasn't a concern between Cheerios. More than once Kurt looked up to wipe his face, only to see Puck staring at him. He was sitting between Matt and that redhead football player that everyone just called Ginge, but he didn't seem to care if anyone followed his gaze and realised who exactly he was looking at. It was as much of a declaration of love as Kurt had ever gotten from anybody.

Kurt went home after school, instead of going to the garage. He didn't particularly want to see his dad until he had a little more time to suppress his feelings about being the wrong kind of son. Unfortunately that meant he was the only one around to answer the phone. Kurt braced for a 'you're a fag' remark, but got Carole saying hello. Almost worse, really.

"I think Burt, uh, your dad's cell phone is dead, and I can't find the phone book to look up the shop number. Could you-"

Kurt rattled off the number, then repeated it when she asked for the last four numbers again. She thanked him and hung up. Kurt sat in the kitchen, thinking. She sounded entirely too happy for a woman that was about to break up with her boyfriend. Finn had seemed totally on board when they'd talked in the hall about breaking their parents up. Maybe he just hadn't had a chance to make his move yet? Because Kurt was sure whatever Finn did, it would be showy and pointed. Finn was no less of a drama queen than he was, he just went about it differently. Kurt was making his point through avoidance, Finn's was more likely to be something like moving his dad's chair to the cemetery.
His dad came home and took the closed basement door for what it was worth. Kurt could hear him moving around, but at no point did he try to come down. Even his goodbye was at the top landing, shouted through the stairs. "I'm going to the Hudsons'. You can make whatever you want for dinner."

Kurt sat on the edge of his bed for about forty five seconds after he heard the door slam. Then he was scrambling for his shoes and running for his car. Whatever was going to happen, he had to see it. He had engineered the entire relationship, and every theatre lover knew you don't walk out before the third act.

Eventually, just before Kurt tired of standing against cold glass, they walked into the living room together. After pausing a moment in front of the TV, Finn moved his dad's ashes off his dad's chair, and Dad sat down. Right in front of his eyes his dad was literally stepping into the spot where Mr Hudson should have been. It was Kurt's worst fear come true. The channel was set to basketball and the corner of the screen said 4th DBD 77 NCTH 66 2:30, and Kurt had no idea what it meant, but Dad and Finn were talking animatedly, full of expressions and hand gestures. It was so, so obvious that they fit. They fit in a way that Kurt never could, in the 'guy stuff' way that Kurt would never in a million years be able to do naturally.

In a fit of emotional delirium he pulled out his phone from his jacket pocket and dialed the number of his most recent texts. As soon as he answered, Kurt demanded, "Why am I always crying?"

"Kurt?"

"Just another reason to be an honorary girl, right? Boys don't cry, right?"

"Kurt, what hap-"

"I fucking hate this," he tried, but his voice snapped the word hate in half with a sob. He cried into the phone for nearly a full minute, Puck asking again and again what was wrong. Kurt couldn't answer, he couldn't even reply to a simple question because he was crying exactly like the person Finn Hudson would never be. Finally, sick of it, Kurt hung up.

"No bears in the Hudson backyard," he managed, voice shuddering around the end of the sentence.

"You're in the - what are you doing over there?" He heard Puck sigh. "Do you want me to come get you?"
Kurt sniffled. He wasn't quite at the point of wiping his nose on his gorgeous plaid sleeve. That would involve a near-suicidal level of misery, and Kurt was merely wretched. "No, don't. If you do I'll have to leave my car here. My dad will see. I don't want him to know I was here."

"Your dad's at Finn's?"

"Why wouldn't he be? Finn's everything he ever wanted."

"Your dad loves-"

Kurt interrupted him. He really couldn't hear that right now, not when he knew how close to a lie it was. His eyes were still streaming, but he managed to keep his voice fairly even. "Once my vision clears I'll drive home. Don't come here. And don't come over. I don't want to talk or cry about this any more."

"Kurt-"

"Goodnight, Puck."

He slid his phone back into his pocket and took a few deep breaths. It wasn't safe to drive if he could barely see. He needed to calm down. He'd go home and work on his skin care regime. He'd be the best honorary girl in Ohio, and maybe Rachel's two gay dads would want to adopt him.

His tears were almost dry on his face when he heard the odd whisper of the sliding door opening. There were only three things that could happen next, and Kurt wanted no part of any of them. Suddenly in a frenzy he began to bolt for his car. He got as far as the gate when the voice called out.

"Kurt?"

It was Finn, the slightly lesser of three evils. Still, if his dad overheard him..."Shut up!"

"I closed the door. It's pretty soundproof." Kurt was frozen and Finn was getting closer. "Why are you here?"

"Why are you outside?" he countered.

"Puck sent me a text that said *Kurt's outside, buttmunch*. I thought he was being weird, but I guess not." He hesitated. "You probably don't want me to get your dad, huh?"

Kurt tried his best for a jaunty handwave. "No reason to interrupt him watching the game."

"You could come in and watch it with us?"

"No. That won't be happening."

"But, if I taught you what was happening you wouldn't feel so, uh, whatever about this."

"Invisible?"

"Yeah. You said that in the hall too. And I said I was sorry, but I think I-"

"No, you didn't actually." Kurt shook his head and tried to turn down the level of morose bitch. It wasn't Finn's fault, after all. "But you don't have to. Just. Just have fun bonding with my dad, okay? I'll try to do the same with your mom."
It wouldn't work, of course. Carole was the same sort of person his dad and Finn were. But it would get Finn's pitying look off of him, and at that point being stoically alone was the best Kurt could hope for.

"That song Mercedes sang at the pep assembly." Finn furrowed his brow. "You know she wasn't just talking about herself, right? Being beautiful, no matter what other people say. That's what you're best at, Kurt."

Finn wasn't standing there calling him beautiful. Not looking like that, in his hideous black sweatshirt with the frayed sleeves and the stain on the hem, and his perfect soft brown eyes watching him. Kurt just wanted to curl up in a ball and hide.

"I'm glad you think so," he said.

"Yeah, and your dad does, too. He doesn't need you to be something you're not."

"The whole world needs me to be something I'm not, every day. I'm sorry, but whatever kind of beautiful I might be, the world isn't going to start appreciating it any time soon. Not in Lima, Ohio, anyway."

"Some of it might," Finn said. He stuck his hands in his pockets. "I know one guy who does."

"Yeah. I could totally see it on his face. He told me, okay? And it's - cool. It's fine."

*Puck. He's talking about Puck.* It was almost embarrassing to feel that level of disappointment about one stupid misunderstanding, but Kurt wasn't at all sure he was going to keep from crying now. "Thanks," was all he said before heading back to the Navigator.

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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZIeihLgjTA

*Skies like angels turn to rust*
*We hide inside our pickup trucks*
*Thoughts heavy like aeroplanes*
*Come crashing down and burst in flames*
*Memories, I'd cash them in for peace of mind and some discipline*

*No turning back*
*I'm starting to mend*
*A fortunate man I've always been*
*I tear at my heart*
*If I don't concede I'm only as good as you allow me to be*

*Friends will come and friends will go*
*You, my friend, own my soul*
*Raindrops plummet from the sky*
*Inside my lungs a battle cry*

- Our Lady Peace, "Allowance"
I didn’t want it to mean that much to me

Chapter Notes

Okay, I feel a little guilty for not tagging for this before, but we wanted it to evolve naturally, so... don't freak out. And, really, you should know to expect complicated from each of us individually, much less the two of us together. Set during 1x17 Bad Reputation. Warnings for paddling, sexual interaction and intense feelings.

-amy and gala

After the complete shit show that was yesterday, Puck was relieved to see a text from Kurt in the middle of making Sarah French toast. He hadn't texted anything to anyone last night beyond informing Finn that he had a problem to fix. Kurt had sounded serious about not wanting to talk, and the last thing Puck wanted was to make it worse. If he was suddenly anti-crying, and talking about his dad made him cry, things would definitely be worse.

*You should come over,* said the text.

Fuck. Yes. That was exactly what he wanted to see. He'd just have to make this work. He dumped three more slices on Sarah's plate. That kid could *eat.*

"Sarah, is there anyone you wanna play with today?"

Sarah raised her eyebrows, but with the syrup smear across her chin it was hard to pull off irony. "Noah, it's like ten in the morning. All my friends are totally sleeping."

Puck didn't know how kids could live in a world without Saturday morning cartoons. Ten years ago he would have been up at six AM, eating cereal dry from the box, sitting five inches away from the television screen.

"Do you think any of them would be up? It's really really important that I see a friend of mine."

"I could go with you?"

As much as Puck wanted Kurt to meet his sister, during a mental breakdown was not the appropriate time. "Sare, I don't think that's gonna work."

She thought about it. "Um. Jasmine's got twin little brothers in preschool. She's always tired at school because they don't sleep past dawn. I bet they've been up forever. And she has a Wii U."

While Sarah ran down the street to check with Jasmine's parents, he replied to Kurt. *I'm supposed to be grounded, but I think I can get away for a while.*
Come right to the basement, and park around the corner. My dad's at the garage, but he's coming home after lunch.

That gave them a couple hours before Kurt risked being discovered by his dad. Not that that would be the end of the world, Puck was a little sick of all this skulking and avoiding, but he figured Kurt could decide how to spill the beans to his own dad. In the meantime, Puck would set Sarah up at the neighbors', lock the house, hope his Ma didn't come home early, and head over there to sort out whatever Kurt would let him sort out.

But what he found in Kurt's room wasn't anything like what he'd expected. Kurt answered the door by grabbing his hand and towing him into the room.

"Our order came in. Well, mine, I suppose. I paid for it all. But you're the only one I have to enjoy it with, so it's ours, really."

Puck decided that he wasn't going take that the way it sounded. He wasn't Kurt's last resort. Kurt liked the things they did; Puck was sure of it.

"I wanted to wait until you were here to open it. Normally I wouldn't. I wait for no man when a new set of boots comes in from Zappos. But the website I ordered from had a free gift after a certain amount spent. I thought you might like the surprise."

The box was mostly filled with packing peanuts and print catalogs displaying eighty-seven thousand dildoes in all shades of the rainbow, but underneath there were the cuffs. Puck noticed Kurt didn't look at him as he set them aside on his pillow. They'd get back to them in a minute. Puck was more interested in the other things in the box.

"What's this?" He pulled out a folded leather thing with laces up one side. "Did they send you the wrong size or something? Looks kind of small."

Kurt seized it from his hands, looking a little irritated. "It's a corset. A bondage corset, and it's not for you."

"Yeah? Who's it for, then?" He didn't really mean to sound so obnoxious about it, but Kurt rolled his eyes like that, and he just reached out and took the stupid scrap of leather back from him. "You think you're going to wear it to school or something?"

"If you don't want to try it out with me, I might," Kurt snapped back.

"Did I say I didn't?" He set the corset-thing aside beside the leather cuffs. Things were already looking a lot better than they had yesterday, and he didn't want to argue for no fucking reason.

The last thing in the box was instantly overwhelming. It was a bright red paddle, leather on one side, fur on the other. Puck's thumb made nervous circles on the fur. "Did you-" Shit, couldn't Kurt have asked him before ordering something so hardcore?

"No. I ordered bondage gear. I guess that's my free gift." Kurt smirks. "More applicable than a G-spot vibrator, right?"

"Uh. Maybe? I dunno if I can use this."

"I'm sure there are tutorials."

"I don't mean like capable. I mean like it looks like a fucking red cricket bat, and I don't know if I can hit you with a fucking cricket bat like we're back in ninth grade and the gym teacher's forcing
European sports down our throats when everyone just wants to play football."

"When I look at that I don't see sports, Puck."

Puck scowled. "That's nice. You're not the former abusive jock."

"You do remember all of this started because you got some abusive jocks to give you the handcuff key?" "I said former. But I can't risk it. I've got crazy guns; what if I hit too hard?" Because there was one time he was wrestling for the remote with Sarah and she got an elbow in the ribs and started crying. It was the worst moment of his life, bar none. Not his shitty stupid dad walking out, not finding out Quinn was pregnant. Accidentally hurting someone he loved. And even if he never, ever said it to Kurt, it was still pretty true.

Kurt sighed. "I'd say tutorials again, but I know you'll just roll your eyes. And I'd say something else, but I know you'll freak out even more, so. I guess I'll put it up on Ebay or something."

Puck frowned. For one thing, he didn't know it was even legal to sell sex toys on Ebay. Wouldn't that be against sanitation rules? Not that a paddle would have any fluids, but still. For another, Kurt assuming he'd freak out was either insulting, or endearing. He wasn't the freak out guy, Ms Pilsbury's assumptions aside. But it was nice that Kurt thought he knew enough about him to predict his reactions.

"Tell me."

Kurt avoided his eyes. "So before Glee started and a handful of the most evil people in school had changes of heart, you and Finn and Matt and Mike would dumpster me."

Puck was pretty sure Mike had never done anything except stand around and watch, but maybe that still counted. "Yeah. Still sorry, dude."

"Not my point. My point is when you or one of the other football players was about to do it, Finn would stop you and make sure I took off my jacket, and put my bag down. Essentially he spotted you all, to make sure you weren't too rough."

It didn't take long to put together Kurt's reminiscing with the situation at hand. "So you want Finn to -?" Fuck. Was there anything about this relationship that damn Hudson couldn't usurp, if he wanted to? Thank god for small miracles, like Finn thinking sex without being under a blanket with the lights off was mindblowingly kinky.

"It's not that I want Finn to. It's that you need someone to watch. And as far as I know, Finn's the only one that knows. And even if we told someone else, Tina doesn't exactly have the upper body strength to push you away if you do get too rough. Which you won't, I know you won't. But you don't know you won't, and you need the reassurance of someone bigger than you."

Kurt was making an awful lot of sense. But it was his pleading expression that Puck was watching. Kurt wanted this. He wasn't sure if it was that Kurt really wanted Finn to be watching, or if it was the prospect of being spanked with the red leather paddle that was getting him riled up, or even if Kurt knew himself which one it was. Whatever was happening, it was definitely something important.

"So you really think Finn is going to say yes, if I ask him to... what did you call it? Spot me?"

Kurt had the decency to at least blush. "I have no idea, Puck. He's your best friend, not mine. But
he seems like he would be willing to try, anyway? He's not afraid of screwing up."

No. Puck could imagine exactly what would happen. Finn would get all responsible and stiff and uncomfortable, but he'd show up. It would be a fucking disaster.

But maybe that's exactly what needs to happen. If Kurt could see how completely impossible things would be with Finn, maybe he would drop this stupid crush, and focus on things that were... not so impossible. Because Kurt, thinking that Finn would ever want anything like this with him, that was just going to hurt him in the end. Better to destroy that hope before it got unreasonable.

"I'll talk to him," he said. "Don't expect anything, but... I'll see what I can do."

Puck knew Finn, all right. He knew exactly what kind of cheap American beer to buy so that Finn would drink it with him without worrying too much about the alcohol content. He'd be far enough off guard that Puck's request wouldn't appear to come out of left field. After school on Monday wasn't an ideal time to try to get Finn a little drunk, but it was pretty much the only time he could manage, now that his Ma was watching him like a hawk. She wasn't going to let him leave the house in the evening for weeks. Puck could sneak out, and would, to see Kurt, but if he was going to bother risking worse punishment, he didn't want to waste it on Finn.

Finn's house was empty enough. But before he could even pop the top on two of those bad boys, he was already telling stories that made Puck pause and stare at him.

"Wait, Kurt stole what from Sylvester's locked file cabinet?"

Puck was pretty sure he was the only one at McKinley allowed to steal things from teachers' offices. He was also absolutely certain Kurt was risking a hell of a lot more than he was by pulling a stunt like that. Kurt was smart; he probably got As and did all his homework and would be actually getting into the colleges he applied for.

"Yeah, I know. But you should have seen this video." Finn smirked as he drained half his first beer. He let Finn ramble on about Sylvester's Physical fiasco for a while, supplying him with replacement cans as they became empty.

"So I meant to tell you thanks," Puck said eventually. "For when I told you about Kurt. You didn't freak out, and you totally could have."

"Of course, man." Finn put an arm around him; Puck put a triumphant tally mark on the Finn = a little cuddly when drunk side of the scoreboard. "I'm your bro; I'm here to watch your back."

Puck couldn't have invented a better opportunity. "Well, actually, this all started because Kurt wanted to try something kinky, and he couldn't do it safely without somebody to watch out for him. So I kind of stepped up."

Finn looked completely floored. "Wait, you're saying Kurt...? He wanted to do... what? Wait, never mind. I don't think I want to know."

Well, too bad, bro, because you're finding out anyway. Puck grinned, gesturing with his beer. "The handcuffs. When Rick and Lipoff strung him up on the fence at school, he realized he got off on that. I couldn't have him dislocating his arm, so I said I'd be there to catch him."

Finn was quiet for a minute while he drank. "And you said you'd do this why?"

"Because sex is awesome, and nobody should be freaked out just because something turns them on.
Because he was trying to figure this thing out alone and that sucks."

"Yeah." Finn was nodding slowly. "That's just... really cool. Nothing stops you from doing what
you think is right, man." He gave Puck a smile he wasn't quite sure what to do with. "I really
admire that about you."

He covered up his embarrassment with a snort and more beer. "Yeah, well, apparently it wasn't just
me being nice. It was totally what I wanted."

"But that's okay, see? Because you didn't know that when you went in. I mean, maybe you did on
some level, but that wasn't the main reason. You weren't trying to take advantage of Kurt." He
paused. "Uh, you weren't, were you?"

"No," Puck protested, all ready to be outraged, until he saw Finn's grin. He punched him on the
shoulder. "Fuck you, Hudson."

"Hey, that's the best friend's job. To watch your back and piss you off." Finn leaned forward,
elbows on his knees, contemplating his beer. Was that his second or his third? Puck had lost track.
"I haven't really been a very good best friend lately."

"Yeah." Puck wasn't going to argue this point, but what Finn said next made his throat close up.

"I miss that."

Puck wasn't going to spill his beer or cry, so he just nodded. He was starting to feel a little guilty
about this whole thing. Taking advantage of an unsuspecting Finn Hudson was one thing, but when
he was all earnest and wanting to help and shit, it was a different story. Then he remembered Kurt,
crying in Finn's backyard, and he strengthened his resolve.

"We kind of need a favor."

Kurt wasn't too embarrassed to be texting Puck from his car. At lunch, in the middle of the day.
When the back door opened and Puck stuck his head in, Kurt wasn't too embarrassed to haul him in
bodily, either.

"So seeing me dance Vanilla Ice with Mr. Schue gets you hot?" Puck said, obviously amused.

"Hey, I got up and danced too." He'd taken out the two middle seats and left them in the garage,
giving them a wide space on the floor of the Navigator to stretch out. Kurt made a mental note to
acquire a second blanket, squirming against the protrusions on the floor digging into his back.
Puck's hands on him made up for it, though.

The hands paused on his waist, and Puck narrowed his eyes. "You're fucking wearing it, aren't
you?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," he replied primly. "I have many layers. You're just
feeling several of them at once."

"You're not kidding." He drew Kurt's hands over his head anyway, leaning casually on his wrists to
hold them down. The fact that he could do that with almost no effort was almost shamefully hot.
Then he leaned in, his lips close to Kurt's ear. "Finn said yes."

"He - he did?" His voice came out in a squeak, but the flood of visuals was almost too intense to be
believed. "He wants to help?"
"Fucking Prince Valiant." Puck took a moment to unbutton Kurt's high collar and pull it down far enough to uncover some unmarked skin. He'd quickly become a fan of Kurt's versatile wardrobe that allowed him to leave bite and suck marks; Kurt just had to time them right so they had time to heal before his next Cheerios rehearsal. "We tell him when and where, and he'll be there."

Kurt was rapidly losing his ability to speak; they'd have to resolve this quickly. "Would it be - god - completely awful of me to suggest doing it at my house while my dad and his mom are on a date together?"

"Appropriately kinky, I think," Puck decided, and dug in with his teeth on Kurt's collarbone as he unzipped his pants. There wasn't a lot of talking once the pants came off, though Kurt made enough noise for the both of them. He wondered what it said about him that the only time he used either curse words or references to deities was when Puck was getting him off.

The floor of his car shouldn't have been an appropriate place to feel vulnerable, but Puck somehow made that okay, too, climbing up beside him to hold him and wait for him to come down from his endorphin high.

"I wish I didn't care that I'm not on the Glist," he admitted, "but I do."

Puck snorted, cradling him closer, and kissed his neck. "You'd be on your own fucking list. Whoever wrote that just doesn't appreciate what a fine piece of ass you are."

Puck skipped math, like usual. Mrs Baxter was very routine, and the 'pop' quizzes were always Thursday. As long as he went that one day and pulled enough information about algebra out of his ass to pass, his attendance went by unnoticed.

This time, though, he didn't go to the nurse's office to have his customary nap. Instead he walked the six blocks to the 7/11. It was nice enough out, and if Puck wasn't going to sleep for an hour he might as well take the time to smell fresh air. The cashier gave his mohawk a second look, but since Puck had never actually shoplifted here, he didn't feel any guilt crawling over him. He just gave the guy a bit of a smirk, then headed for the area he knew held what he needed. Among all the other stupidly high priced items - two dollars for a bottle of soda? Fuck off - was a rack of cards. They were highly pawed over. No doubt the store had seen some feverish shopping, with some guy getting ice cream from the freezer, lottery cards from the counter and cramming them in the first card that said Happy Birthday.

Puck didn't need his to say anything specific. Shit, he didn't even know when Kurt's birthday was. Which, at some point he should probably ask Kurt. Or maybe Finn or Mercedes, so Kurt didn't know that he was a dick that didn't know anything about his friends. But the point right now was to find a generic as fuck card and buy it, regardless of the hike in price.

Soon enough he was walking into the library. It was a first for him. Some people napped in the library, and there was one girl with obviously dyed red hair two tables away with her face buried in her textbook, but Puck knew the superiority of the nurse's office. Other people used it for a place to get away from people, but when Puck needed down time the Glee room was usually unlocked, and if Mr Schue was in there instead of in Spanish class he'd usually fuck off and give him some space. He was generally a good dude, or at least he was better than the other teachers in this shithole, and that had to count for something. And Puck sure as fuck wasn't about to study for anything.

Still, the library was Puck's best choice. He needed to write some shit down without anyone glancing over at him and catching a word or two. His next class was out, because in American history they sat alphabetically at long tables instead of desks, and Megan Peters was a nosy bitch.
If she saw a card she'd be side-eyeing him the whole damn class. Skipping another period to do it in the Glee room had potential, except he was hardly the only singer that skipped class. The last thing Puck needed was Santana snatching the card up before he could punch her in the arm and get her to drop it.

Puck didn't have a hard copy of the Glist. He'd moved it off Rachel's locker, yeah, but he hadn't stood there and written it all down. There'd been no reason to. He didn't really care what other people thought about everyone's sex lives. Sex was good and everyone should have it, and what did anything matter beyond that? Besides, whatever idiot wrote it and didn't put him at the top was crazy and obviously full of bad opinions. It was, however, going to be the basis of his card, and because Puck needed accuracy he had to go on Ben Israel's stupid blog and find the post about it.

Kurt, you'll always be the top of my Glist

1) You don't ask me if you're fat before we have sex. Better than Quinn.
2) After sex you just want to chill, you don't want expensive food. Better than Santana.
3) I'm third. I definitely like having sex with you better than having sex with myself.
4) Your kinks match mine. Ex: bondage, not licking feet and armpits. Better than Brittany.
5) You wouldn't rather fuck a clone of yourself than someone else. Better than Jesse.
6) You know sex is more than missionary with the lights off. Better than Finn.
7) You're not afraid to say what you love without being prompted. Better than Mike.
8) You talk dirty when you're turned on. Better than Matt.
9) You'd ask before you pulled on my goddamn hair. Better than Rachel.

Also, for the record? Also wanna bang you more than Artie or Mercedes or Tina.

He didn't sign his name. In the off chance that Kurt dropped the card, leaving things unnamed would result in about ten tons less embarrassment. If Puck was to come out - which honestly wasn't that unlikely the way things were going, and the way he felt about the way things were going - it was going to be completely his own choice, not because Azimo thought it was funny to steal Kurt's backpack and scatter the contents.

Puck tucked the card into the light yellow envelope and headed for Kurt's locker. It would easily fit through the slot, and that way Kurt could find it himself after last period. He wouldn't have to be stealthy about getting it into Kurt's bag without anyone noticing.

It actually did make Kurt feel a lot better to discover Quinn had written the Glist. Of course he wasn't going to rank on a hotness list written by a girl, especially not one like Quinn.

Puck's comment in the Navigator had helped, too. Whatever else was going on between him and Puck, he thought he could be pretty certain by now that Puck did find him attractive, at least when it came to their shared kinks. It was good for his ego, even if if wasn't something he could share with anyone else.

Unfortunately, he was also pretty certain his dad wasn't going to agree that sexual compatibility should be top of the list when it came to reasons to date somebody. Not that he and Puck were dating, but he wasn't going to win any points by explaining to his dad what they were doing. He just didn't think he could continue hiding Puck's presence in his life much longer. He wondered if Puck would be offended by pretending to be his boyfriend in front of his dad.

I'm going to tell him, he texted Puck on the way to the garage. You can be my beard.

Dude. I am not down with facial hair. Talk about chafing.
He didn't have to hide his eye-roll, with no one there to see him. *A beard is a disguise. My pretend boyfriend. Unless you have a preference for year-long science project partner, though that might be more believable.*

Kurt didn't get another text from Puck until he was pulling up in the parking spot beside his dad's truck. *So this would just be in front of your dad? The boyfriend thing?*

That was confusing. *Unless you suddenly had a desire to come out at school?*

*It's crossed my mind. I think I need a little more time to get used to this whole liking dick thing, but maybe.*

Kurt sat there staring at his phone for another minute, wondering if Puck would ever stop saying things that made it hard to breathe. While he was recovering, another text came through: *Good luck with your dad. Me and Finn will be over at seven. Don't bother with the corset thing, I've got plans.*

*Plans* sounded ominous and erotic at the same time, but he thought he might be able to manage to put them out of his mind while he dealt with his dad. *Understood,* he replied. *See you soon.*

Kurt found his dad hunting for something in the "filing system" he never used. Without asking, Kurt edged between Burt and the desk. He'd seen a stack of unfiled receipts there earlier that week. When he handed them to his dad, he sighed in relief.

"God, I thought they might have gone out with the recycling this morning. You're a lifesaver." He rifled through them, glancing at Kurt. "I hardly ever see you around here anymore, now that you're on the Cheerios."

*And now that I have this undefined sexual relationship with Noah Puckerman.* Kurt pulled up a stool next to the desk. "Well, it's not just the Cheerios."

"Okay."

"So, hypothetically, what if there was this boy..."

His dad shook his head. *Not hypothetical, Kurt. You told me there was a boy. But, okay, what about him?*

Kurt kept his gaze on the desk. His blush would tell all, even if he didn't manage to do it with words. *What if there was a boy who wanted to... who liked me, but who wasn't out at school? Would you be okay with us dating, even if he wasn't going to tell anybody?"

"What - wait, you're dating now? Since when? You went on a date?" His dad's eyebrows had vanished under his ball cap. He peered at Kurt.

"It's an expression, Dad."

"Well... how do you know he likes you?"

_Because this morning, he shoved his tongue in my ear and described all the ways he wanted to make me scream._ Kurt played with the pencil sharpener, trying to think of anything he could share. "He's been really sweet. When I was - when I cried about something, he hugged me until I felt better. Oh, and he got really angry at Coach Sylvester when she told me I needed to lose ten pounds."

His dad's face shifted to outrage. "What the hell? Kurt, you don't need to lose weight."
"I'm not trying," he assured his dad. "The point is, he's closeted at school. At least for now." Kurt wasn't sure how seriously to take Puck's comment to him about that, or even if it mattered, if they weren't really boyfriends anyway. Maybe if Puck did come out, he would just go looking for another guy to not-date.

"Yeah, I think that would be kind of hard on you. I mean, you being... not closeted." His dad made an all-encompassing gesture, looking uncomfortable.

"I don't ever plan to go back in, no. But it's not like I have a queue of boys lined up to take me out, either."

Burt frowned. "You're saying you'd settle for this boy because he's willing to make you his secret?"

"Um... I think he's the one who's settling. He's on the football team. And in Glee."

"Holy - Kurt." His dad grabbed his arm. "You're not talking about Finn?"

"Of course not," he scoffed, feeling his stomach constrict. "It's... no. Not Finn. It's... um. Puck. Noah Puckerman."

He watched his dad's face relax. "Finn's friend? Wasn't he one of those guys that was tossing you into dumpsters at the beginning of the year?"

"So was Finn. They got over it. Puck isn't going to do that again."

"Mmmm. So he was just dealing with his own internalized homophobia all along?"

Kurt was startled into a laugh. "Ten points for knowing the terminology, Dad. Did you read that web site I gave you?"

"See, I can be taught." His dad was grinning. "So when do I get to meet this guy? Can I threaten him with my fake rifle collection?"

"He's not going to hurt me," Kurt insisted. He realized he was absolutely sure about this. "He's been watching out for me. He makes me feel... safe."

Burt's smile slipped a little. "You like this guy? How serious is it?"

He had no idea how to answer either of those questions, so he just shrugged. Luckily, his dad had enough common sense not to dig further or tease him.

"Well, Kurt, I can't say I'm crazy about the idea of another guy lying on your behalf." He squeezed Kurt's shoulder. "But if he can answer a few questions, I'd give him permission to... what? Take you out? You want to have him over for dinner?"

Kurt hugged his dad, feeling relieved, even at the prospect of sitting through dinner with Puck and his father staring at each other. "I'll ask him. Thanks, Dad. What time do you think you'll be home tonight?"

When he got home, he did fifteen minutes of inexplicable crazy nervous cleaning before settling down to his homework. Naturally. I could never get cuffed and spanked in front of my longest-running crush if my math wasn't done and the toilet wasn't spotless. But other than cringing a little at the idea of being naked in front of Finn, Kurt found himself feeling oddly calm about the whole thing. He chalked it up to Puck's confidence. He'd said he would take care of it, and he had. Puck might not be a real boyfriend, but he was remarkably reliable.
When the knock came at 7:05pm, Kurt met them at the door. Puck raised an eyebrow. "How'd it go? You know, with your dad?"

"He wants to meet you. Have you over for dinner, or something. But I think it's going to be okay. I'm guessing we won't get away with... um. Certain things anymore." He hesitated, glancing at Finn with an awkward smile. He wasn't sure Puck would want Finn knowing he'd spent the night.
"Welcome. Thank you for... this. It's really -"

"No problem," Finn interrupted, closing the door behind himself. He looked at Puck. "This is your show. Just... let me know what you need."

Puck put a hand on Kurt's shoulder. It was nearly identical to the way his dad had touched him earlier that afternoon, but his reaction was dramatically different. Having Puck look at him like that, in front of Finn... He swallowed.

"Get your cuffs," he said. "The leather ones. And the paddle. Hang up your pants and meet me on the bed."

He nodded, moving quickly to comply. Finn's expression might have been comical in any other circumstance. He looked a little floored, his jaw hanging slack. When Puck spoke quietly to him, he moved to the dressing table and took a seat, but he didn't take his eyes off Kurt. It gave him a thrill to know whatever he did, it would be noticed. When he returned from hanging up his pants and knelt on the end of the bed, carrying the cuffs, he stayed mostly focused on Puck, stealing glances at Finn every few moments.

Puck began unbuttoning Kurt's shirt, watching his eyes. "How're you doing?"

He felt a surge of warmth in his chest. "Great," he whispered. "Hot."

"Yeah." Puck's hand came up, his fingers brushing through the hair on the nape of Kurt's neck. His head tilted a fraction, and the corner of his lips tipped up in a smile before he claimed Kurt's mouth in a hard kiss. Kurt heard Finn's quick intake of breath, and he moaned. Puck's hand fisted in his hair, jerking his head back. "Definitely hot."

He finished the buttons on Kurt's shirt, sliding it off his shoulders, and draped it over the edge of the desk chair before picking up the leather cuffs. Kurt hadn't tried the cuffs on himself, but he'd hooked them together using the carabiners. Puck unhooked them now, unbuckling the leather strap on one of them and holding it open. "Give me your wrist."

The weight of the cuff wasn't much, but the heavy carabiner added to it. Kurt had considered getting a pair lined with something soft, but in the end he decided the sensation of friction was part of the turn-on. He shook his wrists when Puck had buckled both wrists in, hearing the jingle of the metal, feeling the security of the leather, and smiled. Finn let out a soft sigh.

"These are nice." Puck's hand traced the edge of Kurt's arm, all the way up to his shoulder, and rested on his chest briefly before coming up to grip his neck. Kurt tensed, making a surprised exclamation, and Puck shushed him, his hand tightening. "Maybe you need a collar, too."

Yes, he wanted to say fervently, yes, one of those, please, but there were no words on his tongue. Puck smiled again, looking satisfied.

"Wait there," he said. He took something out of his bag and began moving pillows from the bed to the chair, adjusting the mattress. Kurt remained where he was, listening to his own rapid heartbeat, his accelerated breathing, feeling the weight of the cuffs. The red paddle was on the floor in front
of him. Finn - Finn was looking at Kurt, but he seemed hyper-aware of the paddle, shifting restlessly on the small stool. Kurt tried to avoid catching his eye, not feeling capable of speech at the moment. He didn't want to be distracted.

When Puck returned, he took Kurt by the arm, turning him around so he was on his hands and knees, facing away from Finn. "That's good," said Puck. "I'm going to take your wrists and cuff them like this, on each corner, and pull the rope taut, so you're flat. You want a pillow under your chest?"

"N-no," he managed. He felt the tug on each wrist, and the stretch as he was spread flat. He tried to lie down, but Puck stopped him.

"Your ass, in the air, like that." A hand stroked him down his spine, inspiring shivers, coming to rest on the small of his back. "You think you can stay like that for a while?"

When Kurt didn't answer, Puck brought his hand down between his thighs, spreading them a little, positioning him just the way he wanted him. He was excruciatingly conscious of his cock, heavy and hard, suspended in the air between his legs. Puck's hand came down once, landing on his left cheek with a loud smack. It wasn't particularly painful, but Kurt jumped from the impact. He heard himself make a desperate noise.

"You think you can stay like that for a while?" Puck repeated, still completely calm.

"Yes, yes," he promised, "please, I can do that."

"God," muttered Finn. Puck turned toward him.

"Everything all right?"

Finn cleared his throat. He sounded perplexed. "I thought... you said you wanted me to watch, to be sure you didn't... hurt him? But - um. Those are bruises, aren't they?"

Kurt resisted the urge to twist around to get a look at his own ass; he had a pretty good idea of the color the marks had turned by now. Puck chuckled.

"Yeah, but those are old. That was just my hand. I'm not sure what the paddle's going to do. I mean, I tried it out on myself first, but the angle's all wrong."

Kurt went a little grey around the edges at the overlapping images of Puck, using the paddle, on his own bare ass. There wasn't anything subtle about the implement. It certainly wasn't something he'd have selected for himself if he'd gone looking for a tool like that. But watching Puck lift it in his hand, hefting the weight of it, turning it so the fur side was down, then bringing it out of his line of vision - it was definitely affecting him in very specific ways. When he felt the brush of the fur on the skin of his inner thigh, he cried out.

"Pretty sure nobody's upstairs," Puck observed. "You go ahead and make all the noise you want. But I wouldn't make any plans to come any time soon."

_I wouldn't dream of it_, he wanted to promise, but the suggestion felt a little hollow, considering just how hard he already was. The fur of the paddle, caressing the small of his back, was definitely not helping. When Puck turned it over and rested the leather side against his ass, he tried his best not to thrust back against the spare pressure. He would have welcomed a hand gripping him, the press of fingers, a convenient thigh, but all he could do was grind against the air. _Anything. Please._

"Okay, babe," he said, his voice pleasant. "You get to tell me to stop any time. If you're freaking
out, or it's too hard, anything. But I'm not gonna start again if you tell me to stop, got it?"

When he didn't say anything, Kurt felt the paddle being lifted away. He flinched before he realized Puck was only coming to kneel beside him on the side of the bed. He put his face right up against Kurt's - and he was kissing him, not hard, but thoroughly, without any hurry at all. When the kiss finally ended, Puck sat back, his own cheeks somewhat flushed. Kurt could see Finn behind them, still sitting on the bench, his eyes still riveted to Kurt's ass.

"You think you can answer me now?" Puck asked.

It took Kurt a moment to figure out what Puck was asking, but he let his muddled brain sort through the instructions. "You won't keep going if I ask you to stop."

"Yeah. I don't have time for stupid safe words. You just say stop, or no, or fuck that hurts, and I'm gonna listen."

Kurt wasn't sure there was any way he was going to want to do anything but beg Puck for more, but he nodded. Puck nodded back, kissing him once more before returning to pick up the paddle again and rest it on his skin. This time, when he lifted it, it came back down almost immediately, landing with a loud thwack. He jumped, as much from surprise as anything else.

"Puck," Finn said urgently.

"Give me a minute here." The paddle came down several times, followed each time by a sharp sting. In the wake of the fourth swat came the burn, starting light and building in intensity. Kurt hissed.

"Dude," Finn said again. Now he sounded angry. He stood and came over to stand beside Puck. "You're hurting him."

"Yeah, I don't think so. Go on, ask him."

Finn knelt on the floor beside Kurt's face, looking monumentally worried. "Hey," he said softly. His hand on Kurt's bare shoulder was warm. "Are you - is this okay?"

Finn's eyes widened slightly, and he appeared to want to say more, but he stopped, nodding back. He looked up at Puck. "Is it okay if I stay here?"

"Works for me," said Puck mildly. "We're moving on."

Finn looked back at Kurt, giving him an encouraging smile. "I'm just going to -" He took one hand and laced his fingers through Kurt's, giving his hand a squeeze. Kurt smiled back. He was glad for his temporary mute status, because he was absolutely sure he would have said I love you, if he'd been able to talk.

The impact after that was both easier to handle and more intense, because Kurt could see the effect the paddle was having on Finn. He wasn't wincing, but each blow made him a little more tense, his shoulders bracing, the muscles in his neck taut. Finn's hand, however, stayed firm and gentle on Kurt's. When he experienced sensation so intense he wasn't sure if he could go on, Kurt kept his mind on that hand, and took another deep breath, and set his attention on not coming.

"God, babe," said Puck, sounding a little awed. "You're sure that's not too much?"
Kurt shook his head, as well as he could manage, and Finn relayed, "I - I think he likes it."

"You think?" Kurt felt Puck's hand ghost across the sensitive flesh of his ass, and he made one convulsive twitch back. "Finn, this next part's probably not something you want to stick around for."

Finn looked first at Puck, realization dawning about what he meant, and then back to Kurt. He was clearly torn. Finally, his face set in resolve, and he adjusted his hand to clasp Kurt's. "I'm going to stay."

Kurt heard the sound of Puck's belt, the shifting sound of denim hitting the floor, and gasped at the pressure of Puck's legs against his, kneeling behind him on the bed. One arm came to wrap around him, holding him up. The sensation of Puck's erection against his bruised behind was almost more than he could handle. He moaned again, feeling Finn's hand clench convulsively. Finn leaned in closer, close enough so Kurt could feel the heat of his breath against his skin as he watched him anxiously.

"That's okay?" he asked. Kurt nodded vigorously, and watched Finn's eyes close briefly. He swallowed several times before opening them again.

Kurt guessed it would be an intense scene to witness. He was concerned about Finn, but the remainder of his rational thought flew out the window as Puck's hand encircled his cock and squeezed. The noise he made sounded something like ohhhh and something like please, and he watched Finn rise suddenly to his knees, like he might bolt.

"You did so well, babe," said Puck, leaning over his back, grinding against his too-sensitive skin as he stroked him slowly. "You think you might want to come first?"

Kurt found his eyes going to Finn's, which were tense and wild. He recognized the fear for what it was, and he licked dry lips, tugging on Finn's hand.

"It's okay," he whispered. "You can, if you want to."

Finn blinked, and Kurt hoped he could figure out what he meant, because he was pretty sure he didn't have the wherewithal to say You get to come too, and it doesn't have to mean anything: it can just be a physiological response, okay? But then Finn slowly lowered himself back to the floor, and gave Kurt the tiniest of nods.

Kurt closed his eyes just for a moment, finally giving into the sensations he'd been resisting, thrusting first into Puck's waiting hand, then back to grind his throbbing ass against Puck's hard cock. Puck let out a growl and grasped Kurt's hip in one hand.

"Next time," he said, and it sounded like a promise. "Next time, babe, I'm gonna screw you into the mattress."

"Oh," said Finn, and clutched at Kurt's hand, sounding panicked, "oh, fuck."

Kurt thought being six inches from Finn's face as he came, grinding helplessly against the heel of his hand, was about the hottest thing he'd ever seen, but he still managed to beg, "Please -"

"Go on," Puck said gently, rocking against him. "Come for me."

Kurt let his knees buckle, and he thrust twice more into Puck's hand before coating the bedspread and collapsing. He was only vaguely aware of Puck unhooking the cuffs before coming to lie beside him, propped on one elbow, stroking his hair and whispering encouragement. Kurt shifted,
limbs trembling with adrenaline, to huddle against him.

"Hudson, hand me the quilt on the back of the chair, there."

Finn looked like he might not respond for a minute. He was still holding Kurt's hand, his gaze on
the floor, shoulders heaving.

"Finn." Puck spoke sharply, and Finn's head snapped up to look at him. "The quilt. He's gonna get
cold."

"Um - yeah. Hang on." Finn rose slowly to his feet and let go of Kurt's hand, which was a relief for
his aching fingers. But as soon as Finn returned with the quilt, he spread it over Kurt's prone form,
and immediately took his hand again. Kurt clutched it gratefully. He felt Puck's lips brush against
his neck, and sighed.

"Thank you," he said to Finn.

Finn's gaze shifted away, and he stood, stepping back from the bed. "I... think I'm gonna go." He
made some useless gesture toward the door. "If you're... yeah."

Kurt listened to his footfalls as they moved toward the door, and the quiet sound of the hinges and
the click of the latch. He rolled into Puck, his face pressed against his chest.

"You didn't come."

The evidence of this was hard to ignore, but Puck didn't seem to be in any hurry to move from
where he was. "This wasn't about me. You were fucking amazing, babe."

Kurt smiled helplessly at the tone of his voice. Puck sounded positively proud. "I didn't do
anything. Literally."

"Yeah," he said fondly. "You really did."

"Mmmmm." Puck snagged a pillow from the chair, propping himself up against the wall and
making room for Kurt between his legs. "I'd be an idiot to say no."

Kurt felt the new details of the situation acutely as he took Puck into his mouth: the cuffs tucked
against his chest; his aching bottom brushing the quilt. He wished Finn had stayed to hold his hand
while he did this, too, and he couldn't help wondering if he was okay. In the moment, though, this
was his focus, and when Puck's hands came down to grip his head at the end, Kurt felt nothing but
grateful.

He clambered onto Puck to lie against his chest, appreciating the sensation of the rise and fall of
his body as he breathed.

"It's after nine," said Puck, the hand on Kurt's head gentle now. "When's your dad coming home?"

"We have another hour." Kurt wrapped his arms more securely around Puck's torso, feeling his
sigh. "You don't need to go yet. Unless you -"

"No. Not going anywhere."
Finn had half expected Puck to not bring it up again. There was a difference between asking for a weird sexual favour when you were drunk, and actually repeating it while sober. But Finn had said yes when he was tipsy, because friends help friends, and when Puck had texted him to meet him outside the Hummel house at five to seven Finn had showed up, because friends don’t let friends potentially beat up other friends-slash-possible-future-step-brothers.

On the lawn in front of Kurt's house, Puck had given him this speech. Finn couldn't have repeated it again, not even at gunpoint. His brain was overflowing with so many things, mere dialogue didn't stand a chance of sticking. But basically it had boiled down to 'if anything you see freaks you out, leave, but don't tell Kurt it's gross or weird, or I will put my boot up your ass in a completely unsexy way.' He'd been fooled by the normalcy of Puck threatening him, and by the high pitched lilt in Kurt's voice when he said welcome. Maybe even by the loving hand on Kurt's shoulder, once they were in the basement. Finn wasn't used to seeing it happening to a guy, but as Puck's wingman he knew how Puck acted when he actually cared about the person he was touching.

After that, though, things had started to get crazy. Puck had told Kurt to get cuffs, and he'd said the leather ones, like they had twenty pairs and Kurt wouldn't have known which otherwise. Kurt had smiled when Puck put them on. Kurt had smiled beautifully, and Finn hadn't understood, still didn't understand how someone so pretty could be so interested in violence. Violence meant pain and bruises, and he knew Kurt knew that, because there were already bruises on his ass when he turned so that Finn caught a glimpse. Finn understood consensual violence; he was a football player. He knew how it could make a person feel alive. He just didn't get how it could make a person get a boner.

Puck had picked up the paddle, and Finn had been relieved when the two of them had talked about saying no, because he knew, he just knew that Kurt would have to say no. This wasn't football, this wasn't just one more tackle after Tanaka told them to stop practising. This was serious relationship shit - and when Puck meant it, he was actually really good at that shit. He was sure Puck would follow his promise and stop when Kurt told him to.

Except then Kurt hadn't. Puck had hit him the first time and Kurt had flinched, but hadn't told him to stop, and all Finn could think of was Monro doing wind sprints until he passed out because he was scared to tell Tanaka he needed a water break. And that's what Finn was there for, to stop things if Puck got too into it. So he'd said his warning, and Puck hadn't stopped, he'd hit Kurt three more time, and that was where Finn had stood up and laid down the goddamn line. Enough was enough.

But not according to Kurt. Kurt said *please*, please meaning *more-don't-stop-oh-god*. Finn was willing to admit there were things out there that Puck got that he didn't So Finn had asked him for permission before staying kneeling instead of just doing it. Puck had kept on hitting Kurt, and Kurt's thin fingers had tangled into his, and Finn hadn't been able to let go. There'd been this look on Kurt's face, and the same expression but somehow opposite on Puck's the few times Finn had looked up at him. It was nothing Finn had ever seen, even in porn, and it was both so hot and such a fucking obvious example of what an outsider he was.

So when Puck had told him he should leave, because Kurt was about to get off, Finn's mind had screamed at him to open his damn mouth to shout no. He could try to tell himself all he wanted that he'd stayed because of Kurt. But the truth was, he'd wanted to watch, because this thing that Puck had set up for Kurt to enjoy was maybe the best thing he'd ever seen, and walking out before the finish would have been like a crime. And he wanted to watch because he wanted to be part of it. He suspected this was how Rachel felt all the time about musicals: that whatever was going on, she deserved to be in it, that it would be better with her.
Christ, if it hadn't gotten hotter then. Puck had rubbed his dick all over Kurt's bruised ass, and Finn had just wanted to kiss Kurt and tell him he was still beautiful, and kiss Puck and tell him he was fucking amazing, and how had Finn not known any of this before?

He'd almost creamed his jeans. The mailman was doing nothing to help him, fucking nothing, but shit, Finn wasn't Rachel, he wasn't that selfish. He'd been there because Puck wanted to make sure he didn't go too far, and Finn knew everything between them fine, the best kind of fine. But he wouldn't get to be in on something this fine unless it was for that reason. He'd started to get up and leave, and maybe pausing to come halfway up the staircase wasn't much better than doing it a foot from Kurt and Puck and their wonderful thing, but it was the best he thought he'd be able to do.

That's when Kurt had told him it was okay. So Finn got back down on the floor, told himself it was okay, that he wasn't ruining anything. Then Puck had said something about pounding him into the mattress, and for one brief second Finn had imagined the words were for him. He'd come, imagining Puck pushing his way inside him.

For a moment it had been okay; good, even. Then Kurt had begged Puck to let him come, and Finn had been reminded all over again that this wasn't about him. Getting Kurt his quilt when Puck asked had been the least he could do. Kurt had thanked him, when Finn was really nothing but a fucking asshole fantasizing about being fucked by his boyfriend. He hadn't even been able to say goodbye.

Now Finn stood in the laundry room wearing only his shirt, listening to the water run. It was a waste, probably, only his jeans and underwear were in the machine. Nothing near a full load. But he couldn't have those memories sitting on his bedroom floor, not even for a few days. Finn knew he was supposed to be the good guy. Even when he'd been a bully, he'd still known he was better than the rest of them. Those two articles of clothing were the only proof he wasn't. If he could just stop thinking about how powerful Puck was, how strong Kurt was, how perfect and sexy and important and -

God. How was he going to look either of them in the face tomorrow?

Kurt slept hard, hard enough to have a tough time breaking out of his dream in the morning. It was warm and comforting and made him smile, but when he finally woke enough to check his clock, he'd forgotten what it was about.

His ass was a mottled purple, with red stippling along the curve of one buttock. Kurt spent a long time looking at in the mirror, trying to feel anything other than awesome. He knew it would be a really stupid idea to take a picture of it, but he wished he could preserve the memory somehow. My first paddling. He was absolutely sure it wouldn't be his last.

Sitting on it at breakfast was a special experience. He found himself shifting to lean awkwardly on one thigh, rather than put his weight on top of the bruises. They were just bad enough to be annoying. Luckily his dad didn't seem to notice, talking about their plans that coming weekend.

"Family game night on Friday," said Burt, with a gleam in his eye. "You can teach Finn how we play Sorry."

Kurt wasn't the least bit sorry, but running into Finn in the hallway at school was a little weird. He could see Finn trying to avoid his eyes, and didn't do more than give him a big, bright smile to let him know that at least he thought everything was okay.

But then Kurt opened his locker, and he found the blank yellow envelope waiting for him. It gave
him pause, and he closed his locker before slipping the card in his bag and walking around the
corner to open it in relative privacy.

*Kurt, you'll always be the top of my Glist...*

He was laughing soundlessly, his hand crammed against his mouth and tears rolling down his
cheeks, by the time he reached the fourth line. He read it three times. Then he slid it back into the
envelope and found a secure place for it in a pocket of his messenger bag.

He managed to find Mercedes in the hallway, fumbling one hand out to pull her into a hug, and
sobbed as quietly as he could into her Cheerios uniform while she held him.

"Kurt," she said anxiously, digging in her purse with one hand for a tissue, "what's going on?"

He pulled away, wiping his eyes on the tissue, and sighed in defeat. "I'm in love."

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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7Go7ImtnQM

*I'll leave the lights down low
so she knows I mean business
And maybe we could talk this over
Cause I could be your best bet
Let alone your worst ex
And let alone your worst...

I wanna hate you so bad
But I can't (but I can't) stop this
anymore than you can

So honestly, how could you say those things
when you know they don't mean anything
And you know very well
that I can't keep my hands to myself,
hands to myself

I wanna hate you so bad
But I can't (but I can't) stop this
anymore than you can

This is all wrong and it shows
There's certain things I promised not to let you know,
(You've got a silly way of keeping me up on the edge of my seat,
You've got a silly way of keeping me up on the...)
not to let you know
I never, never...
You've got this silly way
of keeping me on the edge of my seat

But you're only counting the clock against the train
And I'm miserable, oh
(You've got a silly way of keeping me up on the edge of my seat,
You've got a silly way of keeping me up on the...)
And you're just getting started
I'm miserable, oh
You've got me right where you want me

(let's never talk) Let's never talk, let's never,
let's never talk about this again because...
I didn't want it to mean that much to me
I didn't want it to mean that much to me
I didn't want it to mean that much to me
Anyway... yeah

- Taking Back Sunday, "Bike Scene"
Do you like me standing there?

Chapter Notes

We've lost at least one of you already because you don't like Finn's involvement. So sad; he's probably my favorite character. I've gone back and carefully tagged the story as a threesome, so whatever happens, you've been warned. Regardless, they have a while to go before they get there. This chapter overlaps with 1x17 Bad Reputation. No sex here, just angst and UST.

-amy and gala

Mercedes confirmed to Kurt that the expression on his face was hard to mistake as anything other than sickly sweet love. This was distressing for several reasons, the least of which was how distracted he felt from his French exam. He also wasn't crazy about the idea of everybody else around him noticing his twitterpated state, because there might very well be questions, and he wasn't feeling up to inventing an imaginary crush from whole cloth.

The most upsetting part, though, the one that had him turning down hallways he didn't normally walk to avoid Puck and Finn, was the idea that he'd allowed himself to develop feelings for a second boy who wasn't going to return them. This... thing with Puck... neither of them had put specific rules out there, but it had been pretty clear to Kurt from the beginning that it wasn't any kind of a relationship. And yet, here he was, projecting all kinds of possibilities onto the situation. He was feeling downright reproachful at himself for letting it go this far. The easiest thing to do was avoid being face to face with Puck, and try to keep his focus on school.

This was easier to do when he wasn't actually in class with him, but by the time he got to Glee, he had an entire day's worth of overwhelmingly grateful feelings to suppress. He sat in the back of the room, six feet away from him, and sent him a text.

* I found your card this morning.

He watched Puck receive the text, smile, and reply. *Thought maybe it had gotten lost or something. Either that or you fucking hated it.*

*The opposite, actually. I'm a little overwhelmed.*

*You totally deserve all of it, babe.*

Finn was mostly ignoring him, but he was easier to ignore back out of long practice. Kurt didn't take it personally. It was unfortunate that all this ignoring meant Kurt would be going home alone after school, but at least Puck had left the tiedowns tucked under the mattress. He considered thanking him for that, too, but getting Puck riled up in the middle of Glee was not really conducive to keeping a low profile. It was hard enough to sit there and watch the way his back muscles moved under his tight t-shirt.

What Kurt needed to do was figure out a way of venting his feelings in an utterly safe way. If he
didn't, he'd eventually lose his mind. Kurt was too good, too destined to be a star to collapse under the pressure of liking two boys, neither of whom liked him back.

Relating more details to his father was completely out of the question. He'd told him he and Puck were dating as a cover to give him a reason to be over, so talking about how he was in love with a guy that he was only supposed to be having sex with would blow that out of the water. Not to mention he had a feeling that Dad would be horrified by the idea of kind-of-friends with benefits.

Telling Mercedes more was equally impossible. The second that she found out the guy in question was Noah Puckerman, she'd be the most judgmental girl in the world about it. Mercedes had very clear opinions about jocks, whether or not they'd been reformed into decent human beings. And if Mercedes was out, so was the rest of Glee club. At least half of them would gossip about anything Kurt said, spread it around indiscriminately. It would go viral, like an aural flu. Puck wasn't even out, vague texted comments aside. It wasn't worth the risk.

As of late he'd been venting all over Puck. If it had been any other issue, Kurt thought he could have just talked to him about it. Puck accepted a strangely large amount of crying and shouting from him, a lot more than anyone would guess Puck would put up with. But talking to Puck about their not-relationship was not going to happen. The only thing worse than doing what they did, knowing that Puck didn't feel the same, was Puck putting an end to it altogether because Kurt's clinginess was freaking him out.

Calling the GLBT National Help Center wasn't much of an option either. Whoever he ended up talking to would listen open mindedly, and give advice if he asked for it. That much Kurt knew. What he also knew was that when his dad got the phone bill, he'd assume the Help Center was the same as the Trevor Hotline. There would be so much 'you don't need to be suicidal' drama that it would probably make Kurt want to hang himself.

Basically the only option available to Kurt was to start a blog. People were supposed to have ridiculous life stories on blogs. And they were supposed to be related in all caps, and with more punctuation than was grammatically correct. He would just make it through Glee, and then bang away at his keyboard for a bit. It might even come in handy in ten years when he was writing his first autobiography.

Finn dealt with his guilt the best ways he knew how. He hunkered down at school, telling himself it would be over. Then he went to the weight room after school and did curls and crunches until his stomach muscles were trembling. Next, he rode his bike home and made himself an enormous triple-layer ham, capicola and swiss cheese sandwich, with extra mayonnaise and all the things his mom always yelled at him for using up. He cut it in half, poured a glass of milk, and left it on the table. Finally, when the guilt had reached all-consuming levels, but still wasn't as compelling as the images in his head, he turned the shower on, hung his sweaty clothes in the laundry room, and stepped under the spray.

Next time, babe, I'm gonna screw you into the mattress.

Finn was absolutely certain Puck had said more detailed, raunchier things in the middle of sex before. He might have even heard some of them on double dates or in the middle of parties involving too much alcohol and not enough lighting. But he was equally certain Puck had never said them to another guy before.

Next time, babe, I'm gonna screw you into the mattress.

Kurt had looked kind of heartbreakingly beautiful on the bed, cuffed and straining against the ropes
Puck had fixed there to keep him from moving. But in his fantasy, in which Puck did what he'd promised, it wasn't Kurt on the bed. It wasn't Kurt struggling against the restraints. It wasn't Kurt being screwed into the mattress.

He was coming before he could even get past I wonder what it would feel like to be-, coming hard enough to make his vision blur and his legs wobble. He cleaned up as quickly as he could, turned off the water, and threw on a clean pair of boxers before going back to the kitchen to eat his goddamn sandwich.

Puck had no idea what to expect from Finn after that fucking insane evening, but he was pretty sure Finn must be even more freaked out about it than he was, because he hadn't said a word to him in three days. He'd been trying to give him some space, but this was getting ridiculous.

It was up to him to step up and be the bigger man, here. Kurt would probably tell him to talk it through, but Puck knew Finn didn't really talk without something else to do. The trick was to make sure Finn knew he wasn't blowing him off, without crowding him. And the best way he knew to do that was to play video games with him.

Mrs. Hudson was on the roof of the porch, doing something disgusting to the gutters. Puck knew all about cleaning gutters; it wasn't so different from dredging out a really clogged pool drain. He kind of thought he might stop and offer to help, but he wasn't exactly sure how their conversation might go. What's new, Noah? would inevitably turn into What did you and Finn do last night? which might lead to her pushing Puck off the roof. Okay, probably not; Mrs. Hudson was pretty awesome, but Puck might end up being nervous enough to accidentally slip off the edge himself, so he just waved at her and headed inside.

He stopped just outside the family room, where Finn sat awkwardly on the edge of their new couch. His dad's chair was still there, but the picture of Finn's dad was nowhere to be seen, and the chair had a pillow on it that Puck had never seen there before. Finn looked up, saw him standing there, and froze. Neither spoke for about five seconds.

"Maybe I should have knocked," said Puck.

Finn gave a little irritated shake of his head. "You haven't knocked for, like, eight years. Is there a reason for you to start now?"

"Well, I don't know, Finn," Puck shot back. "Is there?"

Finn dropped his gaze to the coffee table, a totally useless piece made out of glass and metal. The Hudsons' old coffee table had been this monster wooden thing that they could prop their feet up on while they played video games, and leave bags of chips out and pop cans and not worry about coasters. Puck guessed this one was going to need coasters, and there was no way he would going to put his shoes on something made of glass. Finn sighed.

"I don't know, man," he said. "I can't - that whole thing was -"

"Hey." Puck came over and sat down next to Finn on the stupid couch, close enough to touch his shoulder, but he waited, wondering if Finn was going to bolt. It looked like it might be a near thing. "You want to play some Call of Duty?"

Finn shook his head, resting his head in his hands. "No, I think... my mom's gonna be back in here in a minute..."

"She's on the fucking roof, man," Puck said gently. Finn took a shaky breath.
"I can't." He shook his head.

"You said that already. And maybe I shouldn't point out that you did, and I'm still here, and so you are you."

"Yeah, but - what was that?" Finn sounded so confused, which maybe was his usual state, but it was a dozen times worse than usual, and Puck gave up on the appropriateness thing and reached out and took his goddamn hand.

"That's what we do. Me, and Kurt. I'm sorry if it freaked you out, but seriously, it's no worse than you'd see in any slightly kinky porn flick. You did exactly what I asked you to do." He held up Finn's hand and gave it a little shake. "And you were kind of awesome, with Kurt."

Finn stared at their joined hands. "I didn't feel awesome. I felt like a - like an idiot."

"Well, you weren't. It's not like either of us have done any of this shit before either. You think I didn't feel like a complete noob the first time I realized he was turning me on? I mean, me, with a guy? But, seriously, I think Kurt must have some fucking magic or something, because he could turn on a lamppost."

"It wasn't Kurt." Finn's voice was low. Puck paused.

"Say again?"

"In his room. The... getting turned on. It wasn't Kurt doing the... turning."

Puck wasn't slow. He got it right away. It was just that he had no fucking idea how to respond. Hey, thanks, man, glad to know you think I'm hot, but couldn't you have said something eight fucking years ago? Considering this was his own inaugural gay thing, he couldn't expect Finn to have been any more self-aware than he'd been himself. He wondered if it would be a good idea or a bad idea to let go of Finn's hand.

"Shit. Wait. I don't mean like, shit shit. I just mean...that really wasn't what I was expecting this conversation to be about, you know?"

Finn shook his head wearily. "We don't need to have a conversation. I'm just gonna back off, like Mrs Schue said."

Puck automatically recoiled at the mention of the crazy bitch that almost got his kid, then squinted at Finn like he could maybe glean an explanation off his face. "Mrs. Schue?"

"I asked her, when she was the nurse, if a guy could love two girls at once. She told me no, that it was bad, and that when they found out I was trying they'd fuck me up. And I dunno if Rachel could fuck me up, but let's be honest, you've got a mean right hook."

Puck wasn't going to let himself get hung up on the word love. He and Finn had known each other for over eight years. If that kind of friendship didn't allow for love, what did? Maybe not romance, but sure as fuck love. The fact that he was competition for Rachel in Finn's mind was more interesting, especially considering how he seemed to be making a comeback in her mind, or so the Run Joey Run shoot would have him believe. If his thing with Kurt wasn't so great, he'd maybe consider trying for both Rachel and Finn at once. Which was the main point in Finn's words, the one that was most important to bring up.

"Are you stupid?"
Finn looked at him before dropping his head. "I feel like the answer is yes, no matter what. You might as well tell me why."

"You took advice from Mrs Schue? The woman that gave everyone drugs and pretended to be pregnant, and was gonna steal the kid without even paying for Quinn's bills? Who else have you taken advice from? April Rhodes? Sarah Palin? Lizzie fucking Borden?" He gave his hand a resolute tug. "You can love whoever the fuck you want. As many as you want. Including me, I guess. It's just-"

"I know, embarrassing and awkward and awful." He didn't take his gaze off the floor. "At least when it was Rachel and Quinn I knew they both loved me back. You love Kurt, and Kurt loves you, and... and I'm not part of that."

Puck snorted. "You were pretty obviously part of that."

He ducked his head lower, as though he could possibly hide his red face. "That's not what I meant."

"Yeah, well, it's what I meant. You don't have to tell me you thought that was hot; your dick was doing the talking for you. But that wasn't what made you go over and sit there next to Kurt and hold his hand." He gave him a reproachful head-toss. "And it's not like either one of us have said anything to the other about love, either."

Finn gave him a sideways glance. "You do, though. I know you."

Puck decided to change the topic. "So, you weren't have a big gay freak out, or a big kink freak out. You were having an emotion freak out."

"Are. Kind of cycling through them. And sometimes it's all three at once."

Puck stared at Finn with fixed determination. "Look. Do you want to shoot things, or what?"

Finn picked up the controller off the floor and handed it to Puck. "Shooting things is literally the only thing keeping me sane."

They did that for a good twenty minutes, while Puck stayed on his end of the couch and played the suckiest game of Call of Duty of his life. He kept getting distracted by looking at Finn and thinking about what he'd said. He'd watch Finn's fingers on the controller and think, I did something that turned him on? Or he'd get stuck on Finn's shoulders, hunched over on the couch, and remember, he decided to stay even after I told him Kurt was about to get off.

Finally Finn put down the controller with a loud bang on the glass table, making Puck jump. He turned toward him, looking exasperated. "What?" he snapped.

"It's nothing," said Puck quickly.

"Then why are you staring at me? I know I'm a total freak, just - focus on the screen, would you?"

Puck frowned, but did as Finn asked. They played in silence for another few minutes before Puck went on, keeping his voice calm, even though he felt anything but.

"You're not a freak, Hudson. Whatever's going on here, trust me, you're not doing anything wrong."

He paused to make sure Finn was going to accept this, then added, "Fuck it, everybody thinks I'm hot."

"Dude, it's not that." Finn sighed. "Okay, fine, maybe it is, a little, but... it wasn't just that, or even
mostly that. It was... what you were doing. Or talking about doing, and we are totally not having this conversation."

"You don't have to make a list," Finn groaned.

"Well, I think it's all pretty fucking hot; I was just trying to sort through it." He watched Finn buckle down with a sigh. "When I stroked off on his leg?"

"Puck..." Finn warned.

"When I told him I was going to screw him into the mattress?"

"No."

Well, that was interesting. Finn had just clammed up, no forethought, just reaction. "You want to watch me do that to him?"

"Okay," he conceded. He wasn't going to get anywhere by poking Finn more about what had or hadn't been said. "You don't have to say."

"When I stroked off on his leg?"

"When I told him I was going to screw him into the mattress?"

"No."

"Okay," he conceded. He wasn't going to get anywhere by poking Finn more about what had or hadn't been said. "You don't have to say."

"Christ," Finn yelped, tossing the controller onto the table. It made a horrible skittering noise on the glass. "Why are you making me talk about things that are never going to happen? Can't we just drop it, please?"

Puck shook his head. "What makes you think they're never going to happen?"

"Because -" Finn looked scornful. "Because you don't like - I mean, you never..." He trailed off, staring at him.

"In the cosmic game of I Never, Finn, there's a lot of things I haven't done, but don't try to tell me I'm not gonna. You'll lose every time."

Finn looked somewhat stunned by this idea, which really shouldn't have been all that much of a surprise. He laid his hands on his knees, rubbing them nervously. Puck gave up on the game entirely, setting his own controller back on the table.

"Look, I didn't expect this to turn into a fucking therapy session. I just wanted to come hang out with my best friend and make sure he was okay, because that was a hell of an intense night for me, too, and I can only imagine how much you're thinking about it."

Finn didn't answer, but he wasn't running away, either, and Puck counted that as a projected win. He kept going.

"So I don't want to make you talk about anything, but I also don't want you to think I'm gonna fucking ditch you or disappear or something stupid. Like I said, you didn't do anything wrong. I'm the one who asked you for help."

"Yeah, and I'm the one who took advantage of it," said Finn bitterly. "You have no idea what I was thinking." He closed his eyes. "What I'm still thinking."
"You're gonna have to tell me, then." He watched Finn shaking his head, and he gave up on trying
to be patient or subtle or any of that shit. It wasn't working anyway. He scooted across the couch to
grab Finn and wrap him up as tight as he could, more like a wrestling hold than a hug.

Finn struggled, swearing and protesting, but it wasn't hard enough to hurt Puck, and he knew Finn
was stronger that that. If he really wanted to get out, he could. Which meant Puck has made the
right call.

"Come on, man," he murmured, close to Finn's ear, feeling him shaking. "It can't be that bad. Just
tell me."

Finn let out a little frustrated sigh. "The last thing."

The last... oh. "You want to fuck me?"

"No." His voice disappeared into the awful upholstery of the couch. "Me."

Puck took in Finn's red face, his averted eyes. He tried to picture those expressions on Kurt, and felt
something resonate inside, like the trembling of leaves when you rang the bell at just the right
frequency. He leaned in close and rested his lips against Finn's ear, letting him feel as much as hear
the question. "You want me to fuck you."

"God," Finn whispered, his breathing ragged.

He backed off, watching Finn to make sure he didn't think Puck was trying to run, and tried for an
ordinary tone of voice, the one in which he asked ordinary questions in an ordinary world - that is,
a world nothing like this one. "Well, I'll have to talk to Kurt, because you might remember I told
him I was gonna do that to him next."

Finn's expression didn't change for a few moments, which Puck attributed to the sluggishness of his
brain while he was sporting a boner. When his face did register he'd heard and understood what
Puck was saying, he tried to back up, but, finding himself against the arm of the couch, just stopped
moving.

"You're not going to do that." His tone was flat. Puck frowned.

"Again with the telling me what's what? I think you already know by now that I don't roll that way.
What, you want to take a look and tell me if you think I'd be into that? Go on. Nobody's beating
anybody up. Take a good look."

For a minute Puck thought he was going to have to grab Finn's hand and put it on the bulge in his
jeans, which might be pushing Finn's envelope a little too hard. But then Finn took a shaky breath,
leaning back a little, and dropped his eyes to Puck's crotch. It would have been hard to miss his
hard-on, but Puck really didn't want there to be a question.

"You see what I mean, Hudson?" He watched Finn's reaction, and felt his own, a crazy series of
feedback moves, as he pictured doing the thing Finn said he wanted - to Finn. It would be fair to
say he'd never thought about doing it before, ever. It would also be fair to say it was getting him
pretty fucking turned on, thinking about doing it now, and a good deal of that was because of the
way Finn was reacting. He wants it. And he's embarrassed, and I fucking love it.

"Boys?" they heard from the front hall.

Puck sprang back first, because he knew Finn was about to hurt himself trying to squeeze any
further into the edge of the couch. Finn ran a hand over his face and gave himself a little
"Here, Mom," said Finn. Mrs. Hudson walked into the room, covered with mud and snow and dried bits of leaves.

"I was starting to think about dinner," she said. "Puck, are you going to stay?"

Puck watched Finn's impassive face for a brief moment before giving Mrs. Hudson a smile. "Hey, I wouldn't miss it."

Finn gathered up the game controllers and turned off the television, moving awkwardly, but this time when he caught Puck staring at him, he didn't snap at him. He just stared back.

_This, I can deal with_, Puck thought. Now that he knew the score, all he had to do was make each play, in order, and keep the goal in sight.

Artie's friend finished setting up the portable projector, then walked to turn off the lights. Before he could, Mr Schue started talking. It was about the stupid Glist again, and how they were all completely fucked if no one admitted to it. Puck rolled his eyes. Half the room probably still thought he did it.

"Seriously, Mr Schue," said Finn, "whoever made that list is not going to come forward." Puck would have agreed with what Finn was saying, except his next words made him choke a little. "We might as well just bend over and take whatever's coming."

Fucking Finn fucking Hudson. There were a hundred ways to phrase non-compliance, and he had to pick that one. Puck didn't dare turn around to see the expression on Kurt's face, but he wouldn't be surprised if the guy was blushing.

Schuester took it well though, considering. Just said fine, and invited Rachel to start her video.

Rachel, of course, was completely obnoxious about it. "I'd like to say a few words first. Though I understand that a motion picture should stand on it's own, I do realise that some of you are not well versed in the complex vocabulary of the filmic arts. I expect that this video will go over the heads of some of our less cultured teammates, so let me just say I hope you enjoy my bad reputation. Lights!"

Puck knew the instant Brittany and Santana went from hot angels to hot angels in multiplying split frame that it was going to be bad. Artie and his friends could only be as good as the director would let them be, and evidently Rachel didn't have the same level of taste Kurt and Mercedes did. Rachel's voice sounded good when she began to sing, but her clutching at her heart was another sign this would just be a huge crapfest. Then came Puck's first shot. He looked good. With his arms over his head his guns were bulging, and the colours in the Berry guest room went with his complexion (and seriously, fuck Kurt that he all of a sudden knew that he was a Fall) and he sounded pretty good too.

Quinn muffled a laugh though, and maybe she had a point. It was a fucking ridiculous song with an equally ridiculous video. And it only got worse as the next split frame had an even more lame kaleidoscope effect, followed immediately by some random black and white. Puck barely had time to snort at the extreme close up of Rachel's crazy-eyes before the male voice changed. Out of nowhere was Jesse, driving a pimped looking car, singing the second verse. And he wasn't the only new character. Also on screen was Mr Ryerson with the gun that the song was about, so lucky for Puck that he hadn't been given the entire role, really. Jesse could have that fuckin' creeper.
Except then, there was Finn. Suddenly it was a lot less funny. Knowing what he did about Finn's messed up head, Rachel toying with him like this was supremely uncool. Puck didn't have to look over at him to know that he'd be upset.

Rachel started applauding herself after it was over, and about half the club joined in. Quinn didn't, Puck could tell she was doing her 'I'm a nice Christian girl, so I'm holding my hysterical mocking laughter inside' routine. Back when he and Finn and Quinn were closer Puck had seen her do it dozens of times.

"Well, why don't we just take a moment to really absorb what we've just watched..."

"This is garbage!" Finn shouted.

Yeah, Puck knew it. Schue started to tell Finn off, but Puck interrupted. "No. He's right. First of all, I need to trust my instincts more, because I had a feeling when we were shooting that that it was not going to be good."

Then Jesse interrupted him. "Why didn't you tell me they were in this too? I thought you and i were going out! Being triple cast with two other guys to play opposite your girlfriend? It's mortifying!"

Rachel was indignant. "It...it was an artistic statement!"

"No, it wasn't. It was you trying to look like you had a bunch of guys fighting over you, so you could stop looking like some kind of outcast and be seen as some hot slutty girl singer." It took everything Puck had to not get up and grab Finn's hand when he stood up and got in Rachel's face. "How can you do this to me? To all us guys? Is your stupid reputation more important than your relationships?"

He walked out, Jesse following in his wake. Puck started to get up, but settled back down. If Finn saw something romantic in the video between him and Rachel, there was a chance Kurt would see the same thing. And if that was true, Puck would have to nip it in the bud immediately. He tried to get a glimpse of Kurt's face, but it was just the wrong angle for it not to look totally obvious.

"Um. Thank you, Rachel. Guys, if you want to take your projector back?"

The next few minutes were occupied by Rachel sitting down in silence, the two AV guys dismantling their stuff and leaving, and Matt giving jazz band their instructions before he and Mike stood in the middle of the room.

It started with a short horn solo. Matt and Mike threw their hips from side to side the whole time. For about the thousandth time Puck wondered how he hadn't known all of freshman year that the two football players were more graceful than they let on. Matt's first words were, "She's into superstitions, black cats and voodoo dolls."

Puck didn't recognise it yet, but Santana said 'hah' loudly enough to be heard over the band, and Mercedes let out a few short but enthusiastic claps. By the chorus Santana and Brittany had both left their seats to dance with Mike and Matt. The next two minutes were an exercise in fast pseudo-latin dancing. Their spins as they repeated the phrase 'living la vida loca' were tight and precise, without looking overworked. The only way it could have looked better was if the girls had been wearing those big 1950's skirts with tons of crinoline underneath.

After the long round of applause for Matt and Mike's planned routine, and Santana and Brittany's additions petered out, Quinn raised her hand. "I've got a song.

"It's actually fairly fitting," she added before beginning.
You have so many relationships in this life
Only one or two will last
You go through all this pain and strife
Then you turn your back and they're gone so fast
And they're gone so fast...

It wasn't until the chorus of nonsense words that Puck realised Quinn had managed to turn Hanson's MMMBop into a slow emo song. It should have been ridiculous, but it was just plain good. Honestly, it was the first song to actually do what Mr Schue had asked them for, to take a horrible song and redeem it. He clapped loud and long, and he wasn't the only one.

"We've got time for one more, if anyone has something prepared? Feel free to do a second if you went earlier in the week."

Kurt stepped down to mutter instructions to the band. Unlike Matt's song there was no musical intro, the moment the band started Kurt wailed, "Give me tiiiiiiime to realize my criiiiiime..."

The beginning of the chorus hit Puck hard. Yeah, he wanted to hurt Kurt. Yeah, he wanted to make him cry. The way Kurt glanced over at him informed him that Kurt was well aware, and was singing it on purpose. The fact that rest of the song was about a boy breaking up with his lover was hopefully irrelevant. Surely there were songs about hating someone and wishing they were dead that Kurt would sing at him if he was upset about Run Joey Run.

He stopped abruptly, the band continuing a few notes beyond him. Once they put their instruments down, Kurt did a little curtsey. "That was Boy George, and there's about three more minutes of the song, but I couldn't go on. I declare it un-rehabilitated. Beyond help."

Schue laughed. "Noted. I guess some things are just unworkable. Anything else before we wrap it up?"

Tina grinned. "Well, it's not really a song, it's more of a dance -"

"It's like you love me!" Mike interrupted.

"- but I feel like a bad rep theme has to end with us doing the Macarena."

"It's like you hate me!" Mike revised.

"You heard the girl! Everyone on the floor."

Mercedes wasn't someone people said no to. As a group they climbed down the risers to join Kurt. No one knew the words, and Puck was certain the band was totally faking it, but repeating 'blahblahblah dodododo heeeeeeey macarena' was enough to create the rhythm that let their bodies sway as they moved their hands from shoulders to neck to hips. They lasted a few minutes before Matt cracked up. Once his weird hooting laughter began it was contagious, Tina's hands over her mouth and Quinn weeping with laughter on Santana's shoulder. Even Rachel was snickering, momentarily unfazed about the mess she'd made of her life. It was a good way to end the rehearsal.

Half of them walked to the parking lot together, while the rest went to the front of the school to wait for parents. Making sure that Matt and Mike were in Matt's Pontiac, and Santana and Brittany were in San's BMW, Puck knocked on Kurt's window before he could drive away. Kurt pressed the button on the console and the window rolled down.

"You pissed? About the Rachel thing?"
Kurt got a haughty look on his face. "No. Any momentary irritation was soothed both by the incredibly low quality of the video, proving once again that I am better than her, and by knowing how long you would have had to have spent with her to do that. Frankly, you punished yourself better than I ever could have."

"She is kinda insane." Puck paused, then figured why the fuck not. "You doing anything tonight?"

Kurt sighed. "Hummel-Hudson dinner. Lucky me."

It was bad of him, but Puck would have paid good money to see Finn's first post-That Evening interaction with Kurt. It wasn't exactly the sort of thing he could just invite himself to though. He had to satisfy himself with imagining Finn's discomfort at being at the table with Kurt while he maintained his Good Boy persona. Whatever else happened that evening, that was pretty much assured.

When his dad had mentioned wanting to eat in this time, Kurt had agreed with little fuss. The three of them were going to discuss a world of things that didn't include him whatever the setting. At least at home Kurt could distract himself with preparing a meal. Something that involved a lot of leaving the living room and checking. A broth he had to stir every two minutes, for example.

Things felt different in execution. Yes, it was easier to make escape upon escape while he cooked the risotto; he'd been right as far as that went. Eventually, though, he had to direct the three of them to the seldom-used dining room table. Kurt knew it was too much to expect a comment on the arrangement in the centre of the table, or the homey air freshener he'd used. Still, it hurt a little when Carole shook out the elaborately folded napkin to place it over her lap. Of the three of them, Kurt had hoped for a little more from her. She, at least, had listened to him when Kurt had run her through his own untelevised version of What Not To Wear. They were distinctly in his territory now, and it didn't seem to matter.

"Good steak, dude," Finn said to Kurt, taking another bite.

"Thanks." It obviously wasn't that good. Finn's was smothered with hot sauce. Kurt had put it on the table as a gesture, not expecting anyone to actually use it, but Finn's plate was more hot sauce than steak.

Kurt wanted to believe he was overreacting. He knew he wasn't, but his life would be so much better if this was all just in his head. So he tried, twice. The first was halfway through his Caesar salad.

"I really think it would benefit sports if the players could show some individuality. Take the San Jose Sharks, for example. If each helmet had a different image of sharks sprayed on it, it would still show cohesion, while at the same time allowing for individual flare. Not to mention the audience would more easily be able to tell who was whom."

"The jerseys have their names on them, dude," Finn mumbled around his food, not making eye contact.
His dad let this pass graciously. "Finn, you like hockey?"

"Kinda. I guess I'd like it more if the hockey team at school weren't all total jerks."

"I played some myself when I was your age. I'm not sure I was the nicest person then either. But you grow up, and out of it. Man, when I played they didn't even make us wear helmets."

"Wasn't the coach worried about brain damage?"

"Saunders? I doubt it. No one wore mouth guards either."

The next five minutes was Finn, Carole and his dad discussing when safety precautions were too much - apparently NASCAR's head braces were distracting to drivers or something - and Kurt carefully not scratching his plate with too rough a knife hand. His grip was tight enough to cut off his circulation, but he wouldn't destroy designer crockery.

His second attempt went over just as well, the topic skewed within two sentences from something Kurt could talk about to something that sounded like the teachers in Charlie Brown. It wasn't much after that though, that Kurt got his revenge. He'd premade crepes for dessert. Upon seeing them Carole said, "Oh, these look like those pancake things Noah always made. Don't you think, Finn?"

Not only was Finn's sudden blush kind of hilarious, Kurt couldn't help but feel good about Finn feeling uncomfortable.

"If you start a water fight, I will kill myself," Kurt muttered. None of them heard him, of course, because none of them were listening to him.

He sat the the kitchen table after a minute. He knew his dad well enough to know he'd get shit for disappearing for his bedroom, but really, Finn was scraping plates, Carole was washing and Dad was drying. What was Kurt supposed to do, further sterilize them with his mind?

At a loss for something else to do, he texted Puck. *What are you wearing?*

It was only after the message was sent that Kurt remembered the fallout from the last time they'd sexted. Yes, the spanking had turned out to be a great thing, but all of Puck's frustration prior to the spanking had sucked. Kurt wanted to be spanked because they both wanted it, not because Puck was so upset with him there was no other way for him to deal with it.

So he added, *Full disclosure, Finn's here. But I want to stab him in the face with a butter knife, so don't worry about intentions.*

But the response came back quickly enough. *Busy, sorry. But we can maybe talk tomorrow.*

Well, shit. Kurt felt stung by Puck's brush-off, but he felt far more annoyed at himself for feeling that to begin with. It wasn't Puck's responsibility to keep him entertained. He could be a big boy and deal with his fucked-up family on his own.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz-DJr1Qs54
Understand the things I say, don't turn away from me,
'Cause I've spent half my life out there, you wouldn't disagree.
Do you see me? Do you see? Do you like me?
Do you like me standing there? Do you notice?
Do you know? Do you see me? Do you see me?
Does anyone care?

Unhappiness where's when I was young,
And we didn't give a damn,
'Cause we were raised
To see life as fun and take it if we can
My mother, my mother,
She hold me, she hold me, when I was out there.
My father, my father,
He liked me, oh, he liked me. Does anyone care?

Understand what I've become, it wasn't my design.
And people ev'rywhere think, something better than I am.
But I miss you, I miss, 'cause I liked it,
'Cause I liked it, when I was out there. Do you know this?
Do you know you did not find me. You did not find.
Does anyone care?

- The Cranberries, "Ode to My Family"
Puck's Ma didn't always wash his hair, but when she got the note in Sarah's backpack about lice, she brought home the really harsh evil-smelling chemical shampoo from the hospital. Right after school on Friday, she made them both sit on the edge of the tub while she worked it into their scalps.

"I'm not fumigating the whole house, Noah," she snapped when he complained about the way it burned his eyes. "They're almost impossible to get rid of once you - hey. What is this?"

Puck definitely got his stubborn persistence from somewhere. His Ma didn't let him out of the bathroom until she'd gotten a good look at the mole, and by then the caustic shampoo had dripped into his eyes, and he had to spend ten minutes with his head under the fucking faucet.

"For heaven's sake, you know I've always told you to wear a hat when you're cleaning pools," she groaned. "I'm taking you in to see Dr. Friedling first thing Monday morning. No, screw that; I'm calling him right now. He owes me a favor."

After an anxious conversation, she bundled them both into the car, Sarah whining about missing the second half of iCarly. Puck sighed, trying to revise his weekend plans in his mind. He needed to deal with this thing with Finn, and this was going to throw a serious wrench in the works. Knowing Kurt had his so special Hudson-Hummel family dinner wasn't helping.

Dr. Friedling was a little irritated at being asked to stay late at the hospital just to probe Puck's noggin. "I'll have to get a better look at it under the scope," he said brusquely, and took out a set of clippers.

"Now, just hang on a second." Puck protested, warding off the doctor's advances with one hand, but Friedling was too quick for him.

"It'll grow back in two weeks," was the doctor's excuse. For cutting off his hair. Puck couldn't even be happy at the news that the mole appeared to be nothing; the guy didn't even take a biopsy or anything. His Ma was so relieved that she took them all to Red Robin for dinner, but Puck didn't enjoy it.

"He never would have done it if I'd been a girl," declared Puck, pushing the rest of his burger aside in disgust. "No matter how short my hair was. You just don't get between a guy and his 'hawk."

"I don't know, Noah." His Ma studied him critically. "I think it looks good this way. I bet all the
"I don't give a rat's ass what the girls think," he snapped. *Maybe one honorary girl.* But he couldn't say that. Then he gave himself a virtual shake. What the fuck; of course he could. He could say anything he wanted. "Ma... look, I still like girls, even if I'm not going out with any of them right now. And I like guys, too."

She barely acknowledged this, but Sarah wrinkled her nose at him. "Noah, boys are totally stupid."

"I'm a boy. You think I'm stupid?" He pointed at her with a fry. "Not all boys are. Some of them are awesome. Awesome enough to go out with. You'll figure it out. Or maybe you'll like girls, or both; whatever."

"Honestly," said his Ma, sounding weary, "sleeping with all the girls wasn't enough? Now you've got to try the guys? I thought the experimental phase wasn't supposed to happen until college."

"Yeah, well, pretty sure I'm not going to college, so I'm getting it over with early." He couldn't help glaring at her. What she was saying wasn't about Kurt, but it sure felt like it was, and he didn't like her talking shit about him even indirectly.

"I swear, you're trying to give me a heart attack. Is this a thing now? Are all the kids trying it? Your friend Brittany, did she put you up to this?"

"She's none of your business." He pushed out his chair, standing up abruptly. "Or who she wants to date. And whoever I want to go out with, that's none of your business either. I'll be in the car."

"I'm a boy. You think I'm stupid?" he demanded.

One of them snickered. "Your head looks like a shaved vagina, bro."

"That's very big of you, considering it's my life."

His Ma reached out and touched his head, resting it there just for a moment. "No! I mean - what?"

He heard footsteps approach, then slow down. He didn't look at his Ma.

"You're really gonna leave Sarah in the restaurant by herself?"

He set his jaw. *Busy, sorry,* he replied. *But we can maybe talk tomorrow.*

There wasn't a response, and Puck was kind of glad. Whatever he said at this moment would be bound to come back to haunt him later.

"I gave her two quarters. She can play a video game for five minutes." She sighed. "Noah, you can't throw a curve ball like that at me and expect me not to react. But give me a little credit. I'm not going to tell you you can't date anybody you want to date."

"That's the last thing I want to be dealing with. I pushed out my chair, standing up abruptly. "Or who she wants to date. And whoever I want to go out with, that's none of your business either. I'll be in the car."

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His Ma reached out and touched his head, resting it there just for a moment. "No! I mean - what?"
"I'm just asking. You don't have to tell me." She took her hand away, tightening her lips. Puck felt the loss, maybe worse than when Dr. Friedling had cut it to begin with.

"There's a guy," he found himself saying. "He's... he's not like anybody else. But he's in love with another guy, and I'm - it's not going to -"

"Oh, Noah." He only resisted a little bit when she hugged him, partly because it was dark out and nobody would see anyway, but mostly because he felt like crap and he wasn't too big a man to accept a little sympathy. But he had to ask.

"What made you ask if it was Finn?"

"Hey, it was just a guess. There was a time when you were closer to him than to your own dad - which was probably a good decision, in retrospect." She stepped back, holding him at arm's length. "You know I love you no matter what, right?"

That just pissed him off. "Liking guys isn't a 'no matter what' thing, Ma. It's nothing. It shouldn't even be a blip on your radar. If you're gonna play the 'no matter what' card, wait until I tell you about some of the really crazy stuff I'm getting up to."

She smiled wryly. "I'll keep that in mind. Here, get in the car, and I'll tear Sarah away from the racecar video game."

Sarah was silent all the way home, until they pulled into their driveway. Then she turned to him with an intense frown. "Does this mean you're gonna kiss a boy?"

He grinned. "I already did."

"Ewwww!" she shrieked, but she was laughing. "Brittany said boys taste like armpits."

"Not if you really like them. I mean, I suppose armpits could be hot, but I'm saying if you really like a guy, he's gonna taste like the best thing in the world, when you kiss him."

He supposed it was his fault for planting the suggestion in his own head, because Puck woke up the next morning filled with memories of exactly how Kurt smelled, that first night in his basement room. He ran a resigned hand over his decimated hair and sent Kurt a text. *Got a surprise to show you.*

*Good surprise or bad surprise?*

_You're gonna have to tell me when you see it. You have time for me?_

*My dad's at the garage until noon, but I'm taking Carole shopping in Dayton this afternoon.*

It was probably a good thing they'd have limits on their time together today, and Puck guessed he wasn't particularly justified in feeling annoyed at Kurt for hanging out with Finn's mother. It was the "Carole" that rankled. So much for healthy distance between them.

Sarah split the last of the Captain Crunch with him. "You're never home anymore," she said, which surprised him.

"I didn't think you really cared."

"It's boring around here without you to torture." She didn't say she didn't care, though, which made it hard for him to tell her anything but the truth when she asked her next question: "Where've you
been going?"

"That boy. The one I kissed. His house."

She looked more fascinated than disgusted this morning. "All these times, you've been at his house?"

"Mostly. Sometimes I've been at Finn's."

"Are you kissing him, too?"

He sighed, dropping his spoon in the too-sweet milk remaining in his bowl. "Maybe. I'm not really kissing anybody right now."

She tracked him with her eyes as he brought the bowl to the sink and rinsed it out. "Are you in love with him?"

"It's complicated, Sare. I'll see you at noon."

It was less complicated in his head, but he wasn't going to say anything out loud to anybody before he'd said it to Kurt, and he didn't really see that happening anytime soon. The eleven blocks between his and Kurt's houses felt particularly long this morning. He sat in his customary parking spot a block and a half away on the street, rubbing his head, for several tense minutes before telling his fear to take a flying leap.

He considered walking up to the front door before he remembered Kurt had said Mr. Hummel wasn't home anyway. Officially meeting Mr. Hummel at the same time he'd been stripped of his 'hawk wasn't maybe the best route to feeling confident, but he was oddly impatient to try on the role of Kurt's fake boyfriend. It would have to be another day. He knocked on the door to Kurt's entrance in the garage.

Kurt opened the door, but when he saw Puck, all movement ceased for several long moments. He just stared at him.

"You gonna let me in, Hummel, or should I go back to my truck? It's fucking cold out here."

Kurt took two steps back, not taking his eyes off Puck. "You should... keep your head covered," he said faintly.

As soon as the door closed behind him, Kurt's body was plastered against his, and both hands were caressing his head as though he was practicing phrenology. Puck sighed, half in irritation and half in pleasure. I missed you so much were the words on his lips, but he managed to stave them off.

"You like it."

"I think like may not be quite the right word." Kurt's fingers moved from the occiput to the temples, gently stroking. Puck wondered if it would be bad form to start purring.

"Yeah, well, don't get used to it. I'm growing the 'hawk back as soon as I fucking can."

Kurt paused long enough to shift his body around to Puck's back and pressed his lips to Puck's scalp. Puck tried his best not to whimper. "Why? This is so elegant."

This was exactly what Puck had been afraid of. He couldn't get into why his rep was more important than what Kurt thought, because that was a particularly couple-y sort of argument to
have. And they weren't a couple, and there was no way what they were would survive a couples fight like that.

He reached up and captured Kurt's wrists in both hands, startling him out of his reverie. "You're gonna have to trust me."

"I - I do," Kurt said immediately, eyes wide. "I trust you."

The temperature in the room went up about five degrees while they stood there, holding and being held. Puck dug himself out of Kurt's ridiculous blue gaze, but he couldn't ignore his own sudden arousal, or the little desperate noises coming out of Kurt's mouth. He walked Kurt backwards until they reached the wall, and ground circles into Kurt's hip with his cock, loving every gasp.

"Yeah?" He dug in again, watching Kurt's eyes roll back. "You trust me to give you what you need?"

"Yes," Kurt hissed. Puck managed to get one of Kurt's hands to drop to his ass, but the other one stayed on his head. It was the first time in Puck's memory that he'd actually prefer the latter to the former, but he wasn't going to let Kurt's lust distract him from his goals. He allowed his mouth to hover over the skin of Kurt's face, his cheek, his jaw, the very light stubble on his neck.

How the fuck could stubble be so sexy?

"You remember what I said, right?" He wasn't quite kissing him, not exactly letting his mouth land on any one spot for more than a brief second. Kurt appeared to be following him like a homing beacon, his eyes only vaguely attending, but the rest of his senses absolutely engaged. He turned his head to face him as Puck shifted, half-lidded and breathing hard. "About what was going to happen next?"

Kurt let out an involuntary groan. It went straight to Puck's cock, and he ground deeper against the welcome hollow in his hip. There was no way this action could be perceived to be for Kurt; Puck was just sick of waiting, and he was going for it - but Kurt's reaction was as enthusiastic and anticipatory as though Puck had been giving him a blowjob right there. Whatever Kurt thinks he's getting, he's pretty convincing.

"I'm gonna do that to you, babe." He reached down between them, into the tight space between their bodies, and unzipped Kurt's skin-tight pants. Kurt's hands clutched at his sweater, tugging him toward the bed, and Puck would have been completely down with that, no reservations, fuckyeah. Except.

He tucked into Kurt's waistband, feeling him rocking against the pressure of the heel of his hand. He didn't need to ask Kurt if he was sure he wanted it, because Kurt clearly did. There wasn't much Puck would rather be doing than giving it to him, hot and slick, right there on Kurt's bed, watching the light brighten in his eyes, indoctrinating him into the cult of buttfucking. Except. He sighed.

"Finn."

Kurt recovered his rational brain rather more quickly than Puck would have expected possible. He blinked. "Wrong name."

"No, Finn. You know how he seemed to be handling this pretty well? He isn't. He was freaking out, about everything. I'm not gonna lie, it freaked me out, too, but..." He paused, watching Kurt's confused, distracted look. He was just going to have to say it. "He wants me to fuck him, too."

Kurt's mouth opened, and his brow dropped, and he took a step back. He looked positively
outraged. Puck didn't follow him as he paced to the bed and back; he recognized all that nervous energy, and he might as well let Kurt deal with it this way if he wasn't going to get to fuck it out of him. When Kurt wheeled on him again, he was trembling.

"Do you want to do that?"

He looked an awful lot like Sarah had when he'd asked him about kissing boys. This boy, he thought, with twisting anxiety. I'd thought I only wanted to do that with this very particular goddamn boy... except. And now I can't lie to him.

"I told him I had to talk to you first. Because I said I was gonna do that for you, and as much as this isn't fucking elementary school, nobody's cutting in line." That was as close as he was willing to come to the truth right then.

Kurt nodded, dropping his gaze to the floor. His arms were around his own elbows, holding them loosely. Puck tried to step back in, but Kurt shook his head, keeping Puck away with one hand. He looked to be on the verge of tears, but he didn't appear to be angry.

"Okay. I think... I think I need to think about this. And I don't think I can have you here while I'm doing it."

Puck had no idea how to respond to that, other than to nod. He didn't owe Kurt anything, because they weren't boyfriends. There wasn't anything like a promise between them, or even an agreement to be monogamous, but he still felt like a complete and total asshole. And while he understood Kurt's request for a little space, everything inside him was screaming don't leave him alone, get the fuck over there and hold him as tight as you can. It wasn't easy to know who to listen to, his own instincts or Kurt's very clear words, but in the end, he had to stick to what he'd told Kurt he would do: stop, if Kurt said stop. And he had.

Leaving was a simple affair; he hadn't even gotten his varsity jacket off. Puck paused with his hand on the door. "Would you call me later, if you decide you want to talk, or anything?" Then he winced, because he really hadn't meant it to sound so much like a proposition. "I just need to know you're not going to go batshit all by yourself here if I can do anything at all about it."

Kurt gave him a wan smile. "I'll call you. Please... I can't."

Puck slipped out the door and closed it securely behind himself. He was concentrating so hard on the snow and the pavement and the expression on Kurt's face in his memory that he nearly collided with Finn and Mrs. Hudson, coming up the walk toward the house.

"Noah!" Mrs. Hudson's surprised smile felt far too bright and positive for Puck's mood, but he wasn't going to snap at her. He let his eyes drift past her to Finn, who looked as though someone had clubbed him over the head with something far heavier than Kurt's red leather paddle.

"Hey, Mrs. H." Then he realized how it must look, him coming out of Kurt's house - Kurt's bedroom, with nobody else around. "I, uh, was looking for Finn, and Mr. Hummel said he was on his way over here?" He mentally crossed his fingers that this explanation would make sense.

Luckily for him, Mrs. Hudson was nodding. "Come on inside. I'm on my way out again pretty quickly. Maybe you could handle getting Finn back to the house afterwards...?"

Puck could see the terrified flicker pass over Finn's face, but his response was mild. "That'd be cool."
It was more than a little weird to be sitting upstairs in Kurt's house, with Kurt demanding alone
time downstairs, across the table from Finn. But he had eight years of bro-approved banter and
stupid dick and fart jokes to draw on, and both of them were snickering and reasonably calm by the
time Carole called to them that she and Kurt were leaving.

"Have fun," Finn called back. They heard the door slam, and the engine of Mrs. Hudson's car
started up. He turned back toward Puck, his smile slipping. "That... your mohawk."

"Yeah. It's only hair, right?" He was sure he didn't sound at all convincing; pointless despair was
probably closer. He watched Finn bite his lip.

"You weren't here looking for me, were you."

He shook his head. Finn got up, slowly, and moved around to Puck's side of the table, pulling out
the chair next to him. The closer Finn got to him, the closer Puck felt to stupid tears, until when
Finn reached out and grasped his arm in clear concern, he had to shut his eyes and struggle for
control.

"Jeez, man, I'm sorry," Finn said, sounding unhappy. "Did the two of - I mean..." He sighed. "He
didn't like it, huh?"

"No, he did. He didn't like other stuff. It doesn't matter."

"Dude. It matters." Finn's voice was soft. "You can't fool me."

And no, he wasn't trying to fool Finn, but he also wasn't going to sit there at Kurt's dining room
table and fall apart about something he really, really couldn't fucking change. Except... this was
apparently exactly what he was going to do, and because it was Finn and nobody else was around,
it wasn't the end of the world that Finn was sitting there, holding his arm. Puck covered Finn's hand
with one of his, squeezing, and Finn squeezed back.

"I really don't need to be in the middle of the two of you." Finn paused, shaking his head, his face
turning pink. "That's... not what I meant."

"Hey, it kind of is." Puck wiped his face on his sleeve, sniffing. "Kurt wasn't counting on this kind
of complication, but it's not your fault. It's mine. I'm the one who invited you to begin with, and -"

Finn's head went on shaking. "I told you, I can just drop it!"

"You're not going to," Puck snapped. "Okay? It's not your call. You're part of this. All of it." He
reached for Finn's arm, grasping his in a mirror pose, not letting him get away from the hold. Finn
took a surprised breath, leaning in toward him, and Puck's hand shifted to rest behind Finn's neck,
pulling him closer until their foreheads touched. It took them a few moments of this before either
one was ready for more, but it was Finn who made the move to jam their mouths together.

It was instantaneous, the response between them, and none of it had anything to do with words. It
was just the heat and the pull and the crashing desire to close the space between them, to
immediately maximize all skin contact. Puck felt Finn's teeth close on his lip with a bruising sense
of unreality, but he was too busy experiencing it to care too much about whether or not it was
actually happening.

"Puck," he heard Finn say, sounding pained and overwhelmed. Puck knew what Finn was feeling
when he sounded like that. He couldn't help Kurt; Kurt wasn't going to let him help. But he could
help Finn. He could be here for him, right now, and he didn't have to pretend it was about being a
best friend or anything other than what it was. He slid his hand down to the inside of Finn's thigh,
fingers twitching against his erection, making Finn moan.

"Don't. Don't stop. You don't have to freak out about this." He didn't move more than an inch from Finn's skin, staying right beside him, feeling him shuddering. "Stamina's for fucking losers, man. I just want you to feel it. Come on." He took a handful of Finn's cock through his jeans, not even bothering to unzip him. "Right now. Give it to me."

"Oh - oh, fuck." The words were a signal, and Puck did move back far enough to watch him as he came. Like so much of this, it wasn't something Puck had ever considered wanting, but his breath caught in his chest as he saw Finn losing it. If he hadn't been absolutely sure it would have freaked Finn out, he would have joined him. As it was, he just pulled Finn into a tight one-armed embrace, keeping the pressure on his cock until Finn's noises had quieted. Then, before Finn could bolt, he kissed him again.

"Kurt asked if I wanted this," he said, letting Finn slump against him. "And even though he was freaking out, he never said I couldn't have it. I think he knows as well as I do what's going on here - and by that I mean I have no fucking idea. I just know what I want."

Finn's heavy breathing was slowly quieting. "You gonna tell me what that is?"

"Not... yet." The unspoken words were no less heavy in his mouth than they had been in Kurt's room downstairs. "Just - soon. And you'll have to believe me that whatever is going on with Kurt, I'm gonna figure it out and fix it. Failure is not an option."

"Puck, trust me." Finn sounded almost amused. "Failure is definitely not what you just did."

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Kurt's list of favorite vintage clothing stores between Lima and Dayton was long enough to keep him occupied for a half a day, easily. Carole was more interested in the boutique places at the mall, but Kurt knew better than to overlook the unassuming stripmall storefronts. He'd found too many treasures in hidden places. *Case in point,* he thought, staring out the window of Carole's sedan at the lines of telephone poles while she chattered away about the process of redecorating her house.

"Kurt?" Carole sounded casual enough. "Why was Noah in your bedroom?"

"Oh, um." He didn't even have the energy to come up with a worthwhile excuse. "I don't know if I want to get into it right now."

She watched him from the corner of her eye. "I'm only asking because your father told me about the conversation you had with him about Noah wanting to ask you out."

He nodded. The whole story felt even more hollow than it had when he'd told his dad. "Yes, we've been talking about that."

"And I couldn't help but notice there's been a lot of Noah staying in over here." She gave him a brief but pointed glance. "If you catch my meaning."

It would have been a familiar task to redirect his dad away from making such an assumption, no matter how true it might have been, but it was another matter entirely to attempt it with Carole. He decided to stick with honesty. "How did you even notice? Haven't you been at work?"

She smiled, not seeming upset. "You forget, I've known Noah for a long, long time. I'm guessing I know more of his tricks than even he realizes. Whatever he's doing here, he doesn't want me or Burt to know... so I'm assuming it has something to do with the two of you."
Kurt couldn't help but return the smile. "You don't seem surprised that Puck might be interested in... someone like me."

"Mmmm. No, not particularly. I'm just glad Noah seems to have moved on past the bullying stage. He hasn't always been a good influence on Finn, but I could usually count on things to balance out over time. He has a big heart."

He fought the tears, but not too hard, and when Carole reached out to take his hand, he let her do it, dabbing at his eyes in silence for a few more miles.

"I really don't think his heart is in charge most of the time," he finally admitted. She laughed.

"I won't pretend to be surprised by that, either. But I wouldn't be so quick to assume that just because he's focused on the physical aspect of things, he's not feeling things, too. I can still see beyond the bad boy image and remember who he was at fourteen, and twelve, and ten. Speaking of that, what happened to his hair?"

Kurt gave a brief explanation, as best as he understood what had happened himself, but his thoughts stayed on Carole's comments. He remembered Noah at ten years old, too, but his own perspective on who Puck had become had certainly shifted since then. It wasn't impossible to think that maybe Puck did have feelings, even strong ones. It was rather a lot less likely that those feelings were for him.

"He and Finn have been close for a long time," he said.

"Yes, for years, although this year they - oh." She paused. "You don't think he -"

"It's not my place to say." Which, he knew, was as good as gossipping about them, but he couldn't help but think the rules must be different for your father's girlfriend. Today, though, the rule was going to be *nobody learns anything else new before I get some answers.* Whether or not he was going to be brave enough to ask the questions was another matter.

When they pulled into a parking space outside of Feathers Vintage Clothing, the first thing Carole did was to give him a nice hug. He was pleased with himself that he was able to return it honestly.

"Whatever's going on between you and Noah, Kurt, or anybody else," she said, her face serious, "I hope you feel like you can talk to me about it."

Kurt imagined what her reaction would be if she found out about what had happened between the three of them in his room. "I think Finn might be having a crisis of sorts," he said. "He's not going to bring it up with me, but you'd definitely be in the running for Mother of the Year if you brought it up with him."

Finn was losing his mind. He was losing his damn mind, and there was only one person that he could talk to. Unfortunately not only was that person the cause of his insanity, Finn had also pretty spectacularly burned that bridge. There would be no crossing back to the totally straight side of the river. He kept his hands clenched on the corner of the piano and clamped his mouth shut when Puck walked in. Nothing he could say would improve anything. Knowing his life, saying something would make things worse.

He left the Glee classroom with the rest of his friends a few minutes before the final morning bell. Well, all his friends except for Puck and Santana. Finn understood that though. Puck and Santana were best girlfriends. Not that Puck was a girl. That was pretty fucking clear, and the source of about eighty percent of his stress. It was just, he was Puck's best guy friend, Matt maybe his...
second, but Matt and Mike were each other's, and then Santana was his best girl friend. Finn had gotten his say Saturday morning, Puck needed time with Santana now.

He had approximately two minutes to bolt down the hall and enter his class before the bell went off and he was officially late. Some teachers measured by if you were at your desk by the last words of the Pledge of Allegiance, but not Mrs Rudie. Finn could swear she counted in nanoseconds. He looked down the rapidly thinning hallway, thought *fuck it* and sat down on the scuffed linoleum. He'd eaten breakfast nearly an hour ago, and there was no way he could handle the rest of the day on an empty stomach. Luckily, anticipating possible trouble, he'd spent some time before leaving the house reducing a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter to half a dozen sandwiches.

Finn pulled the zip on his backpack and dug out one of the plastic bags. He threw the twist tie back in his bag. For some reason his mom liked to reuse them, and did this naggy little glare if she didn't get five back at the end of the week. He took his first bite and leaned his head back against the beige wall. It was a bit harder to chew with his neck at a weird angle, but it was 9:01 and he'd already lost all willpower to make it through the day. Propping his head up was the least the world could do for him.

It took him a minute to realise that he could hear Puck and Santana talking. Finn shook himself and tried to start a round of Journey in his head. He didn't want to hear them. Finn had seen more than his fair share of Santana sexts from a bragging Puck. The last thing he needed was to overhear her telling him how fucking hot he looked. He already couldn't stop thinking about it, graphic detail of what she wanted to do to him would be unhelpful. But he couldn't bring himself to move away, and soon enough their words were louder than his silent singing.

" - mean, it's just a mohawk, right? I'm still Puckasaurus."

"Actually, I don't know if it's the mohawk or the whining but I am totally not turned on by you right now."

Finn's first thought was that she must be brain damaged. Maybe she'd gotten dropped on her head during the last Cheerios practice. Probably not, because it seemed like something Kurt would have talked about during their family dinner, and he hadn't. He hadn't said much of anything, really. But it was the only logical explanation for her not finding Puck hot.

His second thought was that at this point, he was the only one in the Glee club to find Puck hot. Rachel had made out with Puck, and had put him in her stupid slutty video. Quinn had sex with him once, Brittany had sex with him a few times, and Santana had sex with him at least twenty times. Yet, somehow, he was the only one that had to hide a boner when Puck walked in. His back teeth ground on the bread between them at the utter fucking shambles his life was.

His third thought was *fuck shit fuck*, because Santana was walking out of the Glee room and her foot was five inches from his knee, there was no way she wouldn't look down and see him.

"What are you doing?"

Finn held up his sandwich and prayed that it would be enough of an answer for her.

She rolled her eyes, and held her hand out for a fraction of a moment before putting it back on her hip. "Come on, stupid."

It was mean, but it wasn't Hudson, or Frankenteen, or anything else Puck would recognise, so Finn supposed he should be grateful. He put the sandwich back in his backpack. He was pretty sure that
without the twist tie it would fall out of the baggie and rub against the random gross stuff at the bottom of his backpack, the uncapped pens and slushie towel he hadn't washed yet, but he didn't really care. He still had five sandwiches left. If he had to stress-eat more than five times in one day he was just going to go home and curl into a ball on his bed.

Santana led him to the cafeteria, and sat on the opposite side of the table. Finn half expected Brittany to just show up out of nowhere so they could both ignore him, like their Breadstix date.

"Get me some garlic cheese toast, and we'll talk."

Cheesetoast, breadsticks, a plate full of pasta. And that was only the food he'd watched her eating. Finn decided to lighten the mood by cracking a joke. "You really like your carbs, huh."

Her eyebrows raised high on her face. "Manboobs, you're really lucky I didn't hear that. Now, garlic cheese toast."

"I could just leave, you know." He didn't have to sit here and listen to her being mean.

"Oh, but I wouldn't. You see, I've gathered me some opinions. And it's either tell them to you, which is good, because you're in them," she paused to twist and Finn followed her new angle to see Ben Israel in the corner, "or I tell that little rat. See, he actually set up a Twitter account about Mohawkgate. I'm sure he'd love to listen."

"How do you know that? You didn't leave the Glee room until everyone was in class."

"Finn, are you stupid? It's called a cell phone. Teenagers that aren't completely pathetic use them to follow the news."

Finn bought the stupid garlic cheese toast. He felt better about it when he considered it bait for a particularly nasty wild animal. Once she demolished the slice Santana wiped her face with the complimentary napkin and smirked. "So, Hudson. Step one is convincing them that same sex isn't cheating."

Trainwreck. There was a trainwreck in his head, full of sheared metal and sparks shooting and people screaming and children crying. "Wh- what?"

"You. Popping a boner when our friend Puck walked in with his new hair. Don't even try to deny it, I was standing next to you. Or deny it if you want, it'll be as funny as Jessica Simpson trying to explain something. Lord knows I like me some reality tv. But let me finish first."

Finn's braintrain had a gas leak, dangerously close to the sparks. He wasn't capable of interrupting.

"You and I, we're both lucky enough to be into who the unenlightened would call sluts. They know what they enjoy, and they do it when they want to have fun. This is obviously not a bad thing. Both Brit and Puck need a significant other to feel complete. Where we come in is when the significant other is boring as shit. If it's not cheating because you have the same funbits, then you can sneak in the back window and get your rocks off as some useless person is planning their movie and dinner."

"I'm not-"

"I said let me finish before you make me piss myself laughing." She patted his hand. "As far as I know, and I know a lot, you'd be his first guy. Not a lot of DILFs in the pool cleaning industry. But he'll say yeah. Our people? Don't really say no to an orgasm."
"I don't want-"

"Oh please. You would have blown him in front of Mr Schue if you weren't such a giant douchebag about it. You very much do want."

"Puck's...busy." There. That should help, shouldn't it? He wasn't outing Puck, but he was still saying no to Santana.

"What, you think that stupid video means he's with Manhands? So what if he is? I just told you, you have to lay down the gay's-not-anything line."

Finn slumped forward to bury his face in his hands. Rachel. Fuck. If Puck being a guy was eighty percent of his problem, she was a good twelve percent of the rest. She was horrible, like all the time, and he still liked her. He laughed a little hysterically. Maybe he could convince her and Jesse to let him watch them having sex. Maybe it would have the opposite effect this time, and actually make things clear, not insanely complicated.

"Ohhh no. One slice of cheese toast is not nearly enough payment to make me fuss over you having a metal breakdown." The chair scraped as Santana pushed it back and stood up. Finn didn't bother to look up as she walked away. He'd either get hot Cheerio ass or her smirking, and he didn't need either of those as more mind-clutter.

His phone beeped a few minutes later. Reaching for it was automatic, even though there was no one Finn wanted to talk to. When he saw it was from Santana he sighed, then opened it. *Don't worry, stupid. Won't tell if you don't.*

Technically he hadn't admitted to anything. It was still a relief to see those words.

Puck had the instincts of a predator. He knew three guys were following him almost as soon as he left the school after last class. He also knew frantically checking behind him like a scared rabbit wouldn't help the situation in the least. It wasn't until Ben Israel and three other guys -baby blue pants and knitted argyle and square glasses that were just a little too small to be ironic emo glasses, if Kurt saw these guys he'd fuckin cry- appeared in front of him and started walking towards him that Puck realised it wasn't some of the hockey team about to rag on him.

"Got a problem?"

It was weird, how his ears automatically tuned out the words Ben Israel started babbling. Puck wasn't sure if it was one of the lingering effects of being a bully, being unable to listen to dweebs talk. Or maybe it was just that Ben Israel was a total putz, and no matter who Puck was he still wouldn't give a shit about what the guy said. Either way, the words leading up to the cronies putting their hands on him were a total blank.

Puck went with it. Said 'All right,' and threw up his hands in a shrug. He'd been getting crap all day, might as well get dumpstered as a shit cherry on the shit sundae of his day. The trash bags compressed underneath him as he landed. They smelled like a dozen different kinds of rotting cafeteria food. He was human garbage. He should just lie here until the truck came, and let it crush him to death. What was the point of living when he sucked so bad? Kurt didn't love him, Finn was all one step forward, flight of stairs back.

Except they were both reasons to carry on. Puck was by far the biggest badass in Glee. Finn and Mike had some height on him, Matt was about the same size as him. But none of them could throw a punch half as hard as he could. Mike was a wide receiver because he could withstand one tackle,
maybe two, before being out for the night. No one else had the same reckless fuck you and your horse streak he did.

The closest it came to him was Santana. San was brilliant at cutting people down, and she could scratch and rip out hair with the best of the girls, but that wasn't the best skill set to throw against Karofsky or Azimio. Fuck knew the teachers didn't give a shit. Even Schue was useless, when it came down to it. Sue's rabid protection of her Cheerios only covered a third of the club, if someone hurt Mercedes she'd probably throw the stickhead down the stairs, but that meant nothing to Artie. It was Puck's job to watch out for things going too far for the rest of them. He'd committed to that earlier in the year, when all of them except Finn had chosen Glee over football. It was a commitment he wouldn't be able to follow through with if he just let himself suck.

Puck had to do something now. He couldn't let his reputation dwindle in front of his eyes. He had to blow something up or steal someone's bike and BMX over the roof of the school buses before they drove off. Tomorrow would be too late. Facebook, texting, everyone who hadn't witnessed it would know that Puckerman let some dweebs piss all over him.

A month ago the solution would have been simple. Hop out of the dumpster and make out with one of the Cheerios standing in a cluster halfway across the parking lot. If he could get a knee pressed between her legs and a hand curled around the back of her head, under her bouncy ponytail in front of everyone, even while smelling like old green beans, everyone would know he was awesome. But he couldn't do that now. Even if they weren't dating from Kurt's perspective, Puck wasn't about to just mack on another person. Besides Finn, maybe, but that was so tangled with Kurt that it didn't really count.

When it came down to it, there was only one thing he could really do. Puck heaved himself out of the dumpster and took a swing at the closest one. The asswipes had just stood around watching, no doubt revelling in their assumed new power. It was almost enough to make Puck pity their stupidity. When he and the other football players had done it all the time they'd at least been smart enough to distance themselves as soon as the job was done. Baby blue pants shrieked and threw his hands over his face. Puck smiled grimly. One broken nose, six to go. In a crazy ninja move that a remote observing part of his brain was truly impressed with, he managed to kick Ben Israel right in the nuts, while his upper half was twisted enough to slam two more heads together.

The three of them falling to the ground was enough to wake up the other three from their deer in the headlights look. Argyle Sweater, Teal Windbreaker and Sweatervest took off running without a second glance at their fallen companions. Outwardly menacing, inside his head Puck felt mostly disgust. Had the dweebs never been introduced to the concept of loyalty?

Puck squatted beside Ben Israel and smirked at the whimper that came with the gossipy asshole seeing his shoes come into his line of vision. It was more important that Ben Israel was looking at him than his shoes though. Eye contact meant a surprising amount in a situation like this. Puck strung his hand through the Jewfro and pulled his head up. There was the fear of God in Jacob's eyes, just as it should be.

"I wouldn't do that again."

"No. Oh god, no. I will. I. Please. God ple-

"I'll find them," he interrupted.

Ben Israel whimpered again. "Please don't kill them. Gordie has a full ride scholarship, he has so much to live for!"
"Depends on how good his apology is."

With that, Puck stood and walked away. His job was done. And if he didn't trust his own judgement on the matter, Tamara squeezing his ass as he walked by the group of Cheerios was proof enough of the restoration of the order of things. He'd kicked four asses in the span of thirty seconds, and had pretty much guaranteed pocket money for the rest of the week. Shit, if they were especially freaked out Puck might get a fruit basket. A stoner had given him one in September, after wiping out on his BMX and somehow scratching Puck's truck in the process.

Of course, he didn't make it all the way to his car. Mr Elmer's windows looked out onto the parking lot, and aside from biology, he was also in charge of independent projects. Puck knew because when he failed freshman composition, Figgins set up this thing where he could get a credit for writing a series of papers about a topic of his choice. Puck had ended up blowing it off and doing three weeks of summer school. Two hours a day of lessons catered towards all the morons and burnouts had been way simpler than a total of twenty thousand words. Mr Elmer had taken it personally, saying that Puck had made a mockery of his attempted help. Since then he'd had it out for him the same way Sylvester had it out for Mr Schue.

"Puckerman! Office!"

He kept the scowl on his face as he stormed back inside. It was only half faked. On one hand, getting detention for fighting would only add to his vamped reputation. Because so many jocks got away with so much shit, everyone would think that Puck came close to caving someone's skull in to actually get punished. On the other hand, detention was a pain in the ass. He'd have to serve in the morning slot, because Glee's schedule was so erratic, and half the time everyone just went to the Glee room after school anyway, even if nothing was officially scheduled. It would interfere with making Sarah's breakfast.

Mr Schuester was sort of magical. If he hadn't been so freakin' oblivious sometimes, Puck might have thought he was telepathic. He somehow always knew when one of the Glee kids was in trouble, sitting in the office with Figgins staring across the desk. This time was no different. He and Mr Elmer had barely even moved from the outer office with the secretary to the Power Room before Mr Schue showed up, sitting in the seat beside him without even blinking.

"Puck, what happened?"

Mr Elmer answered. "Puck assaulted four boys."

"It wasn't assault," Puck assured him. "No weapon or anything. I smacked one in the face, kneed one, and shoved the other two. And you didn't mention the part before that when they threw me into the dumpster."

"They did what?" Schue gasped.

 Seriously. Fucking oblivious. Puck's innocent tone was pretty rusty, but he had to try. "I was just trying to defend myself, so they wouldn't do it again."

After that Puck mostly faded into his seat as Schue and Elmer argued about his culpability. It was interesting to watch Figgins do the exact same thing; just sit and watch two far more passionate adults make his arguments for him. In the end he got what he'd figured he'd get: a full week's of detention, seven hours total, to be served at the time of his choice.

Once they were back in the hall, Mr Elmer tried to murder Puck with his glare before stalking out, leaving Puck alone with Mr Schuester. His face was deadly serious. "What really happened,
"Puck?"

"Jacob Ben Israel and his asshole friends dumpstered me, is what happened."

"Jacob is a lot smaller than you are."

"Seven guys is a lot more numerous than me," Puck pointed out. "And if you didn't believe me, why'd you fight for me?"

"You're a Glee member. We help our own."

Oh. So bottom line, Schuester was more like Sylvester than he thought. Still, Puck wasn't about to complain about favouritism that favoured him. And if Mr Schue really believed that, he'd understand. "I didn't do it because I got dumpstered. I did it for my rep."

"That's kinda the same thing, Puck."

"No," he said patiently. "It really isn't. My rep keeps half of them safe. Keeps it all to slushies and being checked into lockers instead of being thrown in dumpsters and pushed down the stairs. New Directions needs a badass to keep everyone alive. Because, trust me, as someone that started out on the other side? Adults are fucking useless."

"We-"

Puck shook his head. He didn't want to hear the excuses. Not when Kurt had been handcuffed to a chain link fence, and Artie'd gotten his wheelchair stolen and put at the top landing of the left wing staircase, and Tina had Cheerios following her repeating her words with a much heavier stutter than she'd ever pretended to have. Not when half the shirts in their various closets had been hit by slushies, and none of the teachers were doing a goddamn thing.

"Nope. You're fucking useless. We're used to it, we look past it to the good stuff you do for us. We love Glee, and we love how you go toe to toe with Coach Sylvester and Figgins so we can keep having it. But we all need thick skin, and I need a reputation. Not up for debate." He patted Schue's chest, not unkindly. "So if that's all your questions, I should go serve my first hour."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYRqaMxL9xQ

I've heard it before
I'm straight out of line
The image of malice
With one evil mind

I've got no excuse
It's my alibi
A victim of fashion
Dressed to do or die

Don't worry about me
I'm not your misery
All reject, no respect
(I don't, I don't, I don't...)

I don't want to be a conclusion
Victim of confusion
And I'll stay, my own place, right here in nowhere
So here's my resignation
From the desperation
I'm the saint of hopeless
I'll make no apologies

Well this is a call
Throughout and across
The underdog nation
The hopeless and lost
'Cause we're not the ones
To walk with the dead
Disciples of no one
By no one we're led

I don't want to be a conclusion
Victim of confusion
And I'll stay, my own place, right here in nowhere
So here's my resignation
From the desperation
I'm the saint of hopeless
I'll make no apologies

- Sum 41, "No Apologies"
Chapter Notes

Heavy quoting ahead from key scenes in Laryngitis, but we have ignored 'Jesse's Girl' and the Mercedes storyline entirely. Warnings for angst, confusion and brave acts, but no sex, because they are stupid.

In other news, I actually had someone send me a "you should write more twosomes, these threesomes are too complicated" review. Which kind of blew my mind, because wow, there are a lot of really good fanfic writers out there doing that already? I'm going to stay over here in my kinky poly corner and be very happy with that, thank you. There's lots of room for you if you want to play with us.

-amy

(SECONDED -gala)

Kurt didn't exactly expect Carole to hurry home after their shopping excursion and run Finn the riot act about his "stressful situation." He knew he was edging close to outing him with that statement - although, from Carole's comments, it sounded like she might have had suspicions about him and Puck all along.

But neither did he expect to run into his dad and Finn in the hallway at school, or see either of them so excited about an idiotic baseball game. At least he thought the Reds were a baseball team. Whatever they were, they left a light in their eyes that Kurt was pretty sure he'd never seen directed at him. Certainly not from Finn, but possibly not even from his father. It depressed him enough that he made a pithy excuse to Mercedes about fixing his hair and ducked out the back door to sit in his car with his box of triple-ply tissues, listening to Celine Dion and feeling completely inadequate for everyone.

His dad was right; Kurt didn't give a damn about going to a stupid Reds game. Which just pointed to exactly how desperate he was feeling - that he'd insinuate he did, just to find a means for him and his dad to connect. When he'd reached the threshold of brutal damage to his self-esteem, he picked up his phone and sent Puck a text.

_We're not talking about Finn. Finn is with my father, being the son he never had. Finn does not exist in my universe today._

_Oooookay_, replied Puck after a minute.

_If you even mention Finn's name once, I will kick you out of my bedroom._

_ImPLYING I get to start there? I think I can live with those conditions today. See you in ten._

Kurt closed his eyes on the flood of relief that washed over him, followed by an equally intense rush of anticipation, as he started the car. It didn't seem to matter that he'd spent the first fifteen years of his life handcuff-free and completely devoid of any toys that involved slapping. Being
without these things for a week was now apparently enough to interfere with his sleep and put him on edge around the rest of his friends. He wasn't certain how much of it was the physical experience and how much was the psychological, but both were now clearly important to his well-being.

And then there was Puck. In his rapidly growing list of Things That Worked For Him, Kurt had to include "Puck holding me down and kissing me" and "Puck growling commands under his breath in my ear," but he wasn't sure what part of that was Puck-specific and what part was independent of the holder or the growler. Maybe it didn't matter too much right at that moment, considering Puck was the only one volunteering to do either, but Kurt thought he should figure out the answer eventually. Puck wasn't going to be his pretend Dominant any longer than he was going to be his pretend boyfriend, and it was evident Kurt needed both of those things too.

But Kurt hadn't counted on developing... feelings for Puck. Puck wasn't the sort of guy one had feelings for, or so he'd thought. Puck was the guy he'd fantasized about for months and not felt at all guilty for doing it, because he was just - well, Puck. Sex object was probably a compliment to him. Puck could have any girl he wanted. Probably any boy. Maybe he was, already, considering now he wanted - no, Kurt wasn't thinking about him. Puck wanted Kurt, it was clear, just as much as Kurt wanted him... but now it was complicated by all the other things Kurt wanted.

*I like him.* That had been unexpected. He was so distracted by thinking about all the things he liked about Puck, Kurt nearly ran the stop sign on the corner by his dad's garage. He'd always assumed Puck would be callous, shallow and crass, but he had actually proved to be none of these things. When Kurt needed something, pretty much anything, Puck seemed more than willing to go out of his way to make sure Kurt got it. He had a surprisingly witty sense of humor, but he seldom bothered to use it to poke fun at anybody else. And every time since that first time, when Kurt was satisfied and needed someone to hold, Puck gave him that, too, without ever making him feel bad about it.

To be honest, Puck did more boyfriendy things than Kurt would have ever expected from him. *And he's agreed to be your pretend boyfriend with your dad,* he reminded himself - although that had a bitter taste to it, knowing what was going on with his dad right at that moment. But he wasn't thinking about him.

Kurt pulled into the garage and turned off his car, leaning his head back on the seat and staring up at the ceiling. That was the crux of his problem, or at least of one of many of them. He didn't want to be pretend boyfriends. He wanted to be real boyfriends. All the romantic drabble he felt when Puck kissed him, when he held him, when Kurt had read that card - god, that card - he wanted Puck to feel it too. He wanted to be able to hold him and say *I love you,* and hear Puck say it back to him.

But, apparently, fake was better than nothing, because here he was again, tense and hard and ready to be cuffed, and the shame he felt was entirely smothered by the anticipation of Puck's hands on him, and in him, and - okay, he'd better get inside before he decided to take care of things himself in the car. He hurried into the house and managed to brush his teeth and get his leather cuffs out of their hiding place (under his mattress, between the boxspring coils) before Puck knocked on the door.

"You don't really need to knock," Kurt snapped, wheeling away from the door almost immediately. "It's not like anybody else ever comes over."

Puck paused in the doorway, considering him as he chewed on his lip. Then he narrowed his eyes, pushed the door shut and advanced on Kurt, who scrambled backwards.
"You're sure you want to go there?" said Puck. "Because I had all kinds of more pleasant things in my head than a session with that goddamn red paddle, but you can be sure I'll get it out if you're going to be like that."

Kurt was suddenly tempted to keep pushing to see what else he would come up with, but even he could see that his attitude was more a symptom than a problem. He settled with glaring at Puck, but he was certain Puck was already completely aware of just how turned on he was. It took a little force out of the glare. Kurt thought it might be worth it, anyway, if only Puck would just keep watching him like that.

"I'm just trying to say, you can come in when you want," Kurt tried to explain. The comment seemed rational in his head, but when he said it out loud, it seemed a little desperate. He sighed aloud, exasperated. "I mean, maybe I might be already cuffed by the time you get here."

Puck's hand shot out and grabbed him by the collar, which would normally make him feel anxious about wrinkling his shirt, but tonight it was enough to send him into speechlessness. He gasped as Puck kissed him, hard.

"No fucking way," Puck said, not taking his eyes off him. "You're not going to do any of that shit without me. Nobody's cuffing you to anything except me. Got that?"

"Yes - I mean I got it, I won't -" Puck's mouth cut off the rest of his attempted response. They let out equivalent groans as Puck pushed him down onto the bed. Kurt never would have expected that someone kneeling on his thighs while he unbuttoned his shirt could feel like foreplay, but watching Puck's skin emerge, one tantalizing fraction at a time, made him quake with wanting to touch it.

Puck buckled Kurt's wrists into the cuffs and stretched each one to the corners of his bed, pulling the rope tiedowns out from under the mattress. "Yeah, you'd better remember that." His voice was more gentle now. It was moments like these that made Kurt feel the most frustrated, because he couldn't help but interpret that kind of care as - well, caring, but it couldn't be that, could it?

He thrust his hips back boldly, meeting the pressure of Puck's body with his own. "Maybe you'd better fuck me now."

Puck's movement slowed, stopped. Kurt watched his eyebrows crawl up to rest halfway to his hairline, and he leaned back, crouching above him.

"That was pretty specific." He frowned. "You really think you're ready for that?"

"God, I don't care, Puck, just - what are you doing?"

Puck was climbing off his legs and standing up. The further away he moved, the more panicky Kurt felt, until he was sure he was going to break into pieces right there on the bed. He tugged on his restraints, wondering what would happen if he said no, I can't do this. Would Puck stop? He'd always said he would, but Kurt was a little scared to find out if the answer was yes or no.

"Dude," Puck said, and that was really gentle, in a kind of sneaky ambushing sort of way, and Kurt found himself close to tears. He was gazing down on him. "You're not in a good space for that, no matter how much I might want to do it to you."

How much you might -? echoed Kurt's brain, hungry to dive into that image, but his mouth had other plans. "And what the hell makes you think you know what I need?"

It could have been perceived as a slap in the face, but Puck just smiled, and it was so fucking sweet. "I got eyes, babe. And hands... and teeth... and tongue." He nibbled on Kurt's neck,
but Kurt didn't whimper until Puck tucked him into the crook of one arm, bare skin to bare skin. He reached over to unhook one cuff, letting him rest the hand on his chest. "There's lots we can do besides."

"Why?" Kurt groaned. "I don't want to wait."

"Not your call." He pulled Kurt down on top of his chest, stroking his back slowly and methodically. "You need to cry a hell of a lot more than you need to be fucked."

"I -"

"Let go, Kurt."

It wasn't even any kind of command, just three quiet words, but the tears spilled over anyway. He turned his head into Puck's chest, clutching at his shoulder, and Puck's hand folded over his, holding him tightly while Kurt sobbed out all the things he hadn't been able to say. Puck's arms around him, the murmured encouragement, his lips against his forehead, they were far too representative of things he wanted and couldn't have, and they just made him cry harder.

"Stupid fucking Hudson," Puck said at one point, which made Kurt stiffen.

"What part of not talking about him did you miss? And anyway, you really think this is all about that? About him?"

"If you're interested in correcting me, you can be my guest. You got another reason to cry into my neck other than Finn's usual asshattery?"

Kurt wasn't in any place to talk about it, no matter how much he might want to. He shook his head against Puck's perfectly bronzed skin, and felt his sigh.

"Yeah. I didn't think so." He cradled Kurt closer, taking long, even breaths; he didn't seem to be aiming at anything more intimate than snuggling. Kurt tried to feel annoyed by this, but when he realized he was falling asleep, he stopped fighting it.

When he woke up, he was alone, and the cuffs had been put away. Puck hadn't bothered to help Kurt out of his pants, but he was under the comforter, and his neck was just as well-supported as it had been on Puck's chest.

His dad would be home in twenty minutes, so he went upstairs, got the defrosted chicken out of the fridge and turned on the television for company. He let his mind wander back to Puck's inexplicably attentive behavior as he sliced the chicken into strips and dropped them into the skillet one at a time. What reason could Puck have for wanting to spend this much time dealing with Kurt's freakout? It was obvious: Puck was feeling guilty. This was punishment for what he was feeling about... okay, there was no point in not thinking about him anymore, because Puck was feeling things. About Finn.

The chicken was almost done, but then the television shifted to a montage of Reds' season highlights, and all of a sudden Kurt wasn't very hungry anymore.

It was mild for February at the Great American Ballpark. Finn was grateful for the tray of hot dogs smothered with three-way chili, because eating meant he had just a few more minutes to avoid having to talk to Mr. Hummel. Not that he hadn't been super nice and all, treating Finn like a human being and trying to include him in this weird family they were creating. A month ago, Finn could have glossed over Kurt's predatory behavior and let bygones be bygones - whatever bygones
were. But now, there was this thing with Puck and Kurt, and he'd fallen in the middle of it, and he was sitting here at the ballpark with Kurt's dad, balancing the tray of red hots on his knees, wedged into the space between the seats. What was he supposed to say?

"So," said Mr. Hummel, turning toward him. He wasn't really looking at him, but he wasn't really looking at anything else either, just directing his eyes somewhere into the middle distance. "Kurt told me about what's going on with him and Puckerman."

Finn choked on his bite of 'dog, scrambling to keep hold of the hot dog and the tray. Dropping the whole mess on the floor would be bad, but dropping it on the head of the guy two rows down would be worse. He swallowed. "Um... really? That's... um, he must really trust you."

Mr. Hummel looked pleased with himself. "Me and Kurt, we kind of depended on each other after his mom died. He's a great kid, even if we don't always see eye to eye, you know?" He took a sip of his soda. "You've been friends with Puck a long time. What do you think about him?"

Finn wondered if he could manage to unzip his jacket; it suddenly felt like it was a zillion degrees out. "What do I... think about him?"

"Yeah. I mean, do you think Kurt can trust him? Is he a good guy?"

Mr. Hummel was sitting there, waiting expectantly for some kind of answer from Finn that made sense. But how that possible in a world like this, in which nothing made sense? This was the world where Puck, the guy who'd jubilantly dumpstered Kurt for the first month of their sophomore year, apparently not only wanted to handcuff guys, but to do things with them involving dicks and asses and god, he was not going to get turned on at the ballpark in front of Kurt's dad. He was not. He shook his head to clear it, which made Mr. Hummel look concerned.

"He's not a good guy?"

"What? No - I mean, no, he's good. I mean, he's great, I think he and Kurt would be... very happy together? Maybe?" He gritted his teeth and tried again. "Puck's had a kind of awkward history around girls, so... I didn't even know he liked guys until he, um. With Kurt." He made a flailing gesture with his hand that only succeeded in spreading the leftover chili around on the tray. "But, yeah, he was my best friend, and I think he's really awesome." That was true, at least. "He's treating Kurt a lot better than he's ever treated a girl, that's for sure. Seeing them together, I can tell he actually -"

"Wait, you mean... they're not already dating, are they?" Mr. Hummel looked hard at him, and he shrank back.

"Uh... I guess there might have been one time when they got together, when I was there." Also true, although Mr. Hummel would never hear the details of that from him.

"Oh. Well, I'm glad you think he's maturing a little, anyway. You think his intentions toward Kurt can be trusted?"

"Definitely," Finn said fervently. *Assuming you start with the idea that his intentions involve slapping Kurt on the ass with a big gay red leather thing.*

Mr. Hummel looked relieved, and Finn felt a little bad for misleading him, but he felt a lot better about not having to have this conversation any more. Ever.

"You know, I'll tell you something, Finn, man to man." Mr. Hummel leaned back, crossing his arms. "I was a little doubtful about you and Kurt's ability to get along, at the beginning. I hear tell
he was kind of throwing himself at you for a while there. I'm sorry if he came on a little strong with his crush, but I'm relieved you two found a way to work it out."

Finn couldn't have told anybody one detail about that entire baseball game, including who the visiting team was, any of the notable plays, or even who won. He seemed to recall catching a foul ball at one point, but even that detail didn't stick with him. All he could think about was the way Kurt had looked, cuffed to his bed, and how it had felt to kneel beside him and watch Puck claiming him from behind. That had been - confusing, maybe, but mostly amazing. And what had he done about it? Nothing, that was what. He hadn't done one damn thing to "work it out," he'd just been a complete coward about it. He turned to Mr. Hummel with a fresh sense of determination.

"Kurt's been awesome," he said. "At the beginning when you two started dating, I was freaking out about losing my dad, and... a bunch of other things, but Kurt was patient and encouraging and... I just think he deserves to be happy. Uh, and so do you, and my mom."

Mr. Hummel looked startled by Finn's sentiment, but he rallied, giving him an awkward little shoulder-squeeze. "That's real nice of you, Finn. You do, too, you know - deserve to be happy. That girl you're seeing, Rachel? How are things going with her?"

"Um." In the world where he'd desperately wanted Rachel to be his girlfriend, and had spent far too many hours fantasizing about her boobs, it would have been easier to go on about how great she was, even if nobody else saw it. Because she really was great. But now that his fantasy airtime was competing with Kurt in handcuffs and Puck wielding the leather thing, Rachel's boobs didn't stand much of a chance. If he was going to be honest, they were in serious jeopardy of being bumped to Sunday at 6:30. But he really couldn't be honest, at least not in the middle of the ballpark. Mr. Hummel absolutely didn't need to hear that Finn's current prime time jerk-off viewing featured his son's fake boyfriend. He sighed. "We're not dating anymore. She's with this other guy now, Jesse, but that's okay, except that he's a huge loser."

"Oh. Sorry to hear that, man." Mr. Hummel looked encouraging. "But, hey, you're a popular dude. You know what they say about plenty of fish in the sea, huh?"

"Right," said Finn weakly. *Plenty of fish. And one sex shark.*

Kurt had already had a long morning, and the first bell hadn't even rung yet. Breakfast had been eaten - picked at, really - while his dad talked about the great plays that had been made during yesterday's game. Any lingering relief from his time with Puck was gone entirely by the time Kurt got into his car. It wasn't like he could get a top-off with a clandestine kiss. Not with Puck serving hour three of his week of detention. The best Kurt could do was walk slowly past the classroom hosting morning detention and hope for eye contact, a hope that didn't pan out because Puck seemed to be napping.

Normally Kurt would be spending his last few minutes before class in the Glee room. That's where Mercedes and Tina and Artie were every morning, and there was always something to talk about. But not today. He still wasn't ready to encounter Finn's stupid manly presence. He didn't want to hear about the damn game again from a second point of view. Standing at his locker afforded him more chance of checking his complexion anyway. Crying made his face puffy, and it took a delicate hand to fix that damage. The Glee room hardly had a wealth of hand mirrors.

He saw Sue approach as he prodded the skin beside his eye. It was the very definition of the saying 'you can run but you can't hide.' Kurt could have easily fled; the chance of Sue literally chasing him down was low, but that would lead to his being forced to resign from the team, and Kurt liked being a Cheerio too much to stop before the first real confrontation.
"Hey, ladyface. I noticed you weren't at Cheerios practice yesterday, and I don't look kindly on absenteeism."

"I'm so sorry, Ms Sylvester. It won't happen again. Something happened yesterday that really upset me." Most Cheerios facing her wrath either took it silently, or begged for forgiveness. Kurt was bad at doing either. His attitude was just a little too sharp to grovel. He would attempt to explain, instead. "It's my dad. He's the most important thing in the world to me. I love him, and I'm afraid that I might be losing him, because of my... sexuality."

She seemed unmoved, and her words belied that. "Your sexuality? How old are you, sixteen? Have you even kissed a boy?"

"No."

He could hardly say yes in a crowded hallway. There was no question that someone would overhear, and as the only out gay person in Lima, overhearing would swiftly become gossiping about likely candidates.

"Have you kissed a girl?"

"No."

His answers had downgraded her opinion. Now she seemed distinctly unimpressed. "Well, then, how can you possibly know what you like? You see, that's the problem with your generation. You're obsessed with labels. So you like showtunes. Doesn't mean you're gay! It just means you're awful."

Her tone changed there, got softer. "You know there's only one person in this world that can tell you what you are."

Kurt knew this answer. It was just a shade different than the self esteem seminars that they'd all had in elementary school. He said it with a smile on his face, as was expected, even if it was complete bullshit. "Me."

"No."

"No? What did she mean, no?"

"Me. Sue Sylvester. And she hasn't quite made up her mind about you."

Of course. Why was he surprised? "Wait. I have an idea. Our assignment for Glee is to find a song that reflects our voice."

"Yeah. You know what? I checked out of this conversation about a minute back. So good luck with your troubles and I'm going to make it a habit to not stop and talk to students because this has been a colossal waste of my time."

As she walked away, Kurt decided to take three things from the conversation. One: he wasn't kicked off the Cheerios. Two: for some incomprehensible reason, Sue Sylvester, terror of McKinley, seemed to like him. At least enough to give advice. Three: while Kurt was entirely sure of his sexuality, and was well aware that people made assumptions - correctly - apparently others needed proof before they'd believe anything.

As the school day wore on, the third point became Kurt's main focus. If, for example, an older man was more comfortable around straight, stereotypically manly men, and there was no proof that Kurt wasn't, maybe he could pull off the illusion long enough to become the more popular child. His initial plan, his first burst of genius, had only been to eschew singing a song in his wheelhouse
for one about being a man. Like that song the creators of South Park had written, for which Tina'd sent him the link. Kurt couldn't remember all of it, but he knew the chorus was 'now you're a man, a M. A. N man man, you're a man'. The more Kurt thought about it, the more that seemed downright trivial. Why sing about being a man when he could just act like one?

Glee went by uneventfully. Rachel moped in the corner like the apocalypse was nigh. Brittany half sang, mostly danced to a rendition of Milkshake. She wove her way through the seats, and after Mike, Artie and Finn had each taken a short time to dance with her, Kurt figured: why not? Wasn't this what he was after? He cut in to Brittany and Matt's modified tango to get in a few shimmies and booty rolls.

A few of the others did songs, too. They broke up into smaller groups so Matt, Mike and Brittany could discuss choreography options with those who hadn't performed yet. Kurt knew what band he was going to do, if not the specific song, and he certainly didn't want a detailed dance, so he just watched Mike and Mercedes. Then it was over.

Kurt didn't linger saying goodbyes. There wasn't a person in the room that didn't have his cell number. No, he'd never actually exchanged texts with Quinn or Santana, but if they were left forlorn by his lack of salutation they could always make it a first. He didn't even wait for Puck. He couldn't afford to be distracted on his mission.

Joshua was behind the counter when Kurt walked in, and he smiled upon seeing him. Kurt didn't know the name of every thrift store employee in every store, but a few had good opinions on potential purchases, or occasionally stashed an item they thought he would want. Joshua had a side tailoring business, and although Kurt knew how to alter his own clothing, he appreciated a man that knew exactly how a seam should fall.

"Back again already?"

It was a joke, Kurt knew. They were both aware of the swift turnover of articles a thrift store had, and how only frequent visits got a shopper a spectacular wardrobe. Normally Kurt would reply in kind. Today was different. "I'm... making a change."

"Always on the edge of fashion." Joshua smiled. "See you when you come out of the stacks."

Kurt had the layout of the store in his head the same way Rachel knew a sheet music store or Mr Schuester knew a hair product store. He only had to close his eyes and concentrate for a few moments to know exactly where he'd find the accessories and each layer of clothing. This time, though, he didn't head directly for the rack of jackets. Kurt knew that a good jacket was the foundation of a look, but looking the part of Burt Hummel's son required a pair of jeans that didn't fit impeccably. Burt Hummel's son needed t-shirts worn thin from multiple home washings. Burt Hummel's son needed a range of baseball caps.

And to be blunt - because Kurt had never believed in coddling himself, not when it would only make the juxtaposition of everyone else's hate even harder - those things might be what Noah Puckerman's boyfriend needed too. For as long as he'd lived, Kurt doubted he'd forget the experience of Puck shouting at him about how much of a guy he was. Puck was probably the only one that believed that. Mike and Artie hadn't exactly questioned the honorary girl comment. What Kurt was beginning to wonder was if Puck believed his own words. Didn't it make sense that the thing that attracted his father to Finn was the same thing that attracted Puck to Finn? Not in the same way, of course; the very idea was disgusting. But there was no debating that Finn had qualities Kurt lacked, qualities that Puck obviously liked, since he and Finn had been friends since elementary. How could Kurt be surprised if Puck was aroused by those qualities? Why couldn't he change for Puck as much as for his dad?
For the first time in his life, Kurt didn't try on the articles he chose. The three articles in the change room at a time rule had always been the bane of his existence - how was he supposed to test variations of a complete look when he was only allowed three? But Kurt had always persevered through the annoyance, because not everything that looked good in the transition from the rack to his imagination looked good in the transition between the hanger and his body. In this new set of circumstances looking good wasn't the primary goal, and taking a long look at himself in a full length mirror would only make him uncomfortable.

At last Kurt pushed his shopping cart to the front desk. He started pulling pieces from the cart and handing them to Joshua, taking each off its hanger as a courtesy. With the cash screen tilted towards him, Kurt could see the numbers compounding. But he had an emergency credit card for a reason. A wardrobe to make himself more relatable was most certainly an emergency.

"Are you going to bedazzle this?" Joshua asked with a plaid shirt in hand.

It was a fair question. The last plaid shirt Kurt bought had been embellished with square silver studs across the shoulders, as well as some silver thread on the front pocket and hem. Still, Kurt had to shake his head. "I'm aiming for a more masculine appearance this quarter."

"Huh. You doing the whole thing, or just clothes?"

Kurt frowned. "What?"

"Well, I mean... The clothes are great, if that's what you're going for. But it could be some really crazy sustained performance art if you, you know, acted straight? Like with the voice, and the attitude and stuff. If you had a video camera you could make a short about it or something. It would look good on a college application."

The thought had already crossed Kurt's mind when he'd been stuck in his desk in the planning stages. More than once. To have it confirmed though, made it all the more real. He muttered some kind of agreement and handed over his credit card.

It was nearly five by the time Kurt got home. The next hour was a rush of activity. He had a ton of things he had to do, all of which needed to get done before Dad left the garage.

The first thing he had to do was start a load of laundry. He had two full bags of clothing, and he couldn't wear any of it until they were clean. Each article Kurt had bought was unstained, clean to the naked eye. But that didn't mean they were actually clean, deep down. Not to mention it would be nice to get the weird thrift store scent out of them.

Showering was also a post-thrift store necessity. His generous allowance stretched far with gently used clothes, but the fact that they were used meant unknown conditions of skin rubbing against fabric that then rubbed against his skin. Kurt was hardly Ms Pilsbury, but if he thought about it too long it made his skin creep. The vanilla aloe body wash made him feel better. The water pressure was a bit weak, the temperature a bit colder than normal thanks to the laundry, but Kurt would make do.

Next on the list was picking a song to sing tomorrow. Still dressed in a robe Kurt went upstairs to look through some of his dad's old cassettes. The plastic cases were covered in a layer of dust, and the edges of the folded pamphlets of lyrics were white and worn. He unfolded one, nostalgia hitting him in a wave. He and his mom used to drive around, always singing on the way to the grocery store or school. The cardboard didn't have visible fingerprints, but Kurt knew his childish hands and hers were all over them.
After picking a Mellencamp song Kurt took the wet fabric -nearly all denim and flannel- out of the washing machine and put it in the dryer. Normally he'd throw in a floral scented anti-static sheet, but he skipped the step for this load. Real men rarely smelled like lilacs. He sat at the kitchen table in his robe practicing singing in a lower register, the rumble of the dryer a background note. It was harder than Kurt had thought it would be. It made his throat itch. If he was going to do this for an extended period of time he'd probably need to take a water bottle to school.

When the clocked ticked six, Kurt got up and opened the dryer door, automatically stopping the run. The clothes were still a bit damp, but he needed to get dressed before Dad got home. He pulled the clothes into the white laundry basket and stared. This was the point of no return. Once he had an outfit on, there was no going back.

Kurt shook his head and undid the bow of his robe. Why would he want to go back? Go back to what- Finn being everything his dad wanted, while he was nothing his dad wanted? No. He picked up a plain black shirt and slid it on, then went back to staring at the basket. What else would go well with a plain cotton-polyester blend?

Kurt wound up dressed in three layers of shirts, a khaki padded vest over a red and black plaid shirt over the plain t-shirt. All that went on top of a pair of jeans baggy enough that he had to roll up the hem, which he made sure to do unevenly. A scuffed pair of hiking boots with godawful yellow laces completed the look. His only concession to his old self was the black newsboy hat. Kurt would wean himself off accessories later.

He wrote a note to his dad instructing him to come downstairs when he finally got in, held the basket to his hip and descended the stairs. Until his father came down, he'd continue to practice the Mellencamp. Kurt wanted his dad to walk in on him singing it, it would be an instant new bond. Maybe he'd even pretend to not get the song, so his dad would feel the need to explain. From now on, everything was going to be perfect.

Puck shifted in his seat. He’d done a headcount probably five times, and each time there were only eleven people in the room. It was weird, how strongly his body reacted to Kurt not being where he was supposed to be. Puck wanted to prowl the halls and track him down. He was going through withdrawal or something, not seeing him before class and missing him at lunch. Wherever Kurt had gone then, it hadn't been the cafeteria, and Puck had made sure that it wasn't a dumpster or the fence either.

His half-hearted conversation with Mercedes in the seat beside him about how they should rock some big band number some time soon cut off abruptly as Kurt walked in the room. At least, it was sort of Kurt. It was Kurt in a weird costume, weirder than anything he’d ever worn before. Baggy jeans, a thermal shirt and a puffy blue vest at least one size too big. And a goddamn John Deere baseball cap on top. He looked like Finn on his redneckiest of days. Puck restrained himself from shouting out 'what the fuck are you wearing,’ but let himself scowl.

"All right, let's get things started." Mr Schuester said, rubbing his hands together obliviously.

"Mr Schue-" Kurt interrupted. The teacher twisted to look at him, and frowned. Puck nodded minutely. If anyone in the room wasn't frowning at this disaster in the making they were damn idiots. "I'd like to start us off. I believe I've found a song that finally expresses my true voice."
"Okay," he answered, expression still dubious.

Kurt started singing then. One lyric in and Puck wanted to kick a chair across the room. He didn't know the musical term for the opposite of falsetto, but that's what Kurt was doing, dropping his voice. His voice wasn't suited to it, so every word came out nearly growled. Kurt's face matched his tone; scrunched and snarling. It was just wrong.

In his peripheral vision Puck could see the rest of the Glee club reacting. Artie turned backward to look at the back row, Rachel in the far right seat leaned towards the middle. The only person who wasn't confused was Brittany, who was clapping along to - oh, who the fuck knew what this song was? The only thing that mattered was that it wasn't from a musical, or from a female diva. It wasn't a song that Kurt should be doing, especially not for a 'find your voice' theme.

Finally it was over, about three notes before Puck would have rushed the floor and started shaking Kurt. The applause was weak. Puck wasn't the only one that refused, Matt and Tina didn't clap either. Kurt stood by the piano accepting the near silence for a few moments before he swaggered forward. It wasn't the swagger that had made Puck jump him after his first cheerleading routine. It was aggressive and ugly. It matched his outfit in a way that made Puck feel uncomfortable.

"Is there something wrong, Mr Schue?" Kurt asked in the same messed up lower register that he'd been singing in.

Mr Schue snorted. If Puck was Christian he would have raised his arms to the sky and shouted amen! at that expulsion of air. It summed up everything in the last five minutes for him. Then Mr Schue decided to elaborate. "I don't really think you got the point of the assignment. This was about finding a song that expresses who you are." He stood up, only just far away enough from Kurt to not be in his face. "That song didn't really sound like you."

Preach, fucksakes. Puck agreed with every word. Kurt, however, didn't. "Well, I'm sorry if I didn't live up to your expectations."

"No, no, no. This group needs you to be you, Kurt. You can literally do things no one else can." Despite his concern for the situation, Puck cocked his head a little. Had that been a reference to their conversation? If Schue recognised that Kurt was a person with a role to play for the group, maybe it had sunk in that everyone had their own role too, not just Finn and Rachel. If Schue had actually listened to him, Glee might have a hope of getting better.

Kurt was clearly stung. "I'm not a box. There are more than four sides to me."

"Don't lose track of who you are, just because it might be easier to be someone else."

Oh sweet holy crap. If there was ever a fucking atrocious thing to say to Kurt, that had to be it. Puck wasn't sure what he wanted to do most; punch everyone in the school, kick Mr Schuester in the ass, or fucking hang himself so he didn't have to go through the inevitably dramatic conversation he and Kurt would have after Glee was over.

And there Kurt went, storming towards the door. Mr Schuester, never one to admit he'd lost control of the situation, quickly said, "All right; take five, guys."

Puck started to stand to chase after him, but Brittany beat him to the punch. She jogged the few steps to catch up to Kurt. Puck considered going after the both of them, but quickly decided against it. It was Brittany, not Quinn, there wasn't anything cruel and sniping she would say to make the situation worse. At best she'd be comforting, at worst she'd be confusing and totally irrelevant. She probably agreed that a box only had four sides. Meanwhile, there was a conversation Puck needed
He slapped his hand down on Finn's shoulder and when he turned around to look at him, Puck nodded his head toward the corner of the room. It wasn't far to retreat, but the look in Santana's eyes let Puck know she'd cut anyone that tried to listen to them.

"Was that a joke, or-"

Puck cut Finn off. Nine and a half times out of ten he didn't mind when Finn didn't get stuff. This was that half time. Before Puck could fix this, he needed to know everything. "What did you do?"

"What? I didn't tell anyone about-"

Puck clenched his fists so he could keep his tone even. "I don't give a shit about all that right now. What. Did you. Do with Kurt? To Kurt. Whatever."

"I haven't done anything. I have no idea what you're talking about, dude."

"Maybe not from your point of view. But there was definitely something. The last time he tried to pull this big gender drama was when he was crying in your fucking garden, hating himself because he was acting like a girl while you and his dad were watching basketball. So I'm gonna ask again. Did you do anything in-your-face guyish?"

"Uh." Puck could see the guilt well up on Finn's face before receding. "Me and Burt went and watched baseball. But my mom told me to! And it was really weird and awkward because he spent half the game asking about you. So I don't think it's fair that Kurt is jealous or whatever."

Surely no one would blame him if he threw a chair at Finn. Puck closed his eyes and took another deep breath so he wouldn't end up serving another week of detention. "Okay. I get that you wanna have a father figure. You know I wanted that shit too, before I figured out that all my mom's boyfriends were douchebags. But please. Can you just, like, fucking not until Kurt gets his shit figured out? Because if I have to have the 'no seriously, I know you're a guy, not a huge bitch' conversation over and over again I am gonna lose my goddamn mind."

"We were. Uh. Supposed to meet for hoagies tomorrow?"

"Blow him off!" Judging by the look on Finn's face, he didn't consider that much of an option. "Fuck, fine, just fucking talk to Kurt about it or something first. Invite him with you. Whatever. Something."

Soon after that Brittany and Kurt came back in the room. As soon as they did Mr Schuester asked for another volunteer. Artie sang...something. Puck didn't really care. He just needed Glee to be over already.

When they were finally dismissed Puck rushed to follow Kurt out of the school. Kurt seemed completely indifferent to his presence, but Puck had worked through worse temper tantrums with past girlfriends. "You wanna hang out after school tomorrow?" He'd give Kurt the night to settle, and remember who he really was, and things would be better tomorrow.

"Nope. Can't."

"Why not?" He knew there wasn't a Cheerios practice.

"Going on a date with Brittany."
The words were such a shock that Puck froze in place. Kurt didn't. Puck watched him walk away. Puck sighed. He needed to go home and play with Sarah. Regardless of anything else that was going on, she'd make sense.

Finn wasn't a talker. He wasn't usually going to talk unless somebody made him. But since that night with Kurt and Puck, he felt like he had words coming out of his pores. Every time he turned around at school, the words were present, waiting to be spoken. It wasn't a confession, or an admission. He just needed to say all the words and have somebody listen and tell him what it all meant.

He considered talking to Kurt about it, but Kurt was clearly going through his own weird stuff. When he appeared at school in flannel and sang that Mellencamp song, Finn smiled. It had to be a joke - right? But the song went on, and then it was over, and there was no punch line. It was just another thing he didn't get.

"Jealous?" Finn repeated, feeling a strange sick feeling in his stomach when he thought about what Puck had told him yesterday. "He doesn't have anything to be jealous of, seriously."

"To hold his hand," Finn finished softly, "and tell him he's awesome."

Mr. Hummel met him in the hallway after school, as they'd agreed, to get their half-price hoagies, but he gave Finn an apologetic grimace. "I think we'd better skip today, okay? Kurt was pretty upset that I was going out with you again. To tell you the truth, I think he's jealous."

"Jealous?" Finn repeated, feeling a strange sick feeling in his stomach when he thought about what Puck had told him yesterday. "He doesn't have anything to be jealous of, seriously."

Mr. Hummel ran a hand over his head. "Yeah, you and I know that, but Kurt's sensitive sometimes. He's got some weird ideas about what's okay, and the world doesn't help with that much. I forget sometimes that he's really not as strong as he pretends to be, and he needs somebody to -"

"To hold his hand," Finn finished softly, "and tell him he's awesome."

Mr. Hummel smiled, nodding. "Exactly. I knew you'd understand. We'll do sandwiches another time, okay?"

Finn had met Shawn at football camp over the summer, and he'd struck Finn from the very beginning as one of the most accepting, understanding guys he'd ever met. Unlike the rest of the team, Shawn never made fun of anybody. Which made it suck even more when he had the C4 injury. Finn hadn't visited him in over a month, but now he had a free afternoon, and he thought maybe Shawn might be willing to listen to his not-talking.

Shawn's initial reaction was pretty calm, but the more details Finn added about the encounter, stumbling over terminology (what was that slappy leather thing called, anyway?) and TMI (Shawn hurried him past the part where Kurt came all over the bedspread), the more irritated he got. Finally he stopped him.

"Let me get this straight," said Shawn. "Puck and his boyfriend want to have sex, and let you watch."

Finn squirmed a little. "Uh, yeah."

"And this gets you hot."

"Yeah, I guess," he sighed, shaking his head. "Yes. Whatever I'd expected... yeah. It does."

"And Puck said he would do more stuff with you, which you totally want." Shawn raised an eyebrow at him. "Explain to me again why this is a problem?"
At a loss, Finn tried to talk about Kurt dressing in his Mellencamp costume that afternoon. "I really didn't get it. The best parts of Kurt were, like, hidden. Stifled, under the flannel. I mean, why would he want to look like me when he can look like himself? He's way prettier, way more talented, way hotter than I'll ever be."

Shawn looked amused. "This is the guy who sang you that song? The ballad, earlier this year? You told me about him."

"Actually, he didn't. He had me sing a ballad, but he never sang to me. I sang to my kid - who's really Puck's kid, but - never mind." Finn shook his head. "I told you I was confused. Kurt, he hasn't ever made any secret that he was hot for me, but I told him no."

"And... now it appears to be yes?"

"No," Finn protested. Shawn snorted.

"Pretty, talented and hot, you said? But you're not interested?"

Finn glared at him, but he couldn't find it in him to be angry. Shawn had a point. "I'm not... I mean I never..." But he couldn't say either of those things anymore, not with the overwhelming images of that one night filtering through his brain. "It wasn't Kurt, really. Not by himself. Puck... it was what he was doing. To Kurt, I guess..."

"You want both of them."

It was such a simple idea, it didn't even make sense at first. "Both of them?"

"Look, dude, it's not like I've done any of this shit before, but I remember enough about dating girls that when one of them did something I liked, I wanted them to do it again. And the stuff I didn't like, I pretty much avoided that. So, you liked these two guys together. Right?"

Finn found himself nodding. "Yeah. I did."

"And you think they would do that again, with you?"

The idea made it difficult for Finn to focus. "Probably," he said, closing his eyes. "I think... yeah. I bet they would."

"So... why are you here again?" Shawn was staring at him like he was crazy. Maybe he was. "If I had two hot girls wanting to let me watch them do kinky sexual things, dude, you can bet I wouldn't be over at my loser friend Finn's house, talking to him."

Finn had to laugh. "But that's the point," he had to add. "They're not two hot girls. What the hell does that mean about me?"

Shawn sighed patiently. "I think the rule is that you have to have sex twenty times before you can decide if it means anything about your orientation."

"Really?"

"No, dickhead, I just made that up. Here's another rule: you have to come back and tell your para friend how hot the sex was, so he can live vicariously through you."

Finn flushed. "I'll do you one better. I'll bring my hot ex-girlfriend over to meet you. She could use a dose of humility. And apparently, so could I. I guess I've got it pretty good, huh?"
"Compared to all the teenagers who aren't having hot kinky threesomes? Yeah. Now get the fuck out of here before I start yelling at you."

Puck followed Britt and Kurt about ten paces behind, watching them hold hands and talk. He had no problem with Kurt making out with Britt, or anybody else for that matter; God knows he'd done that enough himself. It was that Kurt was doing it for some reason other than "because I want to." That had to be reason number one, and if that reason wasn't in place, none of the rest mattered. He couldn't punch Britt, so he had to satisfy himself with growling at all the kids who looked remotely scared of him as he passed them.

And then Mr. Hummel was there. Puck paused at ten paces, keeping his face turned away enough not to draw attention to himself, which was hard all by itself. Puck didn't blend in well. He wasn't a blender. Maybe more like a Cuisinart. Right now, though, he was a listener, and a pay-attentioner, and - fuck, there Kurt went, storming away while his dad departed, oblivious.

*I'm always going to notice when my kid is freaking out,* Puck vowed, continuing to shadow Kurt as he headed for the auditorium. It was dark in the house. He found himself a quiet corner and hunkered down as Kurt emerged from the wings, dressed in an entirely new costume. Puck watched him climb the steps to the stage and begin to sing.

_I had a dream_
_I dreamed it for you, dad_
_It wasn't for me, dad_
_And if it wasn't for me_
_Then where would you be_
_Ms. Rachel Berry?_

Puck didn't quite get why Kurt was singing about Rachel and dreams, but it was such a relief to see him dressing and singing like himself that he didn't question it too closely. He was back to being his fucking awesome, incomparable self, which made Puck feel smug and possessive and all kinds of other ridiculous things, but he wasn't going to sweat that too much either. He wondered what it would take to get Kurt to take him home afterwards.

But just as Kurt let out the last note into the darkness of the theater, as Puck was about to stand up and head for the stage, he heard clapping. Mr. Hummel emerged from the opposite side of the auditorium.

"That was some serious singing, kid."

"That was 'Rose's Turn,' " Kurt answered. His voice was back at it's normal pitch. Puck silently thanked the heavens. The costume and the song had been proof enough that Kurt was back to not-so-normal, at least while alone, but since it was beyond obvious he was doing the whole thing for his dad, the last piece of the puzzle was being back to normal in front of his dad.

"I could get into that. Maybe."

Puck wanted to shake him. How did maybe factor into this conversation?

"What happened to the hoagies?" Kurt questioned. Puck crossed his arms. If Kurt was asking, that meant he didn't know, which meant Finn hadn't talked to him like Puck had ordered. They were seriously going to have to sit down and talk about Finn actually listening to the words that came out of his damn mouth.
"Blew it off. You know, too much cholesterol."

"I bet Finn was disappointed."

Puck could hear it in his voice, Kurt was a step or two from crying. He willed Mr Hummel's next words to not be full of douchebaggery. He'd have no problem stepping in and rescuing Kurt if they were, but he was no replacement father.

"He understood. Once I told him how bent out of shape I thought you were."

Kurt's control slipped just a little more. "Me? I'm fine."

No. Puck was not going to rush the stage and take Kurt in his arms and hiss and spit at anyone that came near. Because that would make him a crazy person.

"Kurt? I'm dumb, but I'm not stupid. And I have no idea what that song was about, but 'fine' don't sing like you just sang." Kurt huffed, but they were the first words out of Mr Hummel's mouth that Puck agreed with. "Look, maybe I got carried away doing stuff with Finn. But I told you, this thing with you is going to be hard."

Okay, and no. Puck was back to wanting to flaming dragon punch Kurt's dad.

Thankfully Kurt didn't seem to be buckling. He replied rather snottily. "Thing...with me. You mean being gay."

"Yeah. Being gay. Look, I will fight to the death for your right to love whoever you want. But when you were a little baby in my arms, did I dream about taking you to baseball games and talking to you about girls? Yeah, I did. A lot of fathers do."

Puck was certain his own had never bothered with those dreams. If he had, he wouldn't have taken off like a useless piece of shit. But he didn't have long to think about his own situation, the confrontation was still happening.

"I had no idea how disappointing I was." Kurt turned to leave.

Mr Hummel started shouting after him. "Hey, come on. Stop it right now. I'm talkin' straight to you, don't go playin' the victim. You know that's not what I mean!"

Kurt turned back. Tears were in his eyes, on his voice. "I know. I'm sorry. I know you're working hard on yourself, to make all this okay. Just seeing you...the way you are with Finn. How easy it is." Kurt sniffled, and Puck was sure that if his dad didn't hug him in the next thirty seconds he was going to burn the entire planet to the ground. "Breaks my heart."

"Is that why you were pretending to date that daffy cheerleader? And dressing differently? And singing Mellencamp?"

No, Puck wanted to shout. *Kurt just really loves vaginas! Kurt's all about the vaginas and looking like he's in a beer commercial!*

"I just want you to know that- I'm going to work as hard as you, to make this okay."

Mr Hummel stepped in closer. Still not close enough to comfort, but at least his voice was softer when he said, "You don't have to work on anything. Your job is to be yourself. And my job is to love you no matter what. Okay? That, and a majority ownership of a tire store is all we got. Okay? We stick to that and we're going to be great."
"I miss you, dad."

"Oh, come here."

It took literally all the willpower Puck had to not bellow about goddamn time as they finally went in for the hug. He had nothing left over to allow them a private moment. He walked forward out of the seats and boosted himself up from the edge of the stage, just as they both said "I love you."

He wanted to say it too. Fuck, he wanted to say it too. But Kurt would think he was saying it because he was playing the part of the doting fake boyfriend, and he'd react positively outwardly, while completely blowing it off in his head. And that would hurt so much that Puck wasn't sure if he could stand it. So he just said, "Glad to see you've worked it all out."

Kurt pulled out of his dad's grip, looking outraged. "Were you watching us?"

Puck shrugged. "Never know when you need to protect the boyfriend from the homophobic father." He twisted to look Mr Hummel in the eye. "Glad you're not, though."

Mr Hummel looked a little taken aback, but he wasn't looking away, either. "I'm definitely not."

"So, you two should totally go get those hoagies together. Fuck Finn. And Kurt, you'd better eat one and not be picky about the cheese and mayo."

Burt nodded, his guarded expression giving way to a smile. "Right. You're the one that told him Sylvester was being a crazy woman about dieting."

Puck nodded. He wasn't sure how Mr Hummel knew about that, but he was proud of how things had gone down, and wasn't about to deny it. "Yeah. He's not my only friend that she tells stupid crap to. I try to fix it, when I can."

"You want to come with? It's on me."

When Kurt had talked about wanting to have dinner with his dad, this wasn't what Puck had imagined. He'd pictured tablecloths and stilted conversation, possibly about sports or other things that would make Kurt feel just as alienated as ever. Not a diner after some long-time-coming emotional catharsis. Still, he wasn't about to say no. Puck couldn't see much of a difference between this situation and their private situations, at least not when it came to Kurt needing after care. Mr Hummel cared, but he'd been damn stingy with that hug. Puck wanted to sit in the booth and press his whole side against Kurt's, the entire time they ate.

"Sounds good to me."

"What, I can't hold my boyfriend's hand? Even when nobody's looking?"

His moist blue eyes grew rounder. "At school?"

Puck was just about done with this whole fucking closet business. All it did was get in the way and make everybody crazy. And If he didn't get to touch Kurt in the next five seconds, he was pretty sure he was going to throw something. But he wasn't going to make Kurt do something he didn't...
choose on his own, either. So he just kept walking, his hand outstretched, waiting, until finally Kurt sighed and clasped it in his own.

He leaned against Puck's arm, for just a moment. "I feel like such an idiot."

Puck felt the way Kurt was resting against him, letting Puck take his weight, and it was like none of the shit from the last couple days mattered at all. In this moment, everything was fine. He turned his head and gave Kurt one brief, firm kiss, appreciating his dazed expression.

"You're not. But I sure as hell like you better this way."

He followed Kurt and his dad over to Fat Jack's in his truck, because while there was no point in them having three cars, Puck saw the value in an escape vehicle when parents were involved. He didn't want to be at anybody's mercy, no matter how cool Mr. Hummel was being.

But that meant, when he got there, Mr. Hummel and Kurt were already sitting at a booth, facing one another. Neither was giving him any indication of where he should sit, so Puck just went right up to Kurt and gave him a little scootch with his hip, smirking when Kurt moved aside as though he'd been stung.

"No cheese on mine," Puck said, settling next to him, his leg bumping against Kurt's under the table. "The whole no-milk-with-meat Jew thing."

"You know, I always wondered about that." Mr. Hummel looked genuinely curious, so Puck gave him a reasonably complete explanation of the laws of kashrus, and how impossible it was to follow them at restaurants or other people's houses. That turned into a conversation about family customs and what was appropriate or not appropriate, ending with a pretty hilarious story about Mr. Hummel ("Hey, call me Burt.") accidentally drinking the vinegar at his grandmother's house. In the midst of laughing, Puck turned to see Kurt's bemused, incredulous expression, and wondered exactly what that meant. He squeezed Kurt's knee, making him jump.

But this being Fat Jack's, it was inevitable that they wouldn't be able to be out without being noticed. Kurt, tucked away inside the booth behind Puck, couldn't see what he did, which was Tina eating dinner with her parents. When they first made eye contact, he just nodded, watching her fork drop from her hand into her lap while she gaped.

It wasn't until Puck got up to use the bathroom that Tina approached him. Her hand fell on his shoulder blade just as he opened the washroom door. It was kind of a mammoth amount of restraint for a member of the Glee club. At least half the members would have come right up to the table as soon as they saw them. Santana and Matt would have pushed him over to sit in the same booth. Brittany would have sat in his damn lap.

"Puck? Is Kurt okay?"

Puck turned around. His initial none-of-your-damn-business comment dried on his tongue as he took in her face. It was all concern under the brightly dyed streaks. *No. Yes. Both no and yes for reasons you wouldn't get and I can't tell you. "Yeah, sure. Why?"

"It's just... you're here. With Kurt. And his dad. I couldn't really see Kurt; did he get beat up? Did you stop it?"

Well, at least she hadn't asked if he'd been the one to do it. "No. He's fine."

"Okay. Um. As long as he's okay, I guess it's none of my business."
It wasn't. But Puck was getting really fucking sick of making sure everyone knew nothing he did was anyone's business. It was a lot like being closeted, and why the fuck should he be scared and self-loathing enough to do that to himself? Puck made a decision, and hoped that Kurt wouldn't be angry at him for it.

"Me and Kurt are dating. This is the meet the parents dinner. Well, parent. Not really planning on introducing Kurt to my mom, she's kind of a hellbeast." In a way that Puck could appreciate, yes. He loved her. He just couldn't imagine that meal going nearly as well as this one was.

Tina looked like she was going to have an aneurism. "You and Kurt are..."

"Dating. Yeah. Up until now it's been more bedroom dates, but now that Mr Hummel's cool with it, planning on a few outside things." At least ninety percent of that was true, if a little skewed.

"Holy shit." She blushed and put a hand in front of her mouth. "Uh. I mean...that's cool?"

Puck quirked his head toward the washroom door. "I really need to piss."

Tina nodded, eyes still wide. "Yeah. Okay. Um. Have a nice date?"

"Thanks." Puck pushed on the door and went to the nearest urinal. He was well aware that by the time he finished washing his hands everyone in Glee would know. He just didn't care. Fuck hiding.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xgXDyxEvTo

Laid here with the advertising sliding past my eyes like cartoons from other peoples lives,
I start to wonder what it takes to be a man.
Well I learned to drink & I learned to smoke & I learned to tell a dirty joke.
If that's all there is then there's no point for me.

So please can I ask just why we're alive?
'Cos all that you do seems such a waste of time
& if you hang around too long you'll be a man.
Tell me 'bout it. Your car can get up to a hundred and ten -
you've nowhere to go but you'll go there again
& nothing ever makes no difference to a man.

So you stumble into town & hold your stomach in.
Show them what you've got though they've seen everything.
Yeah you're a beauty but they've seen your type before.
You've got no need but still you want,
so go and book that restaurant.
The wine will flow & then you'll just fly away.

- Pulp, "I'm A Man"
You’re my head, you’re my heart

Longest chapter yet. There were just so many feelings that we couldn't stop. Warnings for m/m sex, poly drama and angst, and plenty of happy feelings, too.

-gala and amy

No one said anything to him. Puck waited the entire twenty minutes before final bell rang and he had to go to first period, and not a single member of Glee said anything. Finn didn't hyperventilate at him being out and what that meant for his own confusion. Mercedes didn't congratulate him for getting his man the way she wasn't able to. Matt didn't offer to protect him from the rest of the team when they inevitably found out. Quinn didn't make any offensive statements about it not being her fault that he turned gay. Rachel didn't offer the chance to talk to her two gay dads. No one said a thing.

The only explanation Puck had was that Tina hadn't told anyone. There wasn't a chance that every member knew and just didn't have an opinion. Mike, maybe. Or Puck could see Brittany not understanding, or thinking a sex shark was supposed to be with everyone, so why was everyone surprised he was sucking seaweed these days? But the world would end before Rachel and Santana didn't have days and weeks of things to say.

Another guy would have been happy. The outing had been only half Puck's choice, at best. He hadn't planned on Tina seeing them, or having to explain. Her restraint should have been a relief. It wasn't. It was fucking annoying, was what it was. Would he have to tell each of them individually? If he went directly to Rachel she'd assume he wanted advice. And what about Quinn, or Jesse? Puck didn't give a shit if they knew, except for how everyone should know, the same way everyone knew about Kurt. What about Mr Schue? If Puck told him directly would it turn into some bullshit after school special? Would he redirect him to Ms Pillsbury so he could talk to a competent adult, like there was anything to actually talk about besides yeah, turns out I like dick too? Puck wasn't ashamed of it, but the idea of having to say it twenty times because everyone was trying to protect his damn privacy was ridiculous.

Puck almost slapped himself in the face when he finally figured it out. It was so fucking easy. He'd just sing them a song that made his feelings obvious. He'd only have to do it once, he wouldn't have to pick and choose who knew, and maybe they'd be so busy reacting to each other's reactions - Jesse would be a fuckin' smartass, but Mercedes would smack him down in the name of true love - that they'd leave him alone. Hell, depending on what song he picked Kurt might even think he was romantic.

He skipped second period to dick around on the internet and find some good lyrics. He searched the term 'coming out songs' first, which turned out to be a crappy choice. All the coming out songs were either completely not his style, Gloria Gaynor, what the fuck, or they were about lesbians. He showed restraint of his own not sending an email full of links to Santana, instead refining his search to specific key phrases.
Eventually, though he found something that would fit the bill. He dug up some chord changes and tablature; after all, the jazz band guys couldn't play if they didn't know the chords, and the song wouldn't be half as good if it was acoustic. Puck entered the Glee room after school like a man on a mission. He approached the band first to make sure they could handle the song on a dry read. He wanted it to sound good, not fall apart halfway through. They were champs, though; they glanced over the papers and said no problem. That red-headed guitarist agreed to back Puck up on his Gibson, because even though Puck could have totally handled the hard rock sound, he wanted to focus on the lyrics.

Next on the list was Mr Schue. "I wanna sing a song," Puck told him. "It doesn't go with a theme, it's just something I gotta say. Okay?"

Schue smiled. His white teeth matched his tie. "Yeah, sure. Of course. You can tell us all about it when you introduce it."

"Uh. I'm actually gonna introduce it after I sing. Okay? But it's not inappropriate or anything. It'll just make more sense after. And I'm pretty sure there's gonna be questions, so."

Schue looked slightly wary now, but he didn't do anything except gesture to the front of the room. Puck eyeballed the stool before deciding to stand in front of the whiteboard. He didn't need support, and he didn't want to look like he was shrinking from the song. Puck nodded towards the band, feeling every pair of eyes on him, and the drums began.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWQeZ8aN7iE

You make me feel  
so alive that I'm trying hard not to make moves  
choosing the wrong place and time  
everyone will know, the minute we let it go  
I can't hold it anymore, let's be original

No holds barred, can you feel it?  
Coming along, break the silence, non directional  
No holds barred, can you feel it coming along, it's on  
Hit the switch and turn me on

You make me feel complicated, sometimes  
I try to explain the way you took me, turn it all around,  
everyone will know, the minute we let it go  
I can't hold it anymore, let's be original

He could see when the kids started to get it. Tina was already smiling by the time he sang the first chorus, but Quinn was staring at him like she might be able to get him to stop singing with the force of her eyes. Britt and Artie were rocking out in inimitable style. Santana just appeared perplexed, which was disappointing; he really would have expected more from her. Berry was clearly barely tolerating the metal sound, but she had on a brave face, like she was going to be supportive if it killed her. And Finn...

Puck repeated the chorus twice more, then continued with the third verse.

Cause I'm crawling my way through,  
I'm falling into you,  
I'm turning on things I thought I knew  
I'm slipping away,
every time I'll try to be more like you

The chorus twice more, and Puck couldn't look at Kurt, because if he was freaking out he wouldn't be able to continue, but he had to continue.

Let's get it on and on and on and on
If you feel it coming on and on and on and on, if you're real then come along along along
If you feel the song, come on, bring it on, bring it on

The final verse repeated four times, and then the drums cut off as abruptly as they started. The group clapped. Maybe they didn't quite get it yet. They knew enough to know Puck was into someone, the lyrics made that obvious, but there were three hundred girls in the school. Only Mr Schuester's applause was hesitant.

"Coming out?" Schue echoed. He sounded doubtful, but the only response that mattered was Kurt's. He was sitting up straight in his chair, his hands pressed to his mouth, eyes lit up like two fucking stars. Puck wasn't gonna cry or any stupid shit like that, but he couldn't help grinning back.

"Yeah?" He gave up on the idea of being comfortable during his inquisition and just sat down on the aforementioned stool. At this rate he might not be permitted to join them on the risers.

She looked like she'd taken a bite of moldy pizza. "You're Jewish. You're a Jew, singing Christian rock to your... your boyfriend. Surely you can see how wrong that is."

Puck raised his hand. "I want me to use a separate water fountain, too?"

Tina chimed in. "If you listen to Christian rock and imagine all the 'you's and 'him's' are about the guy singer's boyfriend instead of Jesus the songs actually get a lot less annoying."

Puck had to laugh. She was totally a hag. She was probably imagining guys in bands boning right now, even as Quinn and Mercedes looked like they were going to fuckin' swoon.

"And... since when are you gay?" Santana asked. Puck absolutely did not miss her knee nudging Finn's. He was going to have to investigate that later.

Artie answered for him. "Probably since he and Kurt started 'getting it on and on and on and on'."

"Okay, guys!" Schue cut in frantically. "If we could keep the comments PG, please."

"I'm not gay. I'm bi. I've still fucked more girls than guys -"

"PG, Puck!"

"- but I'm happy with what I'm doing right now, and trying to hide it is fucking stupid."
"Language," Mr. Schue sighed.

Kurt appeared to have gotten over the worst of his embarrassment, though his cheeks were still high in color. His smile was small, but definitely present, and he definitely was standing closer than he would have yesterday. "You didn't have to do that," he said softly, "but that was really nice."

He smiled. "I'm Puckzilla. I don't have to do anything. I do what I want. But I'm happy you liked it."

He pretty much could have stood there and smiled at Kurt all afternoon, if the jazz band hadn't been shuffling to clean up around them. The whispered voices were a little distracting, too. "That's adorable, right? That's not just me, right? Look at their little smiles!"

"They're not puppies, Mercedes."

Matt laughed. "While I refuse to call anyone adorable, because I'm a dude, I suggest a group hug."

Unsurprisingly, the rest of Glee agreed. It was nothing less than a swarm. With six sets of arms around him, looking up and seeing half of Kurt's head, the rest of it impeded by Brittany's ponytail, Puck really couldn't give a shit that Finn, Jesse and Quinn were holding back.

Puck walked out of the choir room with Kurt, a little closer than guys normally walked. There was no reason not to, not anymore. Puck didn't do anything stupid from the 1950's, like give Kurt his jacket or offer to carry his books. He just lingered until Kurt was done talking to Mercedes and they left together. They were only a few feet from the door when Tina pounced.

"Look. I'm sorry. But I wouldn't have done that, and it really sucks that you thought I would. So you should maybe apologise to me too."

Puck looked back and forth between the two of them. "Are you talking to me, or Kurt?"

"I wouldn't have outed you, Puck. That's a super shitty thing to do, and I wouldn't be that bad a friend. So the pre-emptive strike on outing yourself was -"

Puck interrupted to put a stop to her rant. "Hold it, hold it. I came out because closets are for wimps and people that hate themselves. That ain't me. If I was worried about your reaction, I wouldn't have told you shit yesterday."

That settled her down. "Well, good. Statistics say ten percent, right? Which means we should have like sixty-five GBLT students at McKinley. But somehow there's Kurt, Brittany, Santana, and now you. If I was bi I'd tell everyone, but sadly it's just the guys that interest me."

"I'm sure the girls of this school weep," Kurt returned delicately.

Tina ignored him. "I won't say anything. You know, outside of Glee. But I think everyone's going to know soon enough, anyway. Cheerios thrive on gossip - no offense, Kurt - and we've got three who just found out."

"Four," he corrected.

"No, Mercedes quit. She thought it was making her into a bad person. And she's your best friend, Kurt, so I don't think it'll be her."

Puck didn't think it would be Santana, either. She wouldn't do that, not to him. She was going to tease the fuck out of him for the next month, but she wasn't going to whisper anything in a hockey
player's ear. It would either be Brittany, by mistake, or Quinn, out of spite. Tina put a hand on his shoulder.

"Anyway, you can sit at our table if the jocks get stupid. When, I guess. Artie and Mercedes won't mind."

Puck didn't make a habit of showing affection to girls he didn't date. Or, honestly, to the girls he did date. Give them a drop and they wanted a lake. But Tina had been cool yesterday, and she was being cool now, and he couldn't forget that she was the only Glee girl to not applaud Kurt's straight crossdressing nightmare. He swooped in with a quick one armed hug, then backed off before she could resist or return it.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. But thanks. I'll text you later." With that acting like a suitable goodbye, Kurt continued down the hall. Puck took a few jogged steps to catch up.

"I can't believe you did that," Kurt mouthed into Puck's neck a few minutes later. Puck pressed in a little closer, hoping to encourage Kurt to place a hickey without actually instructing him to. Instead Kurt squirmed even further back against the side of the Nav, so he could continue to talk. "That was - no one's ever sung for me before. You were so brave. That could have been a total disaster."

"Wouldn't have cared."

"But -"

Puck shook his head, leaned forward to kiss Kurt lightly, then pulled back to reply. "How many times do I have to say I do what makes me happy, and fuck any person that thinks they can fuck with me because of it? I will hit Azimo with a baseball bat if he says shit when he finds out."

"There's nothing hot about violence," Kurt objected, but Puck could tell he was lying. He flashed Kurt a grin, then decided that if he wasn't going to mark up his neck, it would just have to be the other way around.

Finn nearly got run over twice on his bike on the way home, he was so distracted. It wasn't even what Puck had done that was so upsetting, because that was kind of awesome, him standing up for Kurt like that. And he wasn't at all surprised, knowing Puck. He pulled stunts like that all the time, just because he could. It was the expression on Puck's face when he was singing that got to him. Puck had had exactly one thing on his mind today in Glee: to tell Kurt how he felt. It had been one hundred percent for him; Puck didn't give a shit about what any of the rest of them thought. Finn thought Kurt totally deserved somebody like that, especially because he'd never had a boyfriend before. He deserved somebody special, somebody who'd make him feel amazing and give him just what he needed.

The house was empty, at least. Finn dropped his bag by the door and was hanging up his coat when his phone rang. He seriously considered not answering it when he saw who it was, but he couldn't quite bring himself to do that, and put the phone to his ear with a sigh. "Hi, Santana."

"Hey Hudson. You watched what I watched, right?"

"Puck letting everyone know he loves Kurt?"

"Uh, no. That was not what that was."

Finn leaned against the wall. "But it was. The whole he wants to be original with him thing. He said it again, after."
"It's like you have the brain of a camel."

"Sant-

"That was Puck coming out, okay? Saying that he's officially accepting that orgasms are his number one goal in life. But guess who's the only guy giving Puck guy-gasms? Ladyface."

"I don't think Kurt likes being called that, actually." Kurt had never said, exactly, but Finn knew he'd objected to Mr. Hummel - Burt - saying that what they did was guy stuff. Kurt might be beautiful, but he was still a guy, which meant that his stuff was just as much guy stuff as anything Finn and Burt did.

"Coach calls him that. If she won't call him anything else, why should we?"

There was the whole 'if Coach Sylvester jumped off a bridge would you do it too' argument. His mom liked to use that a lot. The problem was, if Coach Sylvester jumped off a bridge and ordered them to follow, there wasn't a single Cheerio that wouldn't. Except maybe Kurt. He wasn't totally indoctrinated yet.

"Just call him Kurt in Glee, okay?"

"Whatever. So Kurt was providing him guy touching. Then Puck got bored, like he always does, and put out feelers. Trust me, within the next few days every bi-curious guy in the school is gonna approach. Puck is gonna get on that."

Finn knew she was right and wrong. There were going to be curious guys coming up to Puck in bathrooms. Kurt was the obviously gay guy, but Puck was the safe bet, just like Nellie Devins with the short hair and muscle shirts was the obvious lesbian, but curious girls went to Brittany. But Finn was pretty sure everyone betting on Puck would be denied. They loved each other. There was no way Puck could have done the hitting thing or Kurt could have wanted the hitting thing if they didn't love each other.

He couldn't explain that though. It would be outing them just as much as the gay bomb was; even he could tell that. "Maybe."

"So my point is, you need to be first in line. And you need to blow his freakin' mind. It's not gonna make him court you, with the flowers and shit Lady- Hummel probably demands. But it'll make you the first in his hookups contact list. And that's what really qualifies as success."

Finn sighed, sinking down onto the couch. He felt kind of bad for her, that she couldn't tell the difference between wanting sex and being in love. "No. Really, no. You don't get it. Puck's not looking for a random hookup, especially not from - he's not. He's got the real deal."

He could tell she was rolling her eyes. "Okay. Sure. If you're too much of a good guy to make Puck cheat, ask them if they want a threesome. Puck'll say yes, at least, but I suspect Kurt's way too much of a prude to go for it."

Finn hung up on her, tossing his phone on the couch. He needed to breathe, but his lungs didn't seem to be all that into the idea. He had to focus on convincing them to do their job, not how to laugh off Santana's bonecutting comment.

Once he regained control of his supposedly autonomic functions, Finn put his phone down and headed into the kitchen. A sandwich wouldn't cure his problems, but it would make him feel better until he could distract himself with video games or reruns or something. He got as far as the butter spread (mostly on the bread, a bit on his thumb) when the house phone rang. Finn wiped his greasy
hand on his pants and checked to make sure there was a pen beside the pad underneath the
wallphone. Mom hated it when he didn't write down a message. Even if he remembered it
correctly to tell her once she got home, she'd just scowl and write it down herself.

"Hello? Hudson house."

"That was rude. But I'll forgive you."

"Santana? How'd you even know my home number?"

"And again you seem completely incapable of grasping the concept of internet on your phone. I
looked it up, duh."

"I don't know why you're calling. What do you want? Maybe I don't really want to have sex with
Puck. Maybe it was just an awkward boner. That shit happens sometimes. Remember the time
Mike got hard when he was dancing background to Quinn?" Finn was getting desperate. He went
into forbidden territory, in the hope that it would make her stop. "Is it just 'cause you want to watch
Puck have sex with a guy? Like how Puck watched you? Because I think Kurt's probably more
okay with that than you think he is."

"Hah! You can't see it, but I'm totally kicky feeling with delight right now. I knew it.
That's awesome. We're talking about that later, when you're not about to have a conniption."

Finn wasn't sure what in his last statement she was reacting to. And he didn't really know what a
conniption was either. It probably wasn't good, though.

"For now, let's just focus. Insanely assuming -." She coughed. "- that somehow stuff was to happen,
without cheating or guilt or whatever. I dunno, in a perfect fantasy jerk off world. What do you
even know how to do?"

"What?"

She sighed heavily. It made the phone crackle. "Do you know how to give a blowjob, Hudson?"

"What?" he yelped. "No. None of your business. No."

"Have you ever tried to stick an entire popsicle in your mouth, just to see if you could?"

"Santana, I'm not."

"That's a no then. That's okay. Me and you are going to pick up a guy this weekend, and we'll take
turns blowing him."

Finn thought he might pass out, right there in the kitchen. "You're insane."

"I'm a hands-on teacher."

"I'm hanging up now. And I'm not answering either phone. So don't call again."

"We'll talk about this-" He hung up. He could finish her sentence in his head anyway. We'll talk
about this later, Hudson. Finn shook his head. There was no fucking way he was going to talk to
Santana about picking up a guy to practice on. He liked Puck. Well, and Kurt, as Shawn had
pointed out. That didn't mean he was gay enough to just blow whoever. Or either one of them.

"Who am I kidding," he whispered, covering his face with his hands. He might not be ready to give
a guy a blowjob, but he was seriously thinking about it for the first time in his life. And this wasn't
about any guys; this was about Puck and Kurt, together - and the idea didn't seem to be going away. If Puck could be courageous enough to sing about his feelings in front of the whole freaking Glee club, maybe Finn could find a way to be courageous enough to talk to them about his own feelings.

The worst thing to come out of Puck suddenly being his pretend boyfriend was Kurt's father's new awareness of Puck's visits to the house. There was a big difference between getting away with having Puck over after school, and his dad saying firmly, "Puck can come over, but only when I'm home, and the door stays open."

"I don't want to lie to him," Kurt said, sitting with him in the back seat of the Navigator. He was running his hands over Puck's shoulders, down his arms to his wrists and back up again. He felt like he could do this for hours; luckily Puck didn't seem to mind. "If he's giving me these rules, it's because he thinks I could get hurt if I do it differently."

"Yeah, but he doesn't have all the information," Puck pointed out. He rested back against Kurt's chest, holding Kurt's arms closer around him like a blanket. Kurt had to pause a moment to appreciate the view, gazing down Puck's body, his legs propped up like that... his hand moved to include Puck's chest on the next pass. "He thinks we're still at the flowers-and-chocolate stage, not the chaining-you-to-your-bed stage."

"How did I entirely miss the actual flowers and chocolate parts of the first stage?" Kurt wondered. Puck reached up and tried to swat his head, but Kurt knew better by now, and ducked away from it. "I really don't think my dad's going to accept us doing anything that involves us taking our clothes off."

Puck sighed, considering this. Even this act of thoughtfulness made Kurt feel soft inside. "So, option one, we stop. Stick with what your dad says is okay, and nothing more."

"No," Kurt blurted immediately. Puck turned his head to kiss him, grinning. "Yeah, I didn't think so. Option two, we relocate, assuming that's less guilt-making. My house, maybe. Or the back of the Navigator. Plenty of room, but..." He shrugged. "Not super comfortable."

"What's option three?"

"Option three is me, talking to your dad, man to man, and telling him as many details as he can handle. And hoping he doesn't throw me out."

Kurt tried to keep breathing at the idea. "Um... I don't think I'm quite ready for all the ramifications of that action. Mostly because my dad would never be able to look me in the face again."

"No big," said Puck easily. "Option two, then. I can chip in some blankets. We'll have to figure out where to hook things." He sat up, draping himself over the seat back as he peered into the cargo space, while Kurt worked very hard to keep his hands off Puck's tempting ass. "Some good possibilities, I think. I've got some extra chain and carabiners in my truck. And there's the lube."

Kurt's brain was still stuck on chain and carabiner, but eventually it caught up. "Lube?"

"Well, yeah." Puck slithered back into the back seat, turning to face him, eyebrows raised. "You don't expect me to fuck you without lube, do you."
The statement made it impossible for Kurt to do anything but sit there and stare at Puck's smug grin; he couldn't even lift his hand to touch his face as Puck leaned over on top of him and kissed him. Puck seemed to enjoy the sounds that came out of his throat, though, desperate and needy and completely humiliating.

"Unless you've changed your mind," Puck went on, using his body to wedge Kurt more firmly back into the seat. "Maybe you'd rather fuck me, instead?"

"No," Kurt said, his voice loud in the small space, and Puck laughed, his lips grazing Kurt's ear. He huffed. "No, you are definitely going to be the one doing that to me first, and I have not changed my mind, thank you very much."

"First?" said Puck triumphantly. "You're saying I've got a chance? Because I think I would definitely be down with that. A hundred and fifty thousand gay dudes can't be wrong. Not to mention all the straight guys who like buttfucking."

"God," moaned Kurt, feeling dizzy. "How can that word be so hot when you say it? I used to hate that word."

"What?" It was getting a little sweaty in there already. Puck reached out and brushed the hair out of Kurt's face. He watched Kurt's lips with avid interest, waiting to see what he'd say.

"... Fucking." Kurt whispered. "It always seemed so crude. Violent."

Kurt had no answer for that that made any sense. All the things he thought he ever wanted involving gentle hands and careful bodies had gone out the window the day Puck had brought him to the edge of climax by chaining him to his bed and spanking him.

"I don't want nice," he finally admitted, his hands reaching around to clutch Puck's ass. He watched Puck's eyes darken and listened to his breath catch as pulled him in against his body. "I want you to..." All the words seemed either inadequate or ridiculous. Fill me up. Take me hard. Give it to me. He couldn't imagine saying any of them aloud. But Puck didn't seem to care; he just ground right back against him with equal fervor.

"God, babe," he said roughly. Those strong arms were shaking, and Kurt knew it had nothing to do with not being sturdy enough to hold his body up. "You're not making this easy... but I'm not going to do you right here in the McKinley parking lot. If we have to use your car, so be it, but we're going to do it right."

Kurt followed Puck back to his house to park his truck, waiting with a jumpy stomach while Puck got the necessary items. If there was a time for him to back out, to decide that he wasn't ready, this would have been it. Instead, it was all he could do to keep his hands to himself when Puck slammed the back door and climbed back into the passenger seat, smiling reassuringly.

"We'll stop at your house to get the cuffs, and then I have a place we can park."

Kurt took a moment to glance around his room regretfully one last time. He wondered if maybe Puck had been right - would his dad have changed his mind if he'd just said if you don't let me fool around with Puck at the house, I'm just going to do it someplace more public and less safe? He clutched the leather cuffs with a sense of determination. It might not be ideal, but this was the way it was going to have to be for now. Anyway, the Navigator had been their safe space all semester.
Somehow this was fitting that they take this next step there.

He thought maybe Puck would take them to a municipal park or someplace, but that wasn't his destination at all. The snow had almost entirely melted along the dirt roads outside of town, heading north on Cole, when he pulled off onto a side street, up a hill and around a bend behind some trees. There was a little pond and a cleared space, and a beat-up old picnic table next to what looked like a broken tractor. Kurt looked quizzically at him.

"It's, um..." Puck gazed out over the pond, where there was still enough daylight to see the ducks making their home on the far end. "It was my dad's. He took off, but this is still here." He shrugged. "I think my Ma still thinks about putting a house out here, if she could save up enough for a down payment. For now, we're just gonna keep renting, but -"

Kurt gave up trying to keep his hands to himself, or his lips or any of the rest of his body for that matter. He leaned over as far as he could into the passenger seat, putting himself in the line of fire, and Puck stopped talking and started kissing.

"This," said Kurt hoarsely, "is perfect. Please."

Puck looked suddenly overwhelmed, like he might be ready to take off if Kurt said or did anything else, but it was short-lived. "Yeah," he said, taking Kurt's hand. "Come on. I'll go around to the back."

With both back rows of seats taken out, there was enough room to stretch out full length without bumping into anything. Puck had laid down two thick wool blankets, and on top of that there was a sheet and another blanket. He'd grabbed a couple pillows, but the chains hooked around the bottom of the front seats were what caught Kurt's attention.

"We can keep the motor running if you think you're gonna get cold," said Puck, closing the back hatch, "but I think it'll be warm enough." He ran his fingers along Kurt's arm, touching him more tentatively than he had been even minutes before. Kurt took his hands, held them in his own, and watched Puck's solemn expression thaw into a smile.

"Thank you," he said. "For giving me - so much. This, all of it, it's been so -"

"Yeah," Puck agreed, nodding. "Me, too. I mean... it's totally mutual."

Kurt couldn't be sure that Puck really understood what he'd meant, but watching his face, here in the back of his car, he thought maybe Puck might. He kissed him, with intent and focus, until Puck gave a little growl and buried both hands in his hair, jerking his head back to lave his throat with his tongue. Kurt sighed in exquisite relief.

"Can I...?" He touched the collar of Puck's t-shirt. "I want to undress you."

There was that flight-risk look again, but Puck just nodded silently, letting Kurt lift his shirt over his arms and head, touching as much skin as he could along the way. Kurt could hear the way Puck's breathing changed, feel the tension knotting in his back as he unbuttoned his jeans and dragged them off his hips.

Two naked boys was a very different situation than they'd usually had in Kurt's room. There, Puck had been in charge, and Kurt was ready to take his direction. Here, this evening, that wasn't their goal at all.
"You know I've never done anything like this before." Kurt rested his palm on Puck's rib cage, feeling his warmth and patience. Puck nodded.

"Hey," he said gently. "Me, either, kind of." He kissed him, no pressure, just soft and easy. "Still want to?"

Even in this quiet moment, outside of the passion and control, it still wasn't a real question. "Yes," said Kurt, and placed the handcuffs in Puck's hands. "I really do."

The handcuffs worked their magic, and by the time Kurt was stretched out on his belly, his arms extended and fastened securely to the carabiners, he was caught up in the intensity again. It was all Puck's hands, his strong thighs, his hips, the care with which he tucked the pillows under Kurt's chest, his erect cock pressed against Kurt's back as he leaned over him to kiss his neck. Kurt heard himself muttering a repeated phrase, something that probably sounded like begging, but Puck was just accepting it graciously as he did everything Kurt said or did.

"You look so fucking amazing like that," Puck promised him. He moved around to the side, scooting down to place his face right against Kurt's, kissing him hard until Kurt's moaning reached a peak. When he pulled away, however, it was to kneel beside him, stroking himself, letting Kurt watch with hungry eyes while he put the condom on.

"It was stupid not to use them with Quinn," he said. Kurt was paying only vague attention to his words; his focus was definitely on what Puck was doing with his hands, with the bottle of lubricant, slicking himself up. "You mean a hell of a lot more to me than she did, okay?"

The slick hand didn't wait for an answer. It moved between Kurt's thighs, spreading them open a little, positioning him where he wanted him. Kurt whimpered as he felt the drag against the pucker of his ass, trying not to thrust back. He knew Puck would give it to him when he was ready, but he couldn't keep himself from begging, "Please..."

"This is the part that's kind of new to me," admitted Puck, moving in to blanket Kurt's body with his own. "You're gonna have to tell me stop, and slow down, and ouch, and stuff like that, because I don't..." His dry hand tightened around Kurt's chest suddenly. "I don't want to hurt you."

Kurt laughed, because after all the things they'd done, all the hitting and pinching and biting and marking, it seemed absurd that Puck would be worried about hurting him. "You won't. I told you, I don't want nice. I want... what we have. This, with you; this is what I want." His laugh caught in his throat, and he swallowed the sob. "So much."

The hand slipped down between his legs to grip his cock, just as Puck's other hand landed on that space between his ass cheeks, pressing firmly inside. Kurt had been prepared for a little discomfort; this wasn't the first time Puck had ever touched him, nor the first time he'd touched himself there. But there was no discomfort, none at all, just a tumultuous desire, rolling over him and leaving him limp and gasping in Puck's arms.

"Yes," Kurt insisted, as Puck moved far, far too slowly, because he wanted him now, and he wasn't going to sit there and bargain for it, it was just going to have to happen now. The words that had seemed embarrassing earlier, here in the twilight became just something that needed to be said: fuck me, I need you inside me, right now, fuck me. He had no control over the words, any more than he could control the movement of his hips, seeking contact with Puck behind him, on top of him, pressing his fingers inside. Fuck me, now, please god, now.

"I've got you, babe," Puck said. His voice was shaky, but his hands were steady. He felt the fingers slide out, to be replaced with something thicker, piercing him. When Kurt cried out, Puck didn't
pull away, just waited, stroking his back, until he asked for more. It was probably no more than ten
or fifteen seconds total, but Kurt felt like he would always remember those first moments of Puck,
filling him, pressing him to the floor of the Navigator.

When he quivered and the tears came, Puck somehow knew that didn't mean he should stop. He
turned and kissed Puck's hand as it grazed his face, not caring about trace amounts of lube or
anything else, just needing him to feel him, loving him.

"I love you," he said.

And then Puck did stop, buried deep inside him. He made a noise of anguished frustration. "What
the hell, Kurt?"

"I - I'm sorry," Kurt blurted, aghast, but Puck was holding him tight, unhooking the carabiners and
dropping to his side on the blanket, pulling Kurt back into his arms.

"Fuck that. I just wanted to be the one to say it first." His lips were on Kurt's neck, his ear, his
cheek. "I've been holding back for way too fucking long, and now... you totally stole my
fucking line."

Kurt laughed helplessly, his head dropping to rest on Puck's bicep beneath him. "I didn't mean... I
mean, it was my line as much as yours." He bit his lip. "And it's - it's not too late for you to say it,
right?"

Puck gave the best diva sigh Kurt had ever heard, which just made him laugh harder. "Fine.
Whatever. I love you, goddamnit, even if you did steal my thunder." He snapped his hips forward,
jerking the breath out of Kurt. "And you feel incredible, babe, I can't even tell you."

"Really," Kurt promised, "you don't have to tell me anything, because believe me, I know."

Puck did tell him, though, over and over, holding him down with a heavy hand in the center of his
back, grasping his hips with both hands as he fucked him hard, whispering into his ear. How good,
how hot, how perfect he was. Kurt was overflowing with sensation and stimulation by the time he
gasped out his last, "Coming -" and felt Puck join him.

The Navigator wasn't a comfortable place to sprawl in the aftermath, but as Kurt had pointed out
before, he wasn't really going for comfortable. Intense, definitely, and overwhelming and beautiful
and satisfying, all of which were way, way more important than comfortable.

"I'm gonna say it again," Puck murmured, Kurt's head resting on his chest. "Because it wasn't just a
sex thing. A lot of people say it during sex, but that's not what it's about for me."

"Okay," said Kurt. He wasn't going to argue about it, or anything else. Not while he was feeling
like this.

Puck dug in the storage compartment between the front seats for the package of wet wipes,
cleaning them both up as much as was possible, and passed Kurt's clothes back to him one piece at
a time. Getting dressed was harder than getting undressed, especially with the delicious ache inside
himself, but Puck helped him, and eventually they opened the back hatch to sit on the edge, their
feet dangling into the chilly evening air.

"Your dad's gonna be home in ten minutes," Puck said. "How about we pick up some Doritos, go
back to your house and watch some shitty reality TV?"

Kurt smiled, gazing at Puck's profile in the dim light. He kissed him once more. "That sounds
excellent. I'll pass on the Doritos, though."

Puck made him stop at the gas station for the chips anyway. They pulled right into Kurt's garage next to his dad's truck. There would be no parking around the corner or hiding anymore. Kurt walked around to Puck's side and took his hand before he was even out of the car. They climbed the steps to the front porch while Kurt dug in his bag for the keys.

"I still mean it," said Puck.

It could have made him laugh, but Kurt found himself holding back tears instead. He just nodded. Puck held the door open for him as they walked inside together.

His dad was already cooking the fish, but even though his face was stern, Kurt could tell he wasn't really upset that they were fifteen minutes late. He gave their joined hands one brief look before saying, "Hey, guys, why don't you set the table for three. Puck, you'd better call your mom and let her know you're staying for dinner."

They watched Survivor reruns, their thighs pressed against one another on the couch. The Doritos left disgusting reddish-orange powder on Puck's fingers, and Kurt kept reaching over and handing him tissues to wipe them off. Puck just grinned each time, without a word of complaint.

It was just as they were going to commercial break that Puck leaned over and said it, murmured through his mouthful. Kurt waited for him to swallow the chips before wiping his lips and kissing him, right there on the couch in full view of his dad.

"I love you too," Kurt said. "Still. Again."

It was unseasonably warm the next day, and Finn wasn't entirely surprised to find Puck on his front porch before noon, holding the basketball with a hopeful smile. Finn opened the screen door and joined him, not bothering to call back to his mom that he was leaving. The park was only three blocks away, and she'd see Puck's truck and figure it out.

"Jesus," he sighed. "I knew it. Santana said no way, but I could tell how you were feeling. You're in love with him, aren't you?"

Finn guessed that was probably true. Whatever he'd had with Rachel, it didn't hold a candle to what Puck and Kurt had. He stuffed down the jealousy - yeah, he could see that pretty clearly now, and name it for what it was - and put on what he hoped was a brave smile. "I'm really happy for you guys."

They crossed the muddy grass to the blacktop. He gave the basketball a couple experimental bounces, testing the inflation, and shot at the hoop, hitting the tattered backboard. Puck caught it on the bounceback and passed it back to Finn for a second shot. It made him choke up a little for some reason, and he had to give himself a shake. Focus.

Focus didn't come easily, not with Puck there in his tank top. It wasn't like Finn hadn't seen him like that a million times before, but there was a big difference between the ordinary not-looking
between guys and the yes-fuck-looking he was doing today.

"Aren't you cold?" he had to ask. Puck laughed.

"I left my letterman jacket in the truck. And it's awesome out, yo." He spread his hands, the personification of awesome. "Must be all the shit we got up to last night, keeping me warm."

"I so don't need to hear that," Finn muttered. He shot another basket; this one went in, with a little too much contact with the rim. Puck's laugh was thick and teasing and made Finn grit his teeth.

"You really can." And now Puck was watching him back, the way Finn had been watching Puck. Finn felt the impact of his eyes on his skin, like Puck was touching him, all along his chest and stomach and legs. "I bet you'd like hearing it."

Finn sighed. "Maybe. Okay, yeah, probably, and it's... it's confusing." He bounced the ball, circling Puck, watching him watching him.

"Is it the stuff we were doing? Because it's not so weird, really, just the control, it makes him -"

"No, it's not," Finn interrupted. He tossed the ball at Puck, feeling unreasonably angry all of a sudden. "You guys, what you did, that wasn't it. That wasn't my problem."

Puck waited around for a good half a minute, trading baskets back and forth between himself and Finn, before he asked, "So what was? What's your problem?"

"My problem is that I liked it," he snapped. "All of it. What you guys did, what we did, talking about it, thinking about it. And then I had to sit there and listen to Burt tell me how great his son was, and all I could think was, yeah, he looks amazing when he's cuffed and chained to his bed. Maybe if I was brave like you, I could deal with it better, but I'm not. I'm just a fucking coward, and you guys don't need to deal with that shit."

Finn glared at him. "What?"

"You. Thinking you're not worth my time - our time." He shook his head. "What kind of a best friend do you think I am?"

Finn tried not to hunch in on himself, to try to disappear, because there was no point; he was enormous and awkward and he would be there, no matter what other people thought of that. And then Puck was there, hugging him, on the empty blacktop like it was the most normal thing in the world for two guys to be doing. Maybe it is, he thought, his brain thawing a little, and sighed, clutching at him for just a few more seconds before Puck would let him go.

When he didn't, Finn glanced around nervously, making sure there was nobody in the immediate vicinity. "Um... Puck?"

"Shut up," he murmured, his hands splayed on Finn's back, pulling him closer. Finn felt his sigh, and thought it might sound very much like contentment. He dared to run a tentative hand over Puck's head, feeling the beginnings of the mohawk growing back in, and sighed right back.

"You're not freaking out, here," Puck half-told, half-asked. Finn swallowed.

"Well, I'm in public, so there's that."
"Dude, you're not in public if there's nobody watching you. And who among your friends would be okay if I did this?" Puck grinned, reaching up to cup his hand behind his neck and - fuck, Puck was kissing him!

"Hey," Finn protested weakly, but it didn't stick. The protest was enough for Puck to let him go, though, and that hurt a lot more than it should have. Especially since he'd spent the last eight years feeling like he was playing the leader but Puck was actually the leader. He doesn't have to be your leader, his brain interjected, but he couldn't really listen when he was this turned on. But then Puck started talking, and he realized he was listening, he was really listening, and everything he said... made sense.

"You can like it. You can want it, both of us. I want it. Kurt wants it too, when he's not being a fucking drama queen about it. Having you there the other day, you belonged. You still do. You matter, and - fuck, can't I just -" Puck watched him with equal parts frustration and anger.

"Not in the park," Finn managed.

He carried the basketball under his arm, turning to walk away, and didn't bother to see if Puck was following him. But by the time they got back, though, Puck was worked up into an angry frustration. Without even checking to make sure they were actually alone, Puck shoved him up against the wall next to the kitchen door, one hand on his shoulder, holding him still. The other he let wander between Finn's thighs, letting him know he was loving what he was feeling.

"You, being hot for me," Puck told him, just before kissing him again, "is completely awesome."

"Yeah, well, I doubt Kurt's gonna think that," Finn gasped, trying really hard not to lose himself to the sensations inspired by Puck's touch. Puck stepped away, watching him warily. Then he sighed.

"I'm going to talk to him." He didn't look the least bit embarrassed or apologetic, which Finn wouldn't have expected from him anyway, but he did look serious. Finn felt both comforted and a thousand times more nervous at the same time.

"What are you going to say?" he asked.

"I'll figure it out." Puck reached down and picked up the basketball, taking a few more steps backwards, his eyes on Finn. Then he smiled. It was the same kind of smile Finn had seen on Puck's face fifteen minutes earlier when he'd been talking about Kurt - but this time, it was for him. He flushed, feeling hopeful for the first time since Puck had arrived on his front porch. Puck nodded at him, seeing Finn's reaction.

"Awesome," he echoed softly. "I'll see you later, man. Thanks for the ball."

Mr. Schue wasn't looking his best when he walked into Glee the next day. "Okay guys, listen up. This is Mr Ryan. He's a member of the school board, and uh, he would like to say a few words." He took a step towards his normal chair, then turned back. "I just want you to listen critically, and know that what he's saying is just one of many opinions."

Puck looked at Santana on his right, who shrugged one shoulder at him. Yeah, it had to mean something that Mr Schue sounded like he'd rather beat a cat to death than listen to what Mr Ryan had to say. But what choice did they have?

"Take out a piece of paper," the guy instructed. "And on that paper I want you to write down your biggest dream. A dream that means so much you're afraid to admit it, even to yourself."
Puck didn't even have to think it over. Well, it was obvious, wasn't it? He wanted a threesome. Not just the three of them having sex together, although that would already be a miracle. Rachel had poached Kurt at the beginning of practice, saying she had to talk to him. Santana and Brittany had similarly dragged him to where he was currently sitting, although that had been less about talk, and more both of them resting perfectly hairsprayed heads on either shoulder. Finn, on the other hand, was sitting in the most left chair in the bottom row, literally as far away as he could get from them while still sitting down. If Finn couldn't even handle sitting close to them because his feelings were overwhelming, there wasn't a chance in hell that Finn would get naked with them, kiss them, touch them.

No, if he was going to make this a dream, what Puck really wanted from them was a lot more than just sex. He wanted Finn to snuggle Kurt while he got the glass of water. He wanted to eat hoagies with Carole and get the talk as Finn got the same from Burt. He wanted to have to buy two boxes of chocolate for valentines day, and watch Finn eat an entire row in one sitting while Kurt had a treat a day. He wanted to take up the entire width of the hallway holding both their hands, and if anyone said anything, they'd just raise their arms and clothesline the fuckers.

3some, he scrawled down sideways on the paper. If Santana or Brittany looked over at his they'd just think he was a horny bastard. They wouldn't know about the feelings.

After giving them a minute to brainstorm, Mr Ryan walked forward. Puck expected the start of a shitty motivational speech about how their dreams were in reach, if only they tried and got good grades and didn't do drugs. Instead the man bent forward and tore the page out of Artie's notebook. Then he threw it in the garbage! Puck automatically pressed his notebook to his chest, and wasn't surprised when Brittany's fingers fluttered on the edge of hers. She wasn't built to take harshness from anyone that wasn't Sylvester.

"Your dream is never going to happen," he said, clearly and distinctly. "Ninety-one percent of you will spend your entire lives living in Allen County, Ohio. So unless you wrote down that your dream was to work for a mid-market health insurance provider, or find an entry level job in an elderly care facility, you're going to be very disappointed."

"This is really depressing," Mercedes muttered.

"I'm going to guess that a lot of your dreams involve showbiz. Well, let me tell you: showbiz dreams are the most unrealistic of them all."

"But that's what I want to do with my life." Puck twisted in his seat to look at Tina. He would have expected the comment from Rachel, or Mike, maybe. Not her.

"Look. I'm not trying to hurt your feelings. I'm just trying to spare you the disappointment."

Finn was looking at Mr Schuester desperately, expecting him to fix this. And because Finn was Finn, and meant more to him then some of the rest of them did, Schue spoke up. "I think we get your point."

Mr Ryan tilted his head and looked straight back at him. "Aww, Will Schuester's a prime example. He used to have that glimmer of hope in his eyes, that I can see right now in all of yours. But he couldn't make it happen for himself, so now he has to convince you all that it'll happen for you. Guess what. His dream didn't work out. And neither will yours."

Puck had wanted to hit adults before. More than once. Being ten years older didn't mean you escaped douchebag status. There was no automatic respect-of-elders in his playbook. Adults that earned it, got it - and few adults ever bothered to try to earn it. Some, the ones on the opposite end
of the spectrum, sort of deserved a good fist in the face. Even if Puck never actually followed through, he was perfectly fine with admitting the temptation was there. He had just never wanted to do it on behalf of another adult. The expression on Mr Schue's face... it hurt. Mr Schue was basically the only teacher in school to give a shit about any of them, and here was some random asshole ripping him apart with a fucking smirk, and doing it in a way that Mr Schue couldn't fight back. This wasn't one of Sylvester's random insults. This prick had gone for the heart, and Puck's 'Protect Glee Club' hackles were up.

It was at that moment that Tina started to cry. Puck bit the insides of his cheeks and shouted at himself that punching a school board member in the face would definitely end in expulsion. He could deal with detention, suspension, phone calls home, but he couldn't deal with expulsion. If he had a McKinley restraining order he wouldn't be able to protect anyone.

Thankfully, in the next moment, Mr Schue kicked him out. There was a little more banter, but Puck didn't bother to listen, focus entirely on not getting up and kicking the dude's skinny ass. His hands shoved into his armpits and Santana's hand on his knee both helped a little.

"I'm not the only one that wanted to slap him in the face, right?"

Puck nearly had to laugh. For every ten unfathomable things Quinn did, there was one slice of vicious bitch that just made sense to him. Picturing her five thin fingers bruising Mr Ryan's face pink was another undone notch on the belt of anger that was nearly strangling him.

"I can't condone violence," Mr Schue started. Everyone in the room heard the but. Then he shook his head, looking as discouraged as the rest of them did. "I can't see us getting much done today. If you want to call your parents now, you can. I'll keep the room open until our normal time."

Only a few of them actually left. Matt had been nagging Mike for weeks to get special shoes meant for dancing, Puck watched Mike finally fold and agree to go shopping. Matt was good at persuasion, it was why he and Puck and Santana got along so well. Finn visibly flinched when Santana and Brittany walked past him to leave together. Puck wasn't sure he'd get the full story on that, no matter who he asked; Finn would stammer and not use any quotes, while Santana would exaggerate to make herself sound more badass.

"What's your dream?" Puck asked, once he got bored watching his friends. Someone had pulled out a deck of cards, Finn and Rachel were playing Speed. Finn was really crap at it. Kurt wasn't holding Puck's hand, but his fingertips were playing a song on his knuckles.

Kurt smiled bitterly. "Stardom. One of the impossible ones."

"Fuck that. You can try out for a play this summer or something."

He nodded, but he didn't look convinced. "What's yours?"

It occurred to Puck too late that of course this line of questioning was reciprocal. "I won't lie, but you don't wanna know."

Kurt twisted to look at him. "Tell me."

"Threesome. I wrote threesome."

He shook his head, incredulous. "But...he said biggest dream. Something so big it scares you because you want it so much."

"And I said threesome," he repeated. He couldn't take it back now, no matter how stricken Kurt
"I thought we full-mouth-of-Doritos loved each other."

"We do! I do! I just. Come on Kurt, tell me you didn't feel it when he was holding your hand. I told him to go; you told him to stay."

"So this is my fault?"

"Love isn't a fault." Even though he had no idea what was going to happen, even if they were going to break up in the next five minutes, Puck was certain of that. He took a deep breath and dove in deeper.

"Look. I'm not saying I'm gonna work towards making it happen. It's a life-is-crazy-bullshit fantasy, okay? Like, how you could wish all the guys here were a little more put together and hygienic, but you're not gonna spend years synthesising a gene for fabulousness and then built a bomb and borrow a blimp to sail over Lima and drop it at the exact right time."

For a moment Kurt looked amused, and Puck thought this could possibly end without a storm out. Then his face shuttered closed again. "It's a fantasy, though."

"Kurt, I don't know what to tell you. I love you. A lot. I also... I love him, too. We've known each other for eight years. I have great sex with you, sex I'd be willing to shout about from the rooftops, by the way. But I know he wants to have sex with me, and I know you crushed on him way more than you did on me. Or am I supposed to forget the time you made Berry dress up like a whore to turn him off women?"

"I stopped crushing on him when we got together," Kurt said stiffly, before amending with, "Mostly." Puck latched on to that and continued, taking his hand and holding it tight.

"But, just... why should you have to? All I wrote down, was in a crazy world where no one feels things like jealousy or sadness, and Finn actually stops having the worlds longest sexuality crisis, in that world I'd want to have a threesome."

Kurt's face hardened even more. "It's dandy that you're being rational about how much you love other guys. But I'm about three seconds from bitch slapping you ala Moonstruck. So I'm leaving, before I ruin your pride and break a nail."

One look at Kurt had them both standing. Tina bent to quickly kiss Artie goodbye, and then they joined him at the door. Puck buried his face in his hands. He heard an exasperated sigh beside him.

"Lover's quarrel? Already?"

"Look, I'm sorry I got you pregnant," Puck snapped, "but you could stop being a cunt any day now." Then he grabbed his own backpack, and got the fuck out before Schue could bitch at him for language.
tried to suggest throwing rice or water pistols. Kurt was all for singing along, but that was a step too far.

"Thanks for the ride."

"You sure you're not going to get in trouble?" he'd asked at nine thirty, when they'd walked Mercedes to the door and hugged her goodnight, and Tina said she didn't have to leave yet, if he didn't want her to. It was a bit late for regret now, but Kurt still wanted to know.

"My parents don't really notice a lot of things. Guess how many report cards mentioned my stutter, which I didn't have at home? No, it'll be fine."

"I'll idle until you get inside."

Tina opened the passenger door and got out. Rather than closing it, she stuck her head back in. "It's cool that we were a good distraction. But if you want to actually talk about whatever the problem is, I'll listen." She paused, then seemed to realise that he wasn't going to be dropping any bombs. "Goodnight, Kurt."

"Night, Tina." The car door slammed shut and a minute later the lamp over the door was triggered by her passing underneath it. He waited until it turned off again before driving away.

He should have started driving home. It was going to be quarter to one by the time he changed into pajamas, and then he still had his skin routine to finish. Cheerios practice started at seven thirty. Nationals was speeding towards them, and Kurt knew practice was only going to get rougher. But what was the point in going to bed if he wasn't going to fall asleep? Better to just drive around the nearly empty streets of Lima.

He owed Puck...something. Not an apology, necessarily. Puck had hurt his feelings, and if hurting his back wasn't healthy, it was certainly within a normal set of reactions. Acknowledgement, maybe. What Puck had to say was hard to say, but he'd done it anyway, and not frantically taken it back when it was met with a negative reaction. That took courage.

Eventually Kurt drove to Puck's neighbourhood. If he wasn't going to sleep until they had this conversation, better now than three days from now when he was having hallucinations from sleep deprivation.

_I'm outside your house. Come talk?_

He didn't get a text back, but a minute later Puck came down the sidewalk, a hoodie half zipped over a bleach-stained shirt obviously meant only for sleep. Flannel pants and flip flops completed the look. Puck climbed into the Navigator, looking sleepy and unhappy. Kurt wanted him to smile, wanted to believe if he smiled at Puck, Puck would smile back, but couldn't bring himself to be that delusional.

"I shouldn't have threatened to slap you."

"If you had, you wouldn't have been the first," Puck muttered.

"I wanted to be better than those girls."

And that, Kurt rapidly realised, was part of the problem. Not all of it, not even most of it. But a fraction of their blow up earlier had been because Puck had been with so many girls that he couldn't count on one hand how many had slapped him. Then Kurt had come along, and for the last month, had been Puck's only boy. And just as Kurt had begun to truly be sure that Puck loved
him, wanted him, wouldn't ditch him for the newer, shinier model, Puck had said he loved more
guys than just him.

"You are, dude. Of course you are."

Kurt tried to make him see what he was feeling. "I can't be just another Cheerio you fuck and forget
about. Maybe at the start I wouldn't have cared. But you said it with your mouth full, fully dressed,
a room away from my dad. It wasn't a thing you said for sex. I need it to be true, Puck. I know
that's clingy and possibly creepy, but I really need it to be the truest thing you've ever said."

"It is, Kurt," he insisted. "It is. Even if we can't work this out - even if we're done and I get shit
from Matt and Santana for coming out for like two days - you can't doubt that I love you."

"You think we're breaking up?" His hands clenched on the steering wheel. Ten and two. Kurt had
to keep his hands on ten and two, and not shake Puck for saying such a good thing and such an
awful thing in the same sentence.

Puck dropped his head. His hands came up to rub his face, not that Kurt could see it because of the
hood. "Fuck. I don't want to. I just... I think that love can be multiplied, not divided. Not the way
Santana does it, because the way she does it just makes her hurt more. But the way we did it, the
one night. I can't look back on that and think I only felt half the affection once you and Finn started
holding hands. It's just not true. And it freaks me out to think that if you don't think that way, it
might be one of those fundamental differences people can't get over. Like a Republican and
Democrat falling in love, but even more personal."

"It didn't feel divided," Kurt said.

Puck paused, clearly about to say more, and stared at him. "What? But I thought-

"It hurt, in the Glee room. Because love is supposed to be two people, and even if the gender I love
doesn't make sense to people, at least I knew that one day I'd fall in love with one person. It didn't
matter that I had a crush on two people, because I knew it wouldn't work out with Finn. He's too
straight for me. If you loved both of us, than all those happily ever afters were just more things I
would never, ever get to have." Kurt crossed his arms, trying to hold it together long enough to get
all the words out. "But the fact is, my life isn't a movie. It's not like BDSM features heavily in rom-
coms and the classics, and I wouldn't change that part for anything. Why do I have to change the
fact that I love you and care a lot, more than just potential future stepbrothers, about him? Why do
I have to try to stop you from loving him? The more I think about it, the more it just seems stupid."

"Really?" Puck seemed scared to look at him, and how crazy was that? Puck always had the power;
there was nothing for him to be scared about. He reached out and took his hand.

"If you can honestly say that you love me, then you can love me and him equally. Differently, yes.
Me and Finn will never be the same type of person. But equally."

Puck finally met his eyes, shining with hope and other crazy things. "If I leap across the car to kiss
you, will you take it in the way it's meant, or will you think I'm trying to distract you with sex?"

Kurt slid his hand between Puck's face and the fuzzy fabric of his hood to lay it on his cheek,
smiling. "I want to kiss you straight through 'til Cheerios practice."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGH-4jQZRcc

You are the hole in my head
You are the space in my bed
You are the silence in between
What I thought and what I said

You are the night-time fear
You are the morning when it's clear
When it's over your start
You're my head, you're my heart

No light, no light in your bright blue eyes
I never knew daylight could be so violent
A revelation in the light of day
You can't choose what stays and what fades away
And I'd do anything to make you stay

Tell me what you want me to say

Through the crowd I was
Crying out and
In your place there were a thousand other faces
I was disappearing in plain sight
Heaven help me
I need to make it right

You want a revelation
You want to get right
But it's a conversation
I just can't have tonight

You want a revelation
Some kind of resolution
You are the revelation
Tell me what you want me to say

But would you leave me,
If I told you what I've done
And would you leave me
If I told you what I've become

'Cause it's so easy,
To sing it to a crowd
But it's so hard, my love
To say it to you, all alone

- Florence + the Machine, "No Light, No Light"
Puck was a little surprised Kurt was willing to eat donuts at all, considering how particular he was about what kinds of foods he'd consume. But Kurt stepped right up to the counter at Pat's and ordered two bacon donuts and a cup of coffee. "And cream, please," he added.

After their post-agreement makeout session in the Navigator the night before, Puck was feeling a lot less freaked out about the idea of being honest with Kurt. This shit was either going to break them up, or it was going to be the most awesome thing he'd ever attempted. Either way, he wasn't going to pretend he didn't want what he wanted. Still, when Kurt slid into the booth across from him, that tentative smile barely on his lips, Puck just wanted to wrap him up in his arms and keep him safe from anything that could remotely be considered to suck.

"So," he said, letting his hand rest within holding distance. Kurt didn't hesitate long before taking it and giving it a little squeeze. "I think if Finn's gonna get on board with this in any way, it's gonna have to come from both of us. And, let's face it, he's not leaping out of the closet any time soon."

"He's barely setting foot in the dressing room," Kurt agreed, nodding. "He almost had me convinced he really was straight. But I'm thinking if I make any big moves, he'll bolt. I still don't think I'm his type."

Puck thought of the way Finn talked about Kurt, with a kind of awed anxiousness. He guessed he could understand some of that, considering the way Kurt could reduce him to stupid primal instincts with one quiver of his lip. "I... don't think that's exactly the problem, babe."

Kurt sighed, biting into the first of his donuts. "It's irrelevant, if he can't deal with what he wants. He's a complete basket case in front of Dad and Carole. I mean, I get it; that's going to be incredibly complicated and confusing for him if we end up living in the same house."

Puck tried not to roll his eyes at how predictable Kurt was, but seriously? There was no way he was going to convince anybody that he hadn't planned it this way all along. "Yeah, I bet you can't wait to be able to slip into his bedroom in the middle of the night."

"Dude, I'm sure it would be completely consensual. Until his freakout the next morning. Which is
why we're going to take it easy. If you work on him from your end, and I'll do the same from mine, and get your fucking mind out of the gutter."

Kurt's outrage had apparently vanished in the face of this image, seeing as he was now almost doubled over in laughter. Puck didn't even bother to argue he hadn't meant it that way, because fuck yeah, he totally had, and the idea was becoming more and more compelling as he thought about it. He attempted to focus.

"Just be your awesome self, try to get him alone, and find as many ways to touch him as possible without actually involving your mouth. Finn's all about the casual hugging. Surround him with familiar stuff - video games, snacks and football - and he'll tell you everything he's thinking."

Kurt was still laughing. "I'm having a hard time believing you're giving me tips on how to seduce your best friend."

"Yeah, well, maybe I'm having a hard time believing I'm not going to have my own freakouts along the way, but as long as you can keep reminding me I'm not suddenly less important to you..." He waited for Puck's emphatic head-shake. "Yes. That helps a lot."

"And the idea of getting to do the wild thing with Hudson, I'm guessing that's a pretty strong incentive." He reached out and broke off a piece of maple-bacon sugar off Kurt's remaining donut, grinning at his expression. "No shame in admitting it. He totally does it for you."

"I may have had a few football player/cheerleader scenarios in my head." Kurt peeked at Puck. "And... what about you? Are you telling me you suddenly noticed you were interested in Finn like that, after all these years?"

"It's not exactly like that." Puck's mind traveled back through scores of moments he'd had with Finn since elementary school, many of which could easily have been put in the never forget this box. "I know stuff about him, and he knows stuff about me. Stuff you can't really talk about, because there aren't any words for it. It's just, there's a lot to be said for time together, and we've had a hell of a lot of it."

"Yeah." Kurt went quiet. "You know it's hard to compete with that, right?"

"Not a competition. Nobody's getting replaced or substituted here. It's you, and me, and him. That's it." He made sure Kurt saw his eyes, and nodded agreement, before going on. "Whatever you guys have, that's for you. Whatever we have, that's for us. And the three of us, together..." He found himself unable to get the words out. Kurt seemed to understand this, because he nodded, watching Puck with a little smile.

"It's amazing enough to know you really want this, with me," he said softly. "But I love the idea that I can help you get something else you really want, too."

Puck crammed the rest of his donut in his mouth. "You'd better drink that coffee, Hummel," he mumbled through the mouthful, "before I take you back to your car and show you what else I really want."

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Finn hadn't realized that one of the benefits of Kurt's dad and his mom dating was that he had Kurt around to help him with his homework. And by *help he meant explain it over and over again and eventually sigh and do it for him. He felt a little embarrassed the first time, asking him to go over*
something as they both sat at the dining room table after one of their excruciating Friday family
night dinners. He figured he should have been able to understand it on his own. But when Kurt had
made a 45 minute lecture on supply and demand intelligible with a few clear, concise statements,
Finn had just grinned at him and decided he wasn't going to look this particular gift horse in the
mouth.

"Can I listen to your American history notes?" Finn reached for Kurt's bag, hanging on the back of
the chair. Kurt gave some vague affirmative, not looking up from his trigonometry, and Finn pulled
the bag into his lap, rummaging in the front pockets for Kurt's voice recorder. Kurt had taught him
this crazy-useful study technique where he'd listen to the lecture while reading Kurt's ridiculously
organized notes, and everything would just fall into place. He'd even gotten an A- on the test. It
was nice not to feel so dumb for a change.

Finn reached over and put a spontaneous arm around him, giving him a half-hug. "Thanks, man.
You're the... uh."

Kurt had turned to him, his eyes alight with something disturbingly intense. Finn kind of wanted to
shrink back from it, but he could barely move.

"You, too," Kurt whispered.

Finn felt it in his chest, a tickle that spread lower. Then Kurt turned back to his homework as
though nothing had happened. Except clearly something had, and now Finn was completely
distracted from the Great Depression. How was he supposed to study like this?

"Dad," called Kurt casually, without looking up from his notebook, "Puck's going to come over in a
half hour to work on a project with me and Finn."

"Oh." Burt turned from his seat on the couch next to his mom, looking quizzically at Finn. "If that's
okay with Finn."

Finn licked his lips, trying not to do the table-tennis thing between Kurt on one side and Burt and
his mom on the other. "Oh... well, you know..."

"Up to you," Kurt whispered, low enough that only Finn could hear. He shifted his knee, bumping
against Finn's leg. It was gentle, but the resulting impact tremors reached places inside him he was
only beginning to realize were there.

Next time, babe, I'm gonna screw you into the mattress, came the echo.

"That'd be... good," said Finn. He unclenched his hand from where it was gripping the edge of the
table. "Yeah, Puck could help with... this thing."

He heard Kurt make a little noise, just a tense little sigh, and Finn had this sudden awareness that
Kurt was probably hard, just as he was hard, and that in a half hour that might be addressed in a
couple very specific ways.

God. If he'd thought he'd been distracted before, that was nothing compared to what he was feeling
now. Was he really going to do this?

He'd been watching them over the past week since Puck had come out, seen them snap and
grumble at each other and settle into the familiar patterns of couplehood. It had felt surprisingly
comforting to see that happen. Yesterday he'd seen Puck laugh at something Kurt had said before
Glee, and lean in, completely calm, and kiss him right in the middle of everybody. Finn had been a
little embarrassed, but a lot more pleased, like he just wanted to hug them both. As if that wouldn't
Finn moved his leg, just enough for it to rub against the side of Kurt's thigh, scraping against the outside seam of his jeans. There came that quiet pleased noise again. It wasn't too intimidating. It was even... nice, kind of, to know he was making Kurt feel like that.

Kurt reached for his phone, holding it out in front of him, within easy view of both of them, and tapped out a text to Puck.

*If you're not busy in a half hour, Finn said yes.*

And nice became freaking terrifying, in the span of three seconds. Finn pushed his chair out suddenly, making a squeak on the floor, and stood, heading for the kitchen with a racing heart.

Kurt waited a good two minutes before he joined him. "Did I do something wrong?"

Finn shook his head, not turning from the fridge, where he was perusing the confusing leftovers in the back. "No... no, it's fine."

"Dad and Carole are going to head out in ten minutes." He heard Kurt come to lean beside the refrigerator door. "We should actually finish our homework. And any time you want to talk, we can stop and do that."

Talking about any of this was the very last thing Finn wanted to do. He was completely opposed to the talking part. Everything else, he might be able to handle, if only they didn't make him *talk* about it. "No... no, I'm okay."

He heard Kurt sigh. "Can I at least hug you?"

Finn closed the door on the food he wasn't really hungry for, and turned toward Kurt. A hug. He could do that. It wasn't so different from -

"Oh, shit," he blurted, as Kurt's arms went around him, pulling him close. And Kurt made that little sweet noise thing again, only this time he made it right *in his ear*, and that plus Kurt's body plastered against his was like six thousand times more hot than he ever expected. And yeah, he'd been right about Kurt being hard. He had no idea what to do with his hands, so he left them on Kurt's back, holding him and shaking a little and listening to him breathe.

"It's okay," said Kurt, soothingly. "We talked about you, and it's okay, whatever you want. You don't have to worry about it."

He actually hadn't been worried, until Kurt said something. But then he realized how it might seem to one or both of them, in this new relationship, kind of, to have somebody else there. Not that he was all that distracting compared to the two of them, but it was definitely inspiring some guilt to imagine getting in their way. "I don't have to do anything," he began, but Kurt put a finger on Finn's lips, shaking his head.

"We want you there," he said. "Both of us. Please."

"Mmm," said Finn, not daring to move his mouth any more than that, because that would involve his lips and possibly his tongue on Kurt's fingers, and then there would be the mailman and he'd have to drive home to get a clean pair of jeans. Instead he took a cautious step backward, letting his hands drop back to his sides. "I'm gonna... my homework. Yeah."

Kurt was kind enough to give him a little space, so he put his headphones on and let himself listen
to the American history lecture. Even Kurt's ultra-neat, color-coded notes were distracting him; they were too much like Kurt himself, tidy and focused and far, far too good for him. He had no idea how Kurt had talked Puck into this thing. Or maybe it had been Puck who'd done the talking-into? The idea made his skin buzz all over, like he was using one of those back massagers and he wasn't quite pressing hard enough. He rubbed his arms briskly.

Then his mom was there, touching his hand, and he took the headphones off quickly. "We're heading out," she said, kissing him. "Don't stay here too late. I'll be home later."

"'Kay," he replied, trying to smile without it looking completely fake. "Have fun. I'll... we'll be here. With Puck." *Jesus, couldn't he just shut up now?*

But nothing happened. Burt waved, and his mom closed the door behind him, and he listened to them pull away in his mom's car. And it was just him and Kurt.

"I'm going to finish my math," said Kurt. He'd relocated to the couch after Burt and his mom had vacated it. "Don't forget to put my recorder back in my bag when you're done. You left it on the table the other day."

"Sorry," he said, and Kurt must have heard something of what he was feeling in his voice, because he turned to look at him, leaning on the back of the couch.

"That night. After you left." Kurt waited, as though there could be any possible doubt in either of their minds as to which night he was talking about, but Finn nodded anyway. "I wish you'd have stayed. To hold my hand, for the rest of it."

Finn was afraid to make any kind of noise. If he said something like *rest of it?* Kurt would tell him what had happened, and he wasn't sure he wanted to know, and if he said something like *I don't want to know,* Kurt wouldn't tell him, and he wasn't sure he wanted that either. He just waited, holding his breath, until Kurt turned back around to pick up his pencil and resume his trig.

He had pretty much given up on anything else useful entering his brain, and was packing Kurt's notebook carefully back into his bag, when the front door opened. By half-turning, he was able to watch Puck come through the door, drop his bag at the top of the stairs, then cross into the family room to lean over the couch and - oh.

Well, of course, they would, he told himself. It was just surprising, somehow. And it wasn't like he'd never watched them kiss like this before, because he had. And it also wasn't like he couldn't remember every little detail of that, including the wet, slippery noises their lips made when they met. Things hadn't changed all that much in a week.

"Finn," said Puck, his voice charged and anticipatory. "C'mere."

"We should go downstairs," said Kurt, but Puck's hand kept him from moving too far.

"Not yet. Finn... just sit here on the couch, next to Kurt."

Knowing what he was agreeing to made it easier. He came over and sat down beside Kurt on the couch. Puck walked around to crouch in front of them. Finn was expecting some kind of a gentle talk, maybe a lecture about not hurting his boyfriend, but he didn't think Puck would just pick up where he'd left off, kissing Kurt, less than two feet from his face. Kurt made an exclamation into Puck's mouth, and when his hand went out, clutching, Finn didn't have to think before clasping it tight. He also didn't take his eyes off their connected lips.

"Yeah," said Puck, sounding satisfied. "I always knew you were listening from the back seat on all
those double dates."

Finn tried to feel huffy, but he really couldn't, not when Kurt responded to Puck's comment with a muffled groan, moving his other hand to Puck's thigh. Finn tracked that movement, watching Kurt knead the tight muscle with his fingers. Then Kurt adjusted his hold on Finn's hand, tugging it over to rest on the same thigh he'd been touching. Finn wasn't at all sure he'd ever touched Puck there before, other than accidental brushes or nudges. He tried the squeezing thing Kurt had done on the thigh, wondering what Puck might do.

What Puck did was to reach over and cup Finn's head in one hand, pulling him into a kiss. Again, not like it was the first time they'd done that, but never in front of Kurt. He had no idea why that would make such a difference, but -

"Oh, wow," murmured Kurt, as Puck shifted to kneel in front of Finn, keeping the kiss going. Finn wasn't going to be the one to end it, not if he could make Kurt's breathing go all loose and erratic like that, and not as long as Puck was doing that thing with his teeth on his bottom lip. Eventually Puck did stop, keeping their heads together. It was almost hotter to have his mouth right there against his, not quite touching, feeling the hot puffs of air on his skin.

"You know what you want?" Puck asked.

Here was the talking part. Finn tried to gather his thoughts. "I want to... do stuff. I just don't know how much I can really do. Like, probably not all the things in my head are things that I could actually do." Finn had thought about the paddle thing, for example, and what it would be like being the giver or the receiver. It probably wouldn't be as good in real life as it was shiny and glossy in his head.

Kurt squeezed his fingers, linked through his. "It's okay, Finn. We didn't do everything immediately either. First we sat in my car, talking about it, about all of it. Where we were going to do it, and when. Who was going to fuck whom."

Finn swallowed, hard. It was the first time he'd ever heard Kurt use that word. It sounded so dirty coming out of his pristine mouth. He couldn't think of what to say, because he couldn't say hearing you say that is so hot, but Kurt was already going on, shifting closer to him on the couch, speaking the words in a hypnotizing monotone.

"We picked me, though. We decided that Puck would get to fuck me first. We drove to private property and folded down the seats and laid out in the back. We kissed and he pulled my hair. The only other time Puck's pulled my hair was when I blew him for the first time. I'm not sure he knows how much I love it, how hard it makes me."

Finn could picture that. He could picture the future too, now that Puck knew for certain; Kurt's scalp pink, his dick hard and smearing precome on his stomach, maybe a torn strand or two left on Puck's fingers. Puck let out a faint groan, kissing Kurt's neck, but Kurt had more to say.

"I laid on my stomach then, and he cuffed me. Not wrist to wrist, but arms stretched out. A little like the first time I did anything at all, except there he was, rubbing his cock on my back as he kissed the nape of my neck. Finn, it was so mindblowing, something so sexual and so gentle at the same time."

That kind of described everything they did, though: sexy and gentle and rough all at once. Finn moved restless legs, gravitating toward Kurt.

"And then he started to finger me." Kurt's hand moved to the inside of Finn's thigh, fingertips
nearly underneath him. Finn shifted, unsure if he wanted Kurt's hand on his dick or off him altogether. He ended up slouching, legs spread a bit more. Instantly he regretted his change in position because it let Kurt's fingers wedge underneath him more closely. They were perfectly positioned, right against him.

"Everyone should get fingered, Finn. Honestly. Straight or gay or bi. There's nothing like someone wanting you enough that they want to put bits of themselves inside you. It's not just a physical thing. It feels good, yes. Great. Your body stretches and sighs and moans and just needs it. But it's a head thing too. They want you. They need to be inside you because just touching you isn't close enough."

"It isn't enough," Puck replied, his voice low. "Once you make that move, you can never take away that feeling. Your boy just opening around you, because his body knows where he belongs. You just never want to stop. You want to fuck him, fuck into him until you're both sweaty and exhausted and starving. You want to get hard again, as soon as you come, because you're supposed to be inside him and you can't do that with a soft dick. You want to be hard for the rest of your life, if that's what it takes."

"Oh," Finn whispered, "oh, god."

Then's Kurt's fingers twisted, divoting the fabric between his cheeks, and pushed up hard. Finn could feel it through two layers of clothing. His jeans and underwear did nothing to dull the feeling of Kurt pressing almost exactly over his asshole. Finn threw his head to the side, grinding his face into the cool fabric of Kurt's couch. God, god, he was about to die, because he was coming so hard his head was going to explode.

Kurt's face was absolutely glowing with satisfaction, watching Finn lose it like that. He didn't seem to be having any fear about getting closer to Finn, but the less distance Finn felt between them, the more worried and trapped he felt. "W-wait," he said, trying to put the game on pause, or something equally benign. He needed a break from their intense eyes.

Kurt sat back, reluctantly taking his hand away as he exhaled. "That was... so hot."

Puck stood. "Yeah. I think basement, now."

Kurt took the lead down the stairs, Puck close enough behind to accidentally drive his knee into Kurt's back, if he wasn't careful. Finn hesitated at the top of the stairs. It shouldn't feel like the basement was a trap. He knew, beyond the confusion and everything else that neither had any interest in forcing him to do things he wasn't willing to do. Still, it felt like the basement was the Boss level of Super Mario Brothers. Once he entered the room, the game would be on.

Puck and Kurt weren't looking behind themselves to see if he was coming. They just thought he would. It was a fair likelihood; it wasn't like he'd given any hint of not wanting to join. For that matter, Shawn would murder him if he didn't participate in this as fully as they both knew he wanted to. Screw it. Finn would do this. He would let his dick talk instead of his brain, and worry about it later. He started down the stairs.

"We should get naked. Uh. Before we get on the bed. Because it's hard to get undressed without standing up." Not that he knew what he was talking about. Finn's experience had all happened earlier in the year, before Mrs Not-Schuster-Any-More gave him the drugs, when he just fell asleep everywhere and then woke up at one in the morning with his jeans cutting off the circulation to his legs. Still half asleep, it had been almost impossible to get his belt undone and his jeans kicked off.
"Creamed pants a little uncomfortable?" Puck grinned. Finn dropped his eyes. There was nothing he could say. He'd always finished too fast, even when he tried not to.

Kurt didn't stick up for him. Not really. He just started stripping, making it obvious he agreed with Finn's statement. Finn could have guessed he was turned on from the stuff upstairs. He'd called it hot, after all. But there was a difference between thinking Kurt was probably hard, and seeing his erection as he put his clothes in his hamper. Puck was visibly hard too, front of his pants bulging. And Finn had just wasted his, like an idiot.

Finn only had a second to feel like the odd man out before Puck swaggered over to him, undid Finn's buckle and unzipped his jeans. With both ends of his belt hanging loose Puck tugged down, hard. Finn's pants dropped to the floor, but his underwear only shifted down a little. Finn had his hands as far as the waistband to finish the job before Puck's hands clamped over his, forcing him to stop. He was silent, but there was a look in his eyes. I've got this. Finn had seen it a hundred times over the years. He kept his fingers flat against his sides when Puck moved his off. He'd let Puck have this.

Puck dropped to his knees then. He hooked his thumbs underneath the elastic and pulled until the underwear was at Finn's knees, then let go. The lack of tension let them drop the rest of the way off. Puck's hand curled around his heel and Finn followed the instinct to pull his foot up. Puck switched feet and Finn did it a second time, giving Puck the chance to unhook the pair completely. Then, as Finn shifted and wondered what would happen next, Puck shuffled in a step or two and licked his soft, come-covered dick.

Finn lost time, then. He probably made a noise, or swore. He definitely did some involuntary movement, because the next thing he knew Kurt was behind him, shoring him up. Finn threw his head back as Puck took a second long lick. He was so fucking sensitive his dick couldn't tell if it was painful or not.

"Dude," he said weakly, when Puck crawled back beside him. "That was my first blowjob." He didn't know who he was saying it to. Finn just felt like he wanted it to be said. It didn't seem like something Puck and Kurt would mock him for, not like Santana would have.

"I don't know if it counts. I didn't make you come when your dick was in my mouth. Hell, I didn't even make you come before, to clean it up."

"Finn gets to decide what counts for him," Kurt replied, a hint of reproval in his voice.

"Right. Yeah." Puck stood, his next words half muffled by him lifting his shirt off his head. "So I was thinking about what we were saying upstairs, babe. I've been in you, but you haven't been in me. Isn't that just a damn shame?"

Kurt walked around Finn to plant a kiss on Puck's neck. "Practically criminal." He held out his hand, and Finn took it, allowing himself to be led to Kurt's bed. It had about a thousand pillows on it, probably enough to blanket the floor. Finn pushed all of them off except for one for Kurt and Puck to put their heads on, then sat at the top of the bed, beside the pillow. He'd get the best view in the world of them kissing, and if he felt braver he could scoot down the bed.

The plan was instantly foiled when Puck ignored the pillow and rested his his head on Finn's thigh. The margins of his mohawk were a bit ticklish, but not nearly enough to cause him to squirm away. Finn put one of his hands on Puck's shoulder. He was in the wrong position to hold Puck down, and Puck wouldn't want that anyway, but Finn wanted to touch him.

A second later the other half of Finn's plan fell apart. Puck bent his legs and Kurt crawled between
them, and Finn didn't have to be brave and pick a different angle to know Kurt was sliding a lubed finger into Puck's ass. The look of bliss on Puck's face made it obvious. His eyes were fluttering open and closed. His mouth was open, just a bit.

"Puck," Kurt was whispering as he leaned in, "love you, you're so hot like this."

Finn could have felt jealous at Kurt's words. He probably would have, even yesterday. But right now, eyes skittering back and forth between Kurt's rocking hand and Puck's tongue between his teeth, Finn didn't feel left out. He felt inextricably a part of this. He bit his own lip for a second, then did what he wanted; he pushed two fingers past Puck's lips. Puck made a surprised oh, then opened his mouth to take him inside, and fuck, yes, there was that never want to stop they'd mentioned earlier.

When Kurt pulled back a little, fiddling with the bottle of lube, Finn guessed that meant he was adding another finger. The angle made it impossible for him to see the exact moment Kurt pushed back in with two, but he could feel the moan Puck let loose. Finn stroked his fingers along Puck's palette, and groaned when Puck fought back, flicking his tongue on the fleshy web between Finn's index and middle.

"Finn," Kurt interrupted.

"Yeah?"

"You're supposed to use three, generally. I've got two. Do you want to do the third?"

Finn didn't consider for an instant saying no. He grabbed the pillow and shifted Puck's head to rest on it as neatly as he could, then moved so fast down the bed it was practically teleportation. Puck stretched his legs out even further. He was no Brittany, but it was a decent imitation of the splits. Close as Finn was to Kurt, there was more than enough room for them both.

Kurt used his still wet left hand to slick up Finn's right. For a second all he could think was that this was the best version of holding hands yet. Then Puck murmured, "Come on, man," his voice ridiculously gentle for the situation they were in. Finn put a hand on Puck's hip for some leverage that he didn't really need, because there was just nothing better to do with it, then pushed his index finger in along Kurt's. Physically it didn't feel that much different than when Santana had him do it, before he'd fucking her. In his head, though, it was a thousand degrees different. This was intimate. This was Kurt and Puck, loving each other, and he was joining them.

He crooked his finger, praying silently that that Puck would like it. Beside him Kurt's were working in and out. Finn wasn't sure he could match his tempo, it was a movement thing and Mike and God knew he couldn't do movement things, so he just kept curling his. Whether it was Kurt's penetration or the angle of his own finger, Puck sure as hell was reacting to something. His cock was dark with blood, and his hands were fisted, grasping the covers like he didn't dare touch himself.

Finn didn't want to stop when Kurt eventually said, "Enough." It didn't seem like there could ever be enough of this, but Kurt was insistent. "Finn, get up and get me a condom, from my nightstand. Rip it open. Both my hands are sticky, you have a clean one."

Watching Kurt put on the condom was stupidly hot. There hadn't been any health classes in Finn's junior high, and he hadn't paid a lot of attention in freshman year; the thing with the hot tub had been proof enough of that. But watching now, Finn couldn't help but think if some teacher had just explained how fucking turned on it would make him to see his lover unroll a life-saving piece of latex along his six inches of hard cock, he wouldn't have been the only one to actually listen.
He stayed where he was as Kurt pushed his way inside Puck. It was the best seat in the house, and Finn wanted to see everything. When Puck grunted, bringing Kurt's movements to a standstill, Finn didn't know what to say, so he just rubbed Puck's leg. The hair was rougher than he'd expected. He'd never really thought about rubbing a guy before.

"Fuck me, Kurt. Now."

Well, fuck. If that wasn't the best phrase in the world, Finn didn't know what was. Even though it wasn't him doing it, Finn was so fucking happy to hear those words. Kurt slowly pushed the rest of the way in, and when Puck didn't make any more unhappy noises, rocked back out, then back in again. As he started to increase his tempo, Finn couldn't help himself. He reached over and put a hand on Kurt's ass. Kurt made a delighted little noise that Finn wanted to eat right out of his mouth.

With each thrust, Finn could feel the muscles in Kurt's ass contract. Almost absentmindedly, he curled his hand around his own dick. He stroked himself to the beat of Kurt's muscles, never once taking his eyes off Kurt's cock moving in and out of Puck.

Finn came again before either of them did. He wasn't surprised, and he wasn't ashamed. How could he be, with his come scattered across Puck's thigh, dripping down to the sheet beneath him? It was hot. He just hoped Kurt would pull out and come on Puck too. Then he decided he was feeling brave enough that hoping wasn't going to cut it. He leaned in, close enough so that Kurt's bare shoulder brushed against his chest.

"Would you come on him? It would be really hot."

"Hot.

Puck stiffened, gulped, then asked "Puck. Is that-?"

Puck's response was quick and tense. "Oh, god, babe, you should definitely come on me."

Finn had asked permission, and Puck had said yes, and now Kurt was doing it, pulling out and jerking himself off. That question and answer made the whole thing so much better. They were so good when Puck took over. Apparently Puck thought so, too, because his hips snapped up once, twice, and he came, untouched. Kurt was on top of him before his dick even stopped pulsing, kissing him, touching his face like it was something rare and precious, murmuring words of love. Finn just rested his hand on Kurt's back for several long moments, feeling their connection and trying to make sense of it all.

"Finn," said Puck, "could you get a glass of water? Just one, we can share. At this point I'm thinking germs aren't much of a concern."

Finn was halfway to the bathroom when it hit him. Puck had asked for something, and he was just doing it. Without even thinking about it, or bartering for a different favour. He was like Kurt. And he'd gotten Kurt stuff earlier, before the sex started. Was he Kurt's Kurt? Was he both of theirs? Holy crap. He was. And he still wanted Puck to fuck him. Ten seconds after having sex with both of them, he already was back to wanting Puck to fuck him into the mattress. Holy crap.

He managed to grab his jeans, his shirt and one sock and get almost all the way up the stairs before he started to hyperventilate. He could hear Kurt calling after him, and Puck's tired response: "Leave him, babe." That made him feel even worse, knowing that Puck had predicted this, and was letting him run away, again. But there was nothing that would make him go back down into the basement, not with the new awareness of what was going on between him and Puck and Kurt heavy upon him. He struggled into his clothes and put on his shoes over one bare foot, and left the front door standing ajar as he began the long walk back to his house.
Puck thought it was cute when Kurt ran down the risers to snatch the first bedazzled jean jacket out of the box. And when Mercedes joined him. And when Brittany ran for the tear-away pants. It was all very nice, it just wasn't trustworthy. Gifts always came with a price, even if it was just being forced to feel grateful.

Of course it all fell apart a few minutes later. Sylvester came in and dropped a truth bomb in the worst way possible, because that was just the sort of person she was. Then Mr Ryan had a temper tantrum, complete with snatching Kurt's jacket from his hands. Puck couldn't bring himself to be surprised.

"He's not really gonna cut the program?" Matt asked.

"He can't. We're weeks away from Regionals!"

Puck sat silently as everyone began to self-soothe with faulty logic. Mr Ryan was going to cut the program, because Mr Ryan was a fucking prick. He was a prick with authority, which inevitably meant he was going to abuse it. There was no sense in saying that, though. Bringing everyone down to reality would make him the bad guy. When they got the official news, Puck really didn't want to be the guy that everyone turned to saying you were right, I hope you're happy.

"You think he's going to cut Glee, don't you?" Kurt asked on their way to the parking lot.

"I have no idea. I think that authorities don't ever think about what they're doing when they're proving a point."

Kurt leaned over and planted a quick kiss on his jaw. "Well, we both know that's not always true, don't we?"

Puck eyed his smug smile. "I dunno what you mean."

"You knew exactly what you were doing the first time you spanked me. You knew every second of it, what was happening to me."

Puck swallowed. "I think that's a little different..."

"No," Kurt said firmly. "It's not. And you can do it again. Right now. Let's take a drive."

"Kurt, tell me you didn't bring that paddle to school." Puck watched Kurt's expression shift toward guilty. He sighed, climbing into the car. "For fuck's sake, that's worth a spanking right there. First of all, since when am I an authority over you?"

He bristled a little as Kurt laughed. The amusement rankled, but Puck waited patiently for his answer as Kurt turned the ignition.

"I'm honestly not sure I know how to answer that," he said. "You take control from me in so many different ways, but it all feels right, and easy, and satisfying. I don't want you to do things differently."

"I'm not saying I will. But you wanting it isn't the same as me being, like, the drill sergeant standing over you barking orders."

"Okay, that's oddly really hot, even though I am about as anti-military as they come." Kurt turned north onto Cole without even asking where they were going. "No, you're not like that."

Yeah, that cocky smile definitely had to go. "But you see me as an authority figure? I'm really not
"I think we have a difference of opinion about what authority means, Puck. You organized this whole situation with me. You learned what you needed to keep me safe, and stepped in without hesitation, more than once. You caught me, and took care of things, before, during and after. You always make me feel safe and willing to let go." Kurt shook his head, still smiling. "Do you know how unusual that is for me?"

"I think I've got some idea, yeah." He watched Kurt navigating the familiar dirt road to his dad's property with feelings that threatened to overwhelm him. Which wasn't at all what Kurt needed right now, so he'd better figure out an outlet for that pretty damn soon. "I'm really glad... I mean, glad doesn't even begin to touch how good it feels you want that from me. But this business with the paddle - doesn't it have to be my suggestion? You tell me you want it, but it's my decision if you, like, need it. It's not like I'm just spanking you to get you off."

"No," said Kurt, sounding a little faint. He pulled the car in under the buckeye tree, turned it off and rested both hands on the steering wheel. "And... really, that would be fine too? But that's not what I'm asking for, here."

Puck felt a little dizzy himself at the idea of Kurt getting off just from the spanking, but he was going to make his point. "But you, asking for it... doesn't that take away some of the effect? Topping from the bottom, you know?" Kurt gave him a blank look, so he added, "You're pushing me into doing it. You say you want me in charge, but you're doing everything you want, at your pace. How is that letting go?"

Kurt sighed, looking a little hurt. "I never pretended to be perfect at this."

"Hey." He touched Kurt's arm, firmly enough to let him know he was really there. "Babe, that's not what I'm saying either, and you know it. I'm saying if you want this authority thing, you've either got to let me handle it when I think you need it, or be ready to ask for it. Or else I don't think it's really gonna work."

Kurt blinked, catching his breath. "Ask for it?"

"Yeah." Puck let his hand slide up to Kurt's shoulder, gripping it. "Nicely."

He watched Kurt's focus fracture, skating all over the dashboard, and managed to keep the victorious smile off his own face. Kurt thought he knew what he was doing, but he was really flying blind, mostly, and every little bit of feedback Kurt gave him that it was working for him was precious.

"Um... okay." Kurt licked his lips and looked back at him with new resolve. "I... think I really need a spanking."

Yeah, that was definitely better, and Puck was immediately both rock hard and on the edge of fucking tears. He reached across to the driver's seat and gathered him in with a murmured, "C'mere," and Kurt leaned on his shoulder and shook for a few minutes.

"Was that hard to say?" he asked.

"Yes. But maybe not for the reasons you think." Kurt wiped at his eyes with the heel of his hand. "When you did that for me, the first time, I had no idea how much I was going to appreciate it? Yes, it was hot, and that was hard enough for me to admit, but... I felt so good afterwards. For days, which I decided meant it wasn't just about endorphins."
Puck was listening with half an ear, because although he was agreeing with everything Kurt was saying, having him this close, his hair within smelling distance, curled up in his arms, he was definitely ready to stop talking. He coaxed Kurt's face up with a kiss, and when he felt him begin to respond, he wound his fingers in his hair and jerked his head back, loving the way Kurt's eyes flew open and the moan that escaped from his mouth.

"You're ready now," he said evenly. "Get in the back and take those jeans down, just to your knees."

He watched Kurt jump to obey with absurd satisfaction, following him into the back. This might be better than getting him off, he thought, shaking his head at himself. Which could have been a little scary, if he hadn't been in such ridiculous fucking love with him.

Kurt was on his knees, rooting for the cuffs in the storage space behind the wheel well. He brought out the paddle as well, along with condoms and lube, setting them next to the pillow. It occurred to Puck, as he fastened the cuffs around Kurt's wrists, that having a pillow and blankets in the back of the Navigator with the seats removed was a little obvious, and all Burt would have to do to guess what they were up to was take a peek into his son's car. As long as Kurt wasn't worried, though, he wasn't going to bring it up.

"I don't think you need the paddle today, babe," he said, hooking each wrist to the chains fastened under the back seat. "You need to feel my hand on you."

Kurt was already whining and leaking all over the blanket, rutting forward with aimless frustration. The paddle would put him over the edge too quickly. He was going to make sure Kurt could feel exactly how much Puck wanted to do this to him before he fucked him, and he wasn't going to get that by spreading his legs any further. Actually, he thought, picking up Kurt's jeans, and unwound his narrow black leather belt from his belt loops. He considered asking Kurt before using it, but decided that would just throw him out of headspace. It was a fair bet that Kurt wouldn't wear anything that wasn't well-made.

"Down on your forearms," he instructed, trying to keep the sickening love out of his voice. Kurt complied. It said something about what kind of state he was in that he barely reacted to Puck slipping the belt around his thighs. He cinched it tight enough that Kurt wouldn't be able to part them more than a scant few millimeters.

Kurt let out a sigh when he felt Puck's hand on the small of his back. "You feel so good."

Not "that feels so good." Not "this is so hot." He said "you feel so good," and all I have is one hand on him. Puck let the hand slide down further, avoiding touching Kurt's asshole directly, but that didn't seem to matter at this point. Kurt was writhing against him, desperate for any contact at all, and the whimper he made as he skimmed his thigh with his fingers made him wonder who he was fooling. I can do all this shit for him, be in charge of him, but it doesn't really change what's really going on. I could take Kurt over my goddamn knee, and he'd still totally rule my fucking heart.

"You too, babe," he said, hoarse with emotion, and brought his hand down.

Finn congratulated himself on successfully avoiding being alone together with Kurt and Puck for three days in a row. It was pretty easy during school or in Glee, but Kurt and Puck dating, plus his mom wanting to eat at Burt's twice that week, made it a lot more complicated.

I just can't trust them together, he thought. Together means sex. He felt guilty about having that opinion, but when just watching Kurt take Puck's hand was enough to push him into a sudden
erection, he knew it was hopeless. If he wanted to have any kind of control over this at all, he needed to stay away from them.

But that was before Kurt answered the door wearing a pair of Hummel Tires & Lube coveralls, smeared with oil. His mom just smiled at Kurt, walking past him into the foyer to hang up her coat, and said, "Are you and your dad working on his truck?"

"Changing the oil in the Navigator," he said. Finn bit down hard on his tongue, choking off the groan that threatened to come charging out of his throat. Kurt's hair was perfect, but there was a two-inch smear of oil on his jaw. He couldn't even try to ask if Kurt needed any help, because first of all, Kurt would laugh, and second of all, no.

But ten minutes later, Finn was in the garage, watching Kurt emerge from underneath the chassis, and he was holding out a hand to lift Kurt to his feet, and palms touching turned into Finn giving him a positively pornographic kiss up against the wall of the garage.

"Finn," Kurt said, not raising his voice, but gasping a little against the pressure of Finn's mouth on his neck.

"I know," he groaned, backing off with a great effort. "I know."

"No, I wasn't objecting." Kurt didn't appear to be, smiling up at him, and moved in for his own kiss. Finn allowed it, but it didn't make him feel like any less of a failure for being unable to restrain himself. "You like... what, the coveralls?"

"This," he said through gritted teeth, brushing his thumb over the smudge of oil on Kurt's jaw. It took Kurt a few seconds to get it, but when he did, he flushed so beautifully that Finn had to kiss him again.

"Are you... I mean, the oil." He linked his hands around Finn's back, putting pressure on the space above his tailbone. It sent waves of sensation up his spine. Kurt took a deep breath before asking. "Is that about lube, for you?"

"Lube - oh, god, Kurt." Finn startled back, and Kurt let him go, his smile slipping. Now he felt guilty and awful for putting that look on Kurt's face. "I'm... I don't think I can..."

"It's fine," Kurt assured him, but it was weak, and Finn could see the disappointment in his eyes. Finn gritted his teeth and made himself say the words that would drive that away.

"I really want to. But I think I want you to do it to me, more than I want to do it to you, and I don't want that to change how you see me."

"Oh." Kurt reached out a tentative hand and rested it on Finn's chest. "You - really? You want me to..." He looked down at his feet. When he looked back up, he was smiling in what looked like pleasure. "Me? Not him?"

"Uh..."

"I mean, not just him. That's still..." He gulped a little. "I'm really looking forward to watching him do that to you."

Finn supposed he let that comment stand because he hadn't really been able to think of much else since he'd heard Puck say the words, next time, babe, I'm gonna screw you into the mattress. He wasn't in any condition to argue that Puck wasn't going to do that with him, that he would never let it happen. He just walked out of the garage.
Puck sat beside Kurt, one arm stretched around his shoulder, over the back of his chair. It wasn't the most comfortable position. The edge of the chair was less than an inch thick, not the best support. But Kurt's back was warm through his Cheerios uniform, and it was a way he could touch his boyfriend without everyone reacting. Or carefully not reacting, as the case may be. Puck could tell Tina was blatantly staring, even when she didn't appear to be looking; it threw Matt off every time he saw it. To be fair to Matt, though, it was probably less the dude-on-dude, and more the affection. Matt had known him a long time, and Puck didn't exactly have a history of affection.

Matt and Mike were tossing around a football. Puck tried not to be paranoid about the fact that a week ago he would have been in on that. It was half his fault anyway. Last week he would have just intercepted if he wanted to play. Now he was hesitating, waiting for an invitation in case they didn't want him to join anymore.

It was better that he wasn't, anyway. Playing catch indoors nearly always ended in disaster. It only took one uncaught ball for something bad to happen. Breaking one of the windows at the back of the Glee room wasn't possible; those panes were all the double glass that had wire woven in it. Accidentally beaning someone was a lot more likely. Or snapping one of the rusty music stands like a twig. Puck knew, even if the others didn't, that Glee was on an unrerouteable march towards death. The last thing he wanted as for his legacy to be broke the classroom, has no respect. In any other situation, sure. But not for the one thing in McKinley he actually did respect.

"Hey, Puckerman," Mike called out. "Your hands fall off or something?"

Puck refused to ask do you really want me to join? really, really? because that was pathetic. Waiting for an invitation was bad enough. Screw indoor ball-playing safety. He sprang to his feet and stood beside the piano to create a triangle of sorts.

It was only a couple of throws before Schue walked in. Rather than be a boring-ass teacher about the situation, he simply stepped in front of Puck and caught Mike's perfectly spiralled toss. Puck smirked before heading for his seat.

"All right, guys. Listen up. Tina has something she wants to share with all of us, but first I have an announcement to make."

Puck curled his hands into fists. This was the moment of truth. Schue was about to tell them just how totally fucked they were. And then Rachel would cry, Brittany would cry, Finn would do that big stupid stoic blank faced shit, Matt would get even more quiet, Santana would threaten to come at Mr Ryan with a knife. It would be a fucking mess. God damn the school board. At least Figgins was nice while he was completely useless. Mr Ryan was just straight up evil.

"You've all been reprieved."

Wait. What?

"Bryan Ryan isn't cutting Glee."

Everyone applauded, half-assed like it was nice to hear, but there was no surprise value to it. Like Mr Schuester had just declared that they had nice voices or something. Puck imitated the group, even though he was completely floored. It just didn't make sense. Unless... "Did he die?"

"No. He didn't die." Schue threw the football to him. Puck caught it absently, still not understanding. "He's going to be distracted for a couple of months, making his star turn in Les Mis. He got the lead role."
"But I thought you got the lead," Quinn said.

"I resigned. It was the price for keeping the club."

Finn spoke up next. "Sorry you had to do that, Mr Schue."

"I'm not. The way I see it, I'm trading my one dream for the chance that all thirteen of you might find yours. I mean, come on, you can't argue with those numbers. So..." He smiled. "Let's start with Tina's dream. Come on up Tina."

Puck tuned out then. She was a good singer, and he'd applaud even if he didn't hear her, and he'd definitely listen next time. Right now though it was more important to figure out what exactly had happened. There was no way it could be as easy as Schue just caring more about them than himself. People didn't just do that. Everyone on planet Earth had self-interest. What was he getting out of this? Did he really think they would do that well at Regionals and Nationals that he could get a sort of fame from it?

Matt patted his arm to get his attention. "Come on, man. Auditorium."

He stood up and followed the group without asking why they were going. Puck sat on the first open stool, Matt beside him. Quinn was on his other side, but for the first time in days he didn't feel like she was judging him. Instead all of her attention was on Artie. Puck didn't get the intense focus. His singing was good, yeah. Puck wasn't pretending to not enjoy it, he was swaying with the best of them. He just wasn't staring like the back of Artie's head could cure cancer.

When the first verse was over Artie wheeled stage left so Tina and Mike could dance. He ended up parked beside Quinn. She sighed and rubbed his back. For a minute Puck still didn't get it. There was nothing sad about the song. It was romantic.

And then suddenly, he felt like a complete tool for not realising what was going on, at least not before "Queen of the Heartless Bitches" Quinn. Artie wanted to be doing the song with Tina, only with her. His dream wasn't a trio. He probably didn't want Mike anywhere near Tina. But he couldn't dance and she needed a partner. Yeah, it sucked.

"See?" Kurt murmured, once they were safely curled up together in the back of his car again. "We get to keep Glee. Oh ye of little faith."

Puck was completely relaxed. "Like you weren't surprised. You don't trust Schue either."

"I'll admit, I have reservations when it comes to each of us individually. He has his stars, we all know that. But as a group? We are one amorphous multi-limbed conflation of his dreams and desires. And urge to parent. Which, considering how well that usually goes, makes it sort of a good thing Terri was faking. So yes, I had faith."

"That's the kind of thing I can believe in," Puck agreed. "I just felt bad for Artie, choosing to let Mike give Tina the things he wishes he could give her himself. He'd rather make her happy than be happy himself."

"Yeah," said Kurt.

"Well, that sucks. People should get what they need. Everybody, not just the lucky ones."

Kurt kissed his face over and over again until his scowl turned into a smile, and he batted at Kurt ineffectually, laughing. "You can let yourself be one of the lucky ones, for a change."
"Yeah, well..." His smile turned rueful. "I don't think I can. Not if Finn's not happy."

"I haven't given up on him yet. I don't think you should, either. He wanted to be there, and I think it really meant something to him. He approached me again, on Friday, after family dinner. I think if we keep on trying individually, as well as presenting a united front, he'll eventually realise how much he wants us both. His heart will win over his fear."

Puck sighed, pulling Kurt down onto his chest. "It's a good dream, babe. I'm willing to keep going for what I want." He kissed his forehead. "In the meantime, I'd say this is pretty fucking awesome, right here."

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adGVpCsf9N4

Let's go take a ride in your car
I will take the passenger seat
Baby, we don't have to go far
Unless you wanna show

Me a lovely place out of town
Where you feel most at ease
Well you are the one that I like
Always will be

I think it's time to let you know
The way I feel when you take hold
One single touch from you, I'm gone
Still got the rush when I'm alone

I think it is time I let you know
Take all of me, I will devote
You set me free, my body's yours
It feels the best when you're involved

I want you to take over control
Take over control
Take take take take over control
Oh oh oh, I want you to take over control
Plug it in and turn me on

Baby, baby, can't you see?
That I'm giving all of me
So, it's up to you now
We could let time pass away

I'll make an excuse to play
But, it's up to you now
Just wanna fulfill your needs
While you're taking over me

So, what do you want now?
Take a picture, make a show
'Cause nobody has to know
All the ways that we get down
I want you to take over control
Take over control
Take take take take over control
Oh oh oh, I want you to take over control
Plug it in and turn me on

- Afrojack, "Take Over Control"
There’s a million ways it could go

Quoting from 1x21 Funk. Originally, the episodes were supposed to be aired with Funk first, then Theatricality. Then there was some crap about losing money so they switched it. *shrugs* We wrote in the original order. It makes the issues with Jesse make a lot more sense. Warnings for angst and making out.

- gala and amy

When Santana and Brittany pulled him towards the auditorium on his way into McKinley, Puck figured it was one of two things. One, they'd jacked a guitar from the band room and wanted him to play for them so they could sing to each other. If so, he was going to ignore instructions and play the chords to that Melissa Etheridge song, because if he and Kurt could be out, so could they. Or two, they wanted to simulate some great porn for him, and ask if he and Kurt wanted to join in on the real thing at Brittany's house. It wasn't an insane theory. He'd been with both of them, he knew from slightly confusing texts Brittany'd had fun with Kurt, and Santana found Kurt's occasionally bitchiness refreshing, even if she'd never compliment him like that out loud. it wouldn't even be Santana and Brittany's tenth moresome.

It was neither. It was Jesse St Douche and his Vocal Adrenaline clones, walking around on the April Rhodes stage like they fucking owned it. Puck surveyed the scene stonily.

"Go find Matt and Finn. I can't take on all thirty at once."

Santana tossed her ponytail and sniffed. "While I seriously resent your implication that I couldn't cut a bitch, fine. Come on, Brit."

Matt, Finn and Rachel were the next to show up. After a second, Rachel raced back out, probably unable to handle Finn and Jesse being in the same room. Puck couldn't discuss attack strategy, not with all the assholes so close; they'd eavesdrop and try and evade them. He just had to trust that Matt and Finn would know when to go, and how to split the group. Santana and Brittany returned, armed with Mike and Quinn. Rachel came back with the last of them. Puck spared a second to smile at Kurt, then turned his glare back to the group on stage.

The next two minutes were pretty boring; Rachel begged for an explanation, Jesse let his ego talk. When Finn stepped forward, demanding, "Why are you here?" Puck readied himself. It would have to be a 300-esque charge forward, they weren't exactly close to the stage. Still, he was confident he could make his way to the stage before they could retreat too far. But then Jesse talked more crap - and Vocal Adrenaline began their performance.

They were good. Puck couldn't deny it. They had several strong singers, their choreography was tight, and their large number made it so there were multiple points of attention at once. It was enough to make Puck hate Queen, and for that alone Jesse should die.

Puck was expecting more ego-talk from the jerk when they finished and the rest of Vocal
Adrenaline walked off stage. Instead Rachel and Jesse had this moment of eyefucking, and then Jesse stalked away.

"It's a Carmel high tradition," Artie explained on their way back to the choir room. "They psych out the competition a few weeks before the big show. They call it a funkification, meaning they show us what they've got, and we spiral into a deep black funk."

Finn, ever the motivator, spoke up next. "Yeah, we used to do the same thing to football teams. Try and get inside their heads for the big game. Pull little pranks to intimidate them."

"Yeah, well the difference was our football team sucked," Puck pointed out. "Those guys are golden."

"Come on, keep your heads up guys. It's gonna take more than that to... get... us into a funk."

Puck had about ten seconds to wonder what made Kurt's initial cheery reply trail off before he entered the Glee room. Then he got it immediately. He'd have to be blind to miss the mess the room was in. It was more toilet paper than wall. If Puck was doing his vandalism math right, there were at least thirty rolls used. Probably each one of those fuckers had donated a roll or two.

"I can't believe I'm cleaning up this shit," Puck muttered as he moved the ladder a few feet to the left in preparation to climb again.

"You think you're better than us?" Quinn snapped.

"Calm your shit," Matt snapped back, not exactly calm himself. "He's used to laying this shit down, not picking it up. We all are."

"Speak for yourself," Kurt said archly.

Puck rubbed the heels of his hands into his eyes. Fuck, he was about two years too late for an apology to Kurt and Burt for all the random property damage. If anything it made him feel angrier about the next strand he tore down. He'd gotten over his need to be a complete asshole to people that didn't deserve it. When would Jesse learn?

Tina sighed. "I feel so violated. It's like someone broke into our home."

Puck frantically cast about in his memory for having ever done anything to the Cohen-Chang household, and came up empty. Thank fuck for small miracles.

"Look, it was just a lame little prank. The fact that they're trying to get to us means we've got them spooked."

Before Puck could tell him what a load of crap that was, Mercedes spoke up. "Uh-uh, Mr Schue. They aren't afraid of anything. That number they did was fantastic. You know, which doesn't make any sense. They had all that equipment, how did they even get in?"

Puck was supremely unsurprised that Sylvester walked in at that moment, claiming to have given them keys. She'd probably hovered outside the door, waiting for the cue of someone wondering how. The only thing he caught from her ramble about her stupid fucking trophies was the reminder that Kurt and Santana and Brittany would be gone for the weekend for Nationals. The thought of the event tore at Puck. He wanted his boyfriend and best friends to kick ass. He also wanted Sylvester to lose and implode into a ball of pure misery.

Evidently she felt the same. "I recently checked the odds with my Vegas bookie, who told me that
you're forty to one underdogs at Regionals. You're going to lose and your dreams will be crushed."

"Sue, can I see your trophy?"

"Sure, Will. Hope and dream."

Mr Schuester took it, and next came the most beautiful thing Puck had ever seen in his life, bar
none, not even Kurt tied up and orgasming. Mr Schue threw the trophy against the wall and it
shattered into fifteen pieces. Sylvester bitched a little more, but the instant she walked out, Puck
started a slow clap. Matt and Mike were the first to join, and soon everyone except Schue himself
were clapping.

"That was badass."

"I don't condone-"

"Violence," Tina interrupted. "Yeah, yeah, we know. But even the Cheerios have to admit she's a
giant bitch. That was inspired."

"Seriously," Artie seconded.

While Kurt hadn't had enough relationship experience to know if it was true that you couldn't miss
someone if they didn't go away, and Puck hadn't seemed to exhibit signs of needing some alone
time, he had enough experience with sassy friends to know if he spent one more evening ignoring
Mercedes' texts she was going to cut him. He had five messages from her by the time Coach
Sylvester declared Cheerios practice over. The last was a straight up demand that he come over as
soon as he was finished.

Okay, okay. Will be there in fifteen.

Kurt locked his knees at the hand on his back. Sylvester had spent the day sneaking up behind the
Cheerios and shoving them, apparently in order to assess their ability to stand statue still. The
warning text had been sent by Rochelle in the middle of first period. Kurt didn't have any trouble
imagining that Sylvester had entered a class and random to shove the first Cheerio she saw. None
of the teachers would have said anything to her. Well, besides Mr Schue.

Thankfully it wasn't Sylvester being a maniac. It was just Santana. "So, Hummel. You want a ride
to Puck's? Or how about Finn's?"

"You know I have a car. I'm going to Mercedes' house, anyway."

"Sure you are. Just remember, you need a lot of prep before DP." She smirked before whirling
around and walking away, skirt and ponytail both swaying lightly.

Kurt had his suspicions, both about what DP meant, and what Santana thought she knew. But he
was just going to not think about it. He was going to have a relaxing night with Mercedes and
probably Tina and Artie, and it was going to be nice, and non-sexual. Maybe there would be
boardgames. And manicures.

That thought lasted as long as it took Kurt to knock on the Jones' front door. Mercedes answered
with a smile and a hug, like she hadn't seen him in weeks, not just since lunch. She started to lead
him to the kitchen, stopping for a moment to hang up his jacket, and handed him a glass of Sprite,
smiling quizzically. "Hey... how are you?"
He was meant to complain about Cheerios practice, so she could feel justified in quitting. Kurt knew it. It was an unspoken social contract. She inquired 'generally' into his life after a practice, he talked about how awful the girls were, and how evil Sue was. It was all true, it was just something he wouldn't have dwelled on if she didn't need it.

Instead he said, "I'm pretty sure I just got instructed to use a lot of lube before letting Puck and my other secret gay lover put their cocks in my ass at the same time."

"Oh my god Kurt! A little warning next time!" Mercedes looked like she was about to stroke out.

Tina ran into the kitchen, skull pattern socks skidding on the tile. "I heard Mercedes take the Lord's name in vain. What happened? Spare no detail."

Mercedes waved a limp hand, her eyelashes fluttering. "Kurt was...describing things. Now, I'm not one of those kinds of Christians, you know I'm not. Kurt can love who he wants, even if it is Puckerman. But that was way more detail than I needed. Way more."

"Ohhh. Boyfriend T.M.I. I cannot even begin to tell you how much I wanna hear. 'Cedes, go watch an episode of The O.C. We'll be in when we're done."

"No way," she protested. 'I'm your friend too; you can't just tell me to go away."

Before Kurt could point out that he hadn't said a thing, that the comment had come from Tina, the girl in question spoke up again. "Then sit down and listen to all of Kurt's angst about sex with Puck. What is it? Does he only want to top? Because-"

"Our relationship is mutual, thanks."

"Yeah, I guess that makes sense. You don't really look at Puck and think, 'Now there's a guy that only has sex in one position'. He's way hotter than that."

Mercedes rolled her head back on her neck. "Okay. If we're really having this conversation, we're going to have it somewhere comfortable."

"Living room couch with your weird-cool dimmer lights it is," Tina replied.

Kurt wasn't sure he agreed about the comfort level. The art piece showcased over the mantle on the white brick fireplace was a massive ornate cross. Jesus would be staring at him the whole time he talked about gay sex. On the other hand, he didn't believe. If Tina did - which he knew she did, if not to Quinn and Mercedes levels - and she could talk about it no problem, why should he let it bother him? And it would be nice to talk to someone that wasn't Puck or Finn about Puck and Finn. Not that he would name the latter. Outing someone was one of the worst things a suburban, non-sociopathic teenager could do.

"Living room it is," he echoed weakly.

The next half hour was like being on an afternoon talk show. Gay teen exposes kinks. He could see Mercedes' mind being pried open, one detail at a time. Tina, on the other hand, was practically salivating. She wanted to know everything about the handcuffs. When he explained the origins of their relationship and how Puck had saved him from Lipoff's cruelty, Mercedes was offended on his behalf, but Tina was completely overcome at the idea of Puck's caretaking.

"He's a lot sweeter than I ever expected," Kurt admitted.

"You can say that after he spanked you with that paddle thing?" Mercedes was clearly still
ambivalent. "I don't think I could be with a boy who wanted to treat me that way."

"It's not something I ever expected to want," he said, shrugging, "but he's not doing anything I didn't ask for." He knew he wasn't going to sell Mercedes on BDSM, probably not ever. He put a hand on top of hers. "Don't worry about me getting hurt. It's - amazing, and completely consensual."

"I can't help worrying about you. And this other guy... you're going along with what Puck wants about that too." She frowned. "Seems like he's using you for his kinky playground."

Kurt thought, for the millionth time, of the overwhelming emotions he'd felt, being there with Puck resting his head on Finn's thigh while he'd fingered him. "It's our mutual kinky playground," he said fervently. "And as much as I was scared to include a third, it feels... incredible to trust Puck that much, and to know he trusts me." He wasn't going to say anything about how he felt about Finn, because if he said anything that sounded like love, it would prompt a whole series of questions he wasn't going to answer.

Tina sighed, but she didn't appear worried; rather, she sounded jealous. "Artie would never do that. I don't think he even thinks about anything more kinky than dirty talk. It's embarrassing to always be the one volunteering the weird stuff."

At least Mercedes wasn't looking at him like he was sick or going to hell, just because she didn't agree with his kinks. "You do seem happy," she admitted, hugging him. "And that's really nice to see, Kurt. You deserve that."

Sometimes Puck felt like he and Finn had a kind of telepathic connection. He never would have said this aloud, because it would have been douchy beyond belief, but when Schue started in on the harmless pranks the Glee club could carry out to exact revenge on Vocal Adrenaline, their eyes met. It wasn't getting naked that was going through their minds at that moment. It could have been written on an enormous neon sign, the course of action they would be taking in the grey dawn in the Carmel parking lot in Akron: slash the tires of every one of the goddamn Range Rovers, and slash Jesse's twice.

Puck had shown up on Finn's porch at four in the morning, dressed sufficiently in black that he'd be adequately camouflaged. He hadn't intended for the leather to be sexy at all, but the looks Finn was giving him as they started out for Akron bordered on smouldering. By the time they got there, stoked on caffeine and loud road music and adrenaline, he was certain he wasn't the only one who was hard. Plunging his knife again and again into the thick rubber of the tires didn't help at all.

"Oh," said Finn, eyes shifting wildly from side to side, "we were just - we weren't -"

"Never mind," said a familiar crisp voice. The flashlight swiveled up to the stern face of Shelby Corcoran. "You break into our grounds and damage school property, and you think I'm going to care about two gay kids making out?"

"I'm not," Finn protested, which, really, Puck thought he was just making Ms. Corcoran's point for
"You caught us. What's our sentence? Because if you've got nothing, we've got a long drive back to school, and Finn at least doesn't want to be late for first period."

Her mouth tightened. "Oh, no. I'm taking you back to Mr. Schuester myself. " She watched Finn go apoplectic, and sighed. "Don't worry, I'm not going to out you. But one of you is coming with me in my car, and you're handing over your phones until I can get some answers."

It was a long, tense ride back to Lima, but Puck could only imagine how Finn was holding up in Mrs. Corcoran's car. By the time they made it back to McKinley, first bell had already rung and everybody was in class. Mrs. Corcoran marched them into the office and stated firmly that she needed an audience with the principal. Mr Schue appeared a few minutes later, and he didn't look happy.

"Puck," he sighed, "I'm guessing you didn't steal their school statue. What did you do?"

"I was there, too," Finn said, startling Schue into silence. He looked back and forth between them and Mrs. Corcoran, but he didn't ask any more questions until they had their audience with Principal Figgins.

"Yeah, I did it," Puck snapped. "All I did was step up and be a man. They got what was coming to them."

But Finn's reaction was way out of proportion with the kind of fear authority usually generated in him. Puck always resisted authority, but Finn usually made a strong showing, polite and responsible and apologetic. Not today, though. Today he looked like he was going to puke. Puck wished he could reach out and take his hand.

Schue, once again proved that he was master of trying to get his kids out of shit. After Mrs Corcoran babbled about how stupidly rich all her students were, Mr Schue protested with, "Look, nobody got hurt. It was a harmless prank, that's all!"

Under the obnoxious and grating tone of Sylvester starting up some rant about a young man in Chicago, Finn said in a tone Puck had never really heard from him before: "And I kissed Puck."

Sylvester stopped dead in her tracks for about three seconds. Then she had more crap to say which Puck attempted to tune out.

"What, Finn?" Schue asked, like he didn't believe what he'd heard.

"It was a harmless prank... and I kissed Puck. It's why we got caught. I'm sorry. For stabbing the cars." He gave him a brief glance. "Not for kissing him."

"Isn't Puck dating Kurt?" He was so clearly confused by the state of things, Puck felt like he needed to set him down and give him The Talk. For now, he was gonna have to stay confused, though, because he didn't think he could take his eyes off Finn. He wanted to call in some serious favors with G_d because the kind of things he wanted to say to him without words were pretty damned complicated. And important. And fuck Schue, he didn't care who was looking. He reached over and grabbed Finn's hand off his knee, clasping it tight. Finn startled, his eyes still a little wild, but there was no sign of hyperventilation or wanting to bolt. In his own Finn way, he was dealing with it, and Puck felt so goddamn proud of him he would have risked a hell of a lot more than a sanction from the principal.
Principal Figgins sounded exasperated. "I don't care about any of this. What you boys did was a felony, and you're hereby expelled!"

Ms. Corcoran shook her head. "I don't want anyone to get expelled. I'm not going to press charges, as long as you pay for the damage. You can take it out of the Glee club budget."

"That'll bankrupt the Glee club," Mr. Schuester protested. "We don't have that kind of money."

"We'll get jobs!" Finn shouted. Puck got the seriousness of the situation, but even for it Finn seemed a bit frantic. "Give us a month. We'll pay you back, Mrs Corcoran, I promise."

She eyed Mr. Schue, but finally sighed. "Fine."

Figgins smiled beatifically. "Mrs Corcoran, you are as wise and magnanimous as you are beautiful."

Puck winced. Figgins should never hit on anyone. It was like federal law. But it gave them an opportunity to make a reasonably speedy exit in one direction while Ms. Corcoran took off in the other. Mr. Schue just gave them a hard look and said, "Get to class, guys, and... we'll talk about this later."

Finn watched Schue head down the hallway, his cheeks flushed, but he was almost smiling. "We're not going to class, are we?"

"Fuck no we're not. When you're already in trouble, you take advantage of it." He headed for the side exit by the cafeteria, Finn trailing him close behind.

"I'm not exactly used to getting in trouble," he said. "I think you might have to give me pointers or something."

Puck slammed the doors open and made a beeline for the fence on the other side of the dumpsters. "Yeah, I think you know exactly what I'm going to give you." He reached out behind him, collaring Finn by his flannel shirt and hauling him around in front of him. It took him four steps to get him up against the fence, and then he was kissing him, relishing all the muffled noises Finn was making, but not nearly as much as he was relishing the fact that he wasn't taking off.

"You're my fucking hero," he declared, grinding against Finn's thigh while Finn's eyes rolled up into his head. "We would have gone to prison if you hadn't done what you did."

"I kind of can't believe I did." Finn looked pretty amazed, or was that turned on beyond belief, because they looked a lot alike? "I just couldn't let you take the fall for this. It was the two of us, together."

"You're telling me." He couldn't help grinning at Finn, which made him grin back, and then they were laughing against each other's mouths. Puck took a cursory glance around, but the spot was just as deserted as it had been originally when Lipoff had cuffed Kurt here, months ago. "And you don't give a shit that anybody could walk by and see us here?"

Finn shrugged, still grinning. "Who hangs out behind the kitchen? I don't know. I think being bad feels kind of good."

"Yeah, I kind of like you bad." He kissed him once more, then took his hand, towing him toward the parking lot. "Come on. There's one more person you need to talk to."

Five minutes later, Puck was standing outside Kurt's class, tapping on the glass. Six people noticed
and passed the word across the room before Kurt looked up. There were definite advantages to being out in Glee, and so far it hadn't had major repercussions outside of that, but people were starting to put it together. Nobody was glaring at them, anyway, and Kurt didn't hesitate to come to the front of the room and point at Puck in the hallway. He poked his head out the door, looking more curious than wary.

"Where were you this morning?" Kurt asked. Puck handed him the pass Ms. P had written him.

"You need to hear it from the source," he said. "You're not going to believe it."

Finn was waiting in the back of the Navigator (somehow he'd been impressed that Kurt would trust him with a key to his car, which seemed kind of ridiculous considering Kurt had asked Puck to lock him in handcuffs). He gave Kurt a sheepish smile when he opened the back door and saw him there.

"Start at the beginning," Puck said, climbing into the front. He watched over the edge of the seat while Kurt sat cross-legged on top of the blankets, listening to Finn with wide eyes as he explained where they'd been that morning.

"Tell me you got pictures," Kurt begged, clutching at Finn's leg. He laughed.

"It was a little dark. I think you'll have to imagine it."

Fuck that, Puck was already planning to recreate their costumes for Kurt the next time they all got together. Because in this moment, it was clear it would happen again. He listened with satisfaction as Kurt gasped at Finn telling all the adults about them making out in the Carmel parking lot. He launched himself at Finn in an enormous hug.

"What did Mr. Schue do?" he demanded. "Hell, what did Figgins do? Did he pray for you? He's always doing that to me."

"I don't think anybody knew what to do. We were already in so much trouble." He stroked Kurt's shoulder absently, thinking about it. Puck didn't miss the expression of bliss on Kurt's face. "I guess I'll have to talk to Mr. Schue later. I didn't - I mean, I didn't say anything about me. Just about what we did."

"It's a start," said Kurt firmly. "You were so brave."

Puck remembered hearing those words from Kurt when he'd sung for him in Glee, how much they'd meant to him. Hearing him say them now to Finn was almost better, in a way. Finn, however, looked uncomfortable.

"I don't know how to explain what happened with me and Puck to Mr. Schue, if the two of you are together. I..." He sighed, leaning back against the wall of the Navigator. "I don't know what to do next."

Kurt leaned forward, crawling on all fours until he was practically sitting in Finn's lap, nose to nose. Finn looked startled, but Puck smiled at how readily he opened his arms to hold Kurt. He rested his forehead against Finn's with a little sigh.

"How about you kiss me?"

Finn was trying for the tenth time to get all the facecloths to fit on the Sheets 'n' Things display when Puck walked over. "Come on man, you've been doing that forever. Lets take a break."
"Are we allowed to take a break?"

Puck shrugged. "Probably not. But she's also not allowed to pay us under minimum wage. And yet... So come on. Ten minute coffee break."

Finn thought it was a lot more likely that he'd just guzzle back a Mountain Dew. Same amount of caffeine, while not tasting like burnt death. At least, he would if there were some in the vending machine in the staff room. He'd only been working for a few hours, not long enough to memorise all the snack options. But bending down to peer at the bottom row of bags of chips turned out to be a very, very bad idea as Puck brushed against him from behind. Finn swallowed a whimper.

"Sorry," said Puck, not sounding at all sorry. Finn wanted to glare at him, but all he could do was avoid his eyes and try to eliminate the persistent image of Puck on Kurt's bed, his legs spread wide, Kurt pressing two fingers inside him and himself adding the third.

"I don't think we should do this at work," he said.

Puck snorted. "Tell me you have any kind of respect for Mrs. ex-Schue." He set a hand on Finn's back, just above the waistband of his jeans. Finn felt his ass contract at the contact. "We're taking a break. Pretty sure we're not bothering anybody back here."

Finn moved away from Puck's hand, taking a seat on the lumpy couch. Puck sat across from him, teetering a little on the folding chair, and handed him a bottle of Dew, watching him with a little frown.

"I don't get you sometimes, Hudson. You were pretty badass the other day in Figgins' office. You didn't have any problem making out with me at school, but you don't want to do it in a pitiful excuse for a break room at the mall? What the fuck is this room for, if not for making out? And in the meantime, we've wasted three-tenths of our break talking about it." He gave Finn's shoe a little kick. "Tell me I'm not wasting my time here."

"No. I'm... no." Finn shook his head, feeling muddled. "Just because I don't want to at work doesn't mean I don't want to. But, dude, we can't lose this job."

Puck shrugged, opening his own bottle. "Suit yourself." He put the bottle to his mouth, his lips around the rim. Finn helplessly watched his throat work as he swallowed. God, why was every little thing Puck did a turn-on? He adjusted himself, trying not to watch Puck watching him do it, and drank his soda as quickly as he could.

"We've got four minutes. Last chance until nine o'clock."

In a display of how his body and brain always wanted different things, Finn took the few steps necessary to cross the small room, and when Puck stood to meet him, licked the length of Puck's neck. Kurt wouldn't mind if he left a hickey, would he? Whatever. This was a situation where it was better to do now and apologise later. He got as far as his teeth bared when the doorknob audibly clicked. Finn darted away, leaning against the vending machine.

Howard came in the next moment, glaring at him. "This isn't your break, this is my break. Go back on the floor."

Heart racing, Finn fled to the front of the store. He needed a chance to think. Mrs Schuster liked him more than Puck. If he was at the front of the store and Puck was at the back, she'd probably make Puck do more of the heavy lifting store room stuff, even though it was technically Finn's turn.
The problem was obvious. Puck and Kurt were hot. Finn had left their threesome -their second threesome? Did the holding Kurt's hand one count, just because he'd had an orgasm?- certain about one thing. If he spent any amount of time with Puck and Kurt he would end up doing sexy things. The solution he'd come up with had been to only spend time with them individually. A completely crap solution, really. It was like that Greek hydra thing from when he started reading Greek myths for kids, after watching Disney's Hercules. Together Puck and Kurt were this hot beast. Cut them in half, and they should die, but all of a sudden there's just double the amount of hot.

The real solution was equally obvious. He just didn't want to use it. Finn needed to cockblock himself. He needed to only hang out with Puck and Kurt in situations in which copping a feel would be impossible. School was fine because there were so many other students; Hudson-Hummel dinners were fine because of their parents. But if he wanted to hang out with Puck in the future, Sarah would have to be there. Or Matt and Mike. And if he wanted to hang out with Kurt, he'd make sure to invite Artie along too. It felt like a reasonable, sensible decision. He wondered why he didn't feel better about making it.

Thankfully, Finn barely saw Kurt at all in the next few days. He was busy with preparing for Nationals in Coach Sylvester's absence, and when he wasn't at practice, he was spending time with Mercedes. He ran into them after school at Kurt's house one afternoon, listening with half an ear to her ranting about Quinn.

"I don't know, Kurt," she said. "That lily-white girl, thinking she knows funk? She was good, I guess, but nine months of feeling on the outside for once does not mean she understands. We're approaching epic fail on this assignment."

Finn spoke up before he really thought it through. "I have a funk song. Me and Mrs Schuester looked it up on iTunes at work."

Mercedes and Kurt gave him identical ironic eyebrows. "Finn," Kurt said, clasping his hands, "you do understand about the dancing part."

"Yeah, but this is the kind of dancing I can do. I mean, not like Mike or Matt, or even Puck, but I'm not too shabby." He felt a little defensive, trying to figure out how to explain the breakdancing stage he and Puck had gone through in middle school, and finally settled on, "We practiced a lot. I bet I remember most of it."

"Really."

"Actually, Mercedes, it would be really cool if you joined me and Puck. We could do the rap parts, and you could do the runs. You're really good at runs." And if she joined them, they could actually do the assignment. Under his new self-imposed rules, Finn couldn't just invite Puck to join him. He needed a barrier. A diamond hard wall of Absolutely No Sex.

Her dubious expression was beginning to give way to curiosity. "What kind of runs?"

Finn didn't know Mercedes all that well. His diva of choice had always been Rachel, even when Quinn had been his girlfriend. But he knew divas well enough to know that question in that tone meant she was sold. He didn't even need Kurt's encouraging smile.

"I bet Puck's home. I'll text him to make sure, and then we can go to his house to practice? We're working most evenings, but we weren't scheduled tonight, so if you're free-?"

"I still need to know what kind of runs." She sighed like he was troubling her, but Kurt's fond look clued him in that Mercedes was fine. She probably liked being first pick. It was always a good
feeling when Mr Schuester did it. "But yes. My curfew is ten though."

"That's cool. I like to be home when my mom gets home from work anyway." Yes. This was going to help. Focusing on performing instead of... other things. He smiled gratefully at Mercedes, avoiding Kurt's suspicious stares, and ignored the visions of Puck dancing in his head.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xDf-_8KvGM

You've got these little things
That you've been running from
You either love them or I guess you don't
You're such a pretty thing
To be running from anyone
A vision with nowhere to go

So tell me right now
You think you're ready for it
I wanna know
Why you got me going
So let's go
We'll take it out of here

I think I'm ready to leap
I'm ready to live
I'm ready to go
(Get me out of my mind
Get me out of my mind)
I'm ready to go

You've got these little things
You wanted something for them
You either get it or I guess you won't
What does it really mean
To get nothing from anyone?
There's a million ways it could go

I think I'm ready I think
I know I'm ready I know
I think I'm ready I think
I know I'm ready I know
I think I'm ready I think
I know I'm ready I think
I think I'm ready I think
I know

- Panic! At the Disco, "Ready To Go (Get Me Out Of My Mind)"
Kurt capped his pen and closed his binder. He was nearly finished his homework, with only a worksheet of question for history class left. It could easily be finished in the commercial breaks of primetime. Or if he had a lot of opinions about the episode and needed the commercials to rant, then in the choir room in the morning. Or, if Coach Sylvester actually held one of the practices she was supposed to, he'd be able to do it when he was supposed to be paying attention in another class. Hell, if it really came down to it, he could do it in history, and hand it in at the end of class.

"Leaving?" his dad asked from the couch. "Have something to do?"

Kurt decided to be honest. "I think I'm going to loiter at Sheets and Things."

He stood, coming over to the table where Kurt was packing up his homework. "How's Finn liking it? He say anything to you? Carole hasn't heard a thing, and seeing as it's his first job, I think she's a bit concerned. He's been acting kind of weird."

And here he was, back to lying for everyone's own good. Kurt could have told his dad and Carole a dozen different things about the job. There was just nothing they'd want to hear. Finn and Puck had been hired by Mrs No-Longer-Schuester, and she'd said right to their faces it was because she could pay them less than immigrants. The job was boring, except for when it was gross, like the man that tried to return pee-stained sheets on a daily basis. Mr Ryerson spent a disturbing amount of time in the store. According to Puck, Mrs Schuester kept staring at Finn.

Of course, none of those things were why Finn was being weird. It had nothing to do with the job. Finn was busy having a slow burn freakout about coming out. Kurt understood why it had happened the way it did; hearing about it had made his heart leap with pride. Still, it had been an entirely awful audience for Finn's first admission. Mr Schuester had a habit of making the week's assignment about personal things. This week's happened to be Funk, but Kurt could easily see Schue making next week Secrets week. The coach of their rival team knew, and depending on how she used the information she could destroy Finn as easily as Jesse had Rachel. And there was no telling what Sylvester would do, especially now. She hadn't emerged from her apartment in three days.

Kurt tried to look uninvolved. "I dunno, Dad. I haven't really noticed anything? I'm not in all of his classes, though."

He nodded. "Fair enough."
"If I get a chance to talk to him tonight, I'll ask." Or rather, once he had several hours to brainstorm he'd have a much better lie to hand his father. "I'll see you later."

Neither Puck nor Finn was doing anything of substance when he arrived there, but Finn refused to leave the store. "I've got... stacking to do," he said stubbornly. Puck sighed and rolled his eyes, taking Kurt's hand as they escaped to the parking lot.

It was the world's fastest hookup, even quicker than the thirteen-minute escapade during the Madonna pep rally. It wasn't the first time Kurt thanked the Lincoln car company for using tinted windows; as much as he might have a teeny-weeny exhibitionist kink, he wasn't excited with the idea of being naked for the whole world to see - only those he deemed worthy.

They'd just finished, relaxing in their post-coital bliss. Then Kurt's cell chose that moment to ring.

"You're not actually getting that?"

The call was from Santana. Kurt gave Puck an apologetic look as he pressed talk. Any other time he probably wouldn't have, but all around him people were falling to bits, and he couldn't just not answer.

"Kuuuurt?" Her voice wobbled.

"Santana, are you drunk?"

Puck looked at him, question obvious in his eyes. Why would Santana call Kurt, not him or Brit or Matt? Kurt couldn't answer him, of course. Not with Santana's weepy voice in his ear. "No... no one would buy for me."

"That's probably because you haven't showered in two days."

"I have nothing to live for."

"What? No. No, that's not true."

"I have nothing to live for," she repeated, voice even more wobbly.

"Everything's going to be okay." Kurt couldn't count the number of times he'd said that in the last forty eight hours. Dozens of times.

"The Cheerios... and Nation-" Santana broke off, crying.

"It's okay. Me and Celeste figured out the routine. Brittany helped, remember?" Or at least Brittany helped until she got confused by no one criticizing her.

"Brittany," Santana moaned.

"Remember how good practice went?" That wasn't a placation. The team had held it together while they were cheering. It was after that Derek started crying, cueing half the team, and Amanda started stress puking.

Santana sobbed harder. Kurt was beginning to worry if she was inhaling enough oxygen. He'd seen her crying, earlier. She was a snotty crier. By now her nose was probably completely plugged.

"No. Please don't. It's okay." How did Puck do this every time he cried? This consoling thing was impossible.

"Santana, go to Brittany's house? Okay? Ladykisses at Brittany's house." It was the only real solution. He couldn't monitor her on the phone all night. The Pierces had to be at least a little self-aware, otherwise Brittany would have fallen into a well years ago. They could do the suicide watch.

"Coach hates us."

"No, she doesn't." She just picked the worst possible time to fall into a depression.

"She does. Admit it." Santana wailed.

"Fine. She does. But it doesn't matter because Brittany loves you. Go see Brittany. Get up, right now. Put shoes on. Go to Brittany," Kurt said as forcefully as he could. It wasn't as hard as his 'straight' voice, but it wasn't exactly his natural voice either.

Santana sobbed out something that sounded scarily like "I want to die." It made Kurt shiver to hear, knowing just how many people on the squad had had the same thought.

He only had one card left in his hand. "So does Brittany. You need to help her. Tell her you love her."

"I love Brittany so much."

"Go to her house and tell her. Right now, Santana."

She sniffed. "Okay."

"Call me when you get there." After all, he had no idea how she was travelling. If she was morose enough to walk, he wanted to make sure she didn't just step into traffic.

She hung up. Kurt pressed end, lowered his arm and looked at the phone he was now cradling in both hands.

"What the hell was that?"

"Coach Sylvester quit. We're leaving for Nationals Saturday morning. For all their other differences, she and Schuester are a lot alike when it comes to last minute prep. Celeste and I have had to plan everything."

"Just you two?"

Kurt nodded. "The team's so stockholmed that they're falling apart. I'm dealing with twenty five nervous breakdowns at once. No exaggeration. You know Ethan was sucking his thumb in math class yesterday?"

Puck grimaced. "Sounds rough."

"Honestly, it makes me wish that Rachel was a Cheerio. She likes bossing everyone around. It's so exhausting. We're going to Nationals whether or not Sue comes along; Celeste forged Sue's signature or whatever to get us the Greyhound. But I really just want it to be Monday already."

Puck pulled him into a hug. Kurt breathed deeply, trying to shake out some of the stress. He didn't have time for this; he had to be strong until Monday.
Almost like Puck had read his mind, he said into Kurt's hair, "Tomorrow night, after my shift. We'll do a scene. You're not gonna survive the weekend this splintery. Or maybe you could, but you shouldn't have to. We'll calm you down Friday night, so you can do Saturday and Sunday."

"I love you," Kurt murmured, deep into his cotton-polyester shirt.

"Where're the Doritos?" Puck rumbled placidly.

Kurt laughed. For the first time in days. His boyfriend really was perfect.

Will had to admit, though he would never have chosen to play favorites, he had a special place in his heart for Finn Hudson. Finn reminded him so much of himself, with 80% of the rough edges filed away. Finn was popular, and Will had never been, but Finn's determined, white-knight persona was familiar to him. He tried his best to include everyone. Will suspected Finn would make an excellent teacher someday.

But he really didn't know what to think of what had happened in Figgins' office. First of all, he'd always suspected Puck was a bad influence on Finn - not that he didn't love Puck, or all of the Glee members, just the way they were - and that seemed to be true here in more than one way. Puck and Finn, driving all the way to Carmel to exact some kind of vigilante justice on Vocal Adrenaline... he understood that impulse, misguided thought it might be. But for Finn to be experimenting sexually with Puck, just as he was beginning a new relationship with Kurt (who was fragile in his own way), he couldn't condone that. Sure, young people needed space to explore their sexuality, but Finn should be doing that with someone who didn't already have a commitment.

All of this was in the back of his mind when Emma came to him at lunchtime, looking frantic and white-knuckled.

"Will, you need to help me. It's Finn." She looked back and forth across his office, close to panic. "The things he's talking about... I can't handle it. You have to find somebody else who understands his... issues."

"Emma, calm down." He took her hand. "What's going on? Is this about Finn's trip with Puck to Carmel?"

She shook her head. "No, he didn't talk about that." Her voice dropped to a whisper. "Sex... too scary. I can't."

"It's okay. I'll talk to him." Will's mind was reeling. What had Finn been up to?

He found him exiting the cafeteria, laughing with Kurt. Puck was a few steps behind them, but didn't seem to be involved in the conversation. That worried Will even more. Could it be that Kurt hadn't yet heard about what Finn and Puck had done? He sighed. More secrets. Just what Glee needs. He put out a hand to intercept him.

"Finn? Can we talk?"

"I understand," Will said, opening his office door for Finn. He gestured to the seat and closed the door behind them. "But this is about something else. I just spoke with Ms. Pillsbury, Finn. She said you had some difficult things to talk about with her?"
Will watched his face go red, and he looked at his lap. "I thought those conversations were supposed to be private," he mumbled.

"She didn't tell me any details. She just said she didn't think she could help you. I'm not sure I'll be of any more help, Finn, but I want you to know you can talk to me."

"Uh..." He let out an unhappy little laugh. "Yeah, I really doubt you could help. I just didn't know who else to talk to. Ms. P's always been willing to talk about all the crazy stuff." He put a hand to his forehead, cringing. "God... I can't believe I'm doing this."

"What is it, Finn?" Will said, as gently as he could. Maybe if Finn could let out some of his fears about kissing Puck, he could -

"It's about sex. With guys. Specifically with Puck." Finn wasn't coming out from behind the shelter of his hand. "I just never thought about, um, putting things up there, and then I did, and these thoughts, they kind of... took over. And now I can't seem to think about anything else." He peeked out, looking wretched. "Only I'm not gay, Mr. Schue, and... I'm really having a hard time with this."

"What... kind of ways?" Will asked carefully, bracing himself for the answer.

And Finn gave it, in halting detail that left Will both speechless and scarlet. There's no point in worrying about finding common ground here, because Finn and Puck and Kurt have already done more than I'd ever dreamed of doing, Will thought as he listened to Finn describe exactly what he and Puck and Kurt had been doing over the past several weeks. The best of Will's own sex life had been when Terri was frantically trying to get pregnant. He'd thought he was having a wild streak having sex once a week. The kinkiest thing he'd ever done was pray Terri would take her negligee off, while Puck and Kurt and Finn were having crazy monkey sex inside stores and in random parking lots, and owned multiple pairs of cuffs. He'd had exactly one sex partner, while they apparently had sex with more than one person at the same freaking time. Will mopped his forehead. There was no way he could say he knew what Finn was going through.

When Finn finally wound down, he cleared his throat. "Finn..." he said, then paused, smiling, because he didn't know what else to do. He put out his hands. "I think you're gay."

Finn's face went blank. "I - what?"

"I mean, you're young, and you have lots of time to change your mind. You can always change your mind. But, Finn... you're telling me about several relationships with girls that were... less than satisfying for you. And now, you have this - um, with Puck and... and Kurt..." He had to blink and calm himself before going on, because honestly. "It's clear to me your feelings for them are strong and real, and you're... attracted to both of them. If that's what you're using to make your judgments about your sexual identity, Finn... well, I just think you've got to be honest with yourself."
He watched Finn wrestling with this idea, feeling bad for introducing more uncertainty, but at least he might be able to do some good here. "Okay," Finn said slowly.

Will pressed on. "But I need you to think seriously about what you're doing with Puck and Kurt."

Finn's face shuttered, his expression becoming wary. "I'm not sure if that's something you get to judge me for, Mr. Schue. Puck and Kurt have their eyes wide open."

He sighed in exasperation. "Don't you see, you're really not being responsible about this. Just because Puck ruined your relationship with Quinn, it doesn't mean you should try to ruin his with Kurt."

Finn stared at him, completely speechless. Will pressed his advantage. "I know it might seem like you're the only one to have feelings like this, but believe me, especially in the theater, there are -"

Finn pushed his chair back, standing up abruptly. "You're wrong," he said, pointing accusingly at Will, who sat back. "This isn't about my feelings for some faceless, nameless guys. Weren't you listening to me? I'm in love with them. With Puck and Kurt. I never would have even thought about being with guys if it wasn't for how I feel about them."

"Finn, there's no way you can be in love with two people at once," he said patiently. "Don't you see how selfish you're being here? You need to let Puck and Kurt have their time together, no matter what feelings you're having. I'm sure they both care about you very much, and I don't think they would ever want to hurt your feelings by leaving you out. But you need to move on and find a relationship that's just for you."

He stared at Will for another long moment before letting his hand drop to his side. Then he closed his eyes and sighed. "Maybe you're right," he said. "I... god, I don't know what I was thinking."

Will stood, giving Finn an encouraging smile. "Like I said, you have plenty of time to think about this. In the meantime, we've got work to do if we're going to beat Vocal Adrenaline. Are you on board?"

"Sure," said Finn, nodding. "Of course. I'm here for the team."

Will watched him walk away, smiling to himself. He knew he could count on Finn to make the right decision.

Kurt surveyed the room. He'd managed to gather everyone into the choir room except for Mercedes and Finn, and he had full confidence they were coming. Mercedes wanted to finish eating her tots, and Finn had been temporarily stolen by Mr Schuester. The delay was fine, really; it meant that he got a chance to sit down, and after approximately six hours of rigorous dancing, even five minutes was a godsend. Brittany and Santana clearly felt the same; they sank into the plastic chairs almost simultaneously.

"So what's going on? You said you had an idea about the funk song?"

Kurt nodded. "Sit down and talk amongst yourselves until our two missing members arrive. Then we'll discuss." He slumped against Brittany, and Puck sat on Santana's other side to be her cushion.

Mercedes came in first, full and happy. When she asked what was happening, Kurt didn't bother to explain, knowing Rachel would harp on his mysterious gathering for him.

It took Finn seven more minutes to show up. His face was unreadable, unless you counted the
standard anxious/guilty/hopeful expression that seemed to be his default. Kurt shook off his concern. He had a job to do, worried about Finn or not, sore limbs or not. "Okay. We have five cars between us. Everyone pick a ride and follow me."

"Where are we going?"

Time to reveal the master plan. "We can't possibly perform a funk number and destroy Vocal Adrenaline's confidence without dressing the part. I can have you looking spectacular for under ten dollars each."

"You want to dress us?" Mike sounded a bit wary.

Puck rolled his eyes. "He's not gonna crossdress you. Duh. He just wants to make sure we don't all end up looking like massive tools."

"Oh, like you and Hudson doing Marky freakin' Mark?" Santana sniped.

"Sure. Like that."

"It won't take very long," Kurt assured them. "The rest of lunch period, maybe fourth period."

Rachel frowned. "I can't skip. I've never skipped."

"Do you want to kick St Asshat in the balls or not? Did you already forget about the chicken fetuses?"

Her expression hardened. "Let's go!"

What only Kurt knew Puck wasn't saying to the group was how much Kurt needed this today. He needed a break to relax and engage his mind with something that wasn't dancing or singing. He'd been woken up at 5:30 by his cell phone. Coach Sylvester had been on the other side, with orders to be in the gym by six. He'd eaten a granola bar for breakfast on the drive, wanting so badly to feel relieved, but unsure if her confident voice meant what he hoped it did.

It was clear upon entering the gymnasium that Sylvester was back to her old, evil ways. Kurt's relief at no longer having to be in charge was compounded by pride when half the team informed Coach that he and Celeste had come up with a great routine. Even if she decided she didn't want it, they thought it was good enough. Good with no qualifier, even.

Sylvester had thought so, too. Not that she'd done anything as kind as compliment their work. The word sloppy had been shouted through her megaphone multiple times. But when they'd finished the first runthrough, she'd merely spent ten minutes criticizing each of them individually on specific flaws before ordering them to do it again. The fact that she didn't scrap it and start building something else was as close to a 'good job' as he'd ever get.

Just before class had been due to start, she'd given them a ten minute break to sit and breathe, or get some water, whatever was more important to them. Kurt had used the time to approach and ask about Finn. Sylvester glared down at him.

"I told you before. I don't believe kids your age know who they are. Why would I bother to repeat Frankenteen's stupid ideas about his so-called sexuality? The very thought of having his name in my mouth is revolting."

Kurt had thought that if she'd seen him naked she might change her mind. Kurt thought about Finn's sexuality kind of a lot, not to mention parts of him he'd love to have in his mouth.
She'd gestured imperiously. "This conversation is boring me. Go away now."

It wasn't a promise to let Finn come out on his own time, but Kurt had known there was no chance of that, so he'd left it before he could annoy her. It had been the last opportunity for talk anyway. Amanda attempted to leave when the five minute bell rang, and Coach had thrown a hoola hoop at her, hard enough to break it open at the seam. Evidently there were more important things than attending class.

Sylvester had finally let them go ten minutes ago, with instructions to eat and nap before practice resumed at 3:50. Afternoon practice would continue until they had it perfect. Kurt had no doubt that it would turn into an evening practice. Any other time he might have been annoyed for the bogarting of his schedule, but today Kurt was just grateful for the twenty minute delay. Choosing between being late to their final practice before Nationals and helping the rest of Glee psych out their competition would have been a very ugly decision.

Over the sounds of Mercedes declaring that her outfit would be the best, and Quinn saying that she wasn't sure if maternity came in 'funk', Artie sighed. "Dressing the part sounds nice, but I'm not going to be able to call my dad for a ride if we're skipping. Sorry."

Kurt looked at Artie, feeling guilty for a second before the obvious solution hit. "If you can sit in a seat with a seatbelt, your wheelchair will fit in the back no problem. A ton of stuff can fit in the back."

"Yeah, like two bodies," Puck said with a bit of a smirk.

Artie chuckled nervously. "But you've cleaned up since, right?"

Santana snorted. "Like Hummel'd let Puck just leave come stains all over his pretty expensive car."

"Tina, they don't want to talk about that," Artie said, which Puck apparently took as a challenge, because he launched into a detailed explanation of how and where they chose to park the car. Tina listened avidly through the whole thing while Artie hunched lower and lower in his seat, wincing as words like *lube* and *blowjob* emerged from Puck's mouth.

Kurt reached under the dash and handed him a pair of wireless headphones, giving him an apologetic smile. "Sorry," he mouthed. Artie nodded, putting the headphones on and turning the volume up on the radio.

Kurt knew before he parked what he wanted to wear, and what he wanted Puck to wear, as well as what Finn would be comfortable in. If it was maybe unfair that he was basing the entire look of the club on what he wanted to see his boyfriend (boyfriends? It was impossible to tell with Finn) in, it wasn't like anyone would have to know. Quinn and Santana pulled into parking spaces beside him, and Kurt led them inside.

Joshua was behind the counter. He looked up when the mass of twelve teens came in, but handled it with his normal aplomb. "Another performance piece? How did the pretending to be straight thing work out?"

A few people looked at Kurt, and he might have had the chance to see their opinions in their eyes, if Puck hadn't come up and slung a possessive arm around his back. He kissed Kurt's temple. "Not well."
"Maybe it did, if you got a boyfriend out of it. Congrats, Kurt."

Quinn said, derision in her voice, "You're on a first name basis?"

"Well, it's hardly difficult to read a nametag. Besides, wouldn't you say names are better than labels, Missus Pregnant High Schooler?"

It took Kurt all he had to not snicker. He loved Puck the way he was, but for most of his teenage years he'd imagined dating a bitchy queen, and all the brilliant snark he'd get to say.

Instead of letting the conversation devolve further, Kurt clapped to get everyone's attention. "Okay, our palette is black red yellow khaki. Layers, jackets and hats are the style we're looking for. Pants are always harder to fit without tailoring, if any of you already have bottoms in any length in these colours, please let me know. Please remember the classic rule, if you have a great signature piece, the rest of the outfit can be from K-Mart for all it matters. I'll be circulating."

The next half hour was essentially the most fun Kurt had had all week. Yes, sex with Puck was powerful, passionate, perfect. But this was fun.

Mercedes, who'd immediately understood his vision, who'd known exactly what she was going to wear as soon as Kurt listed colours, found a pair of high top Converse. "I'm going to spray paint them silver. And I'm gonna get another pair and make one of the guys wear them."

After he finished hugging her for her brilliance, Kurt found a trashy jacket that he could feel fine about ruining with paint. In his mind's eye it looked even better with the red jeans and fedora than the original black jacket had.

Quinn had been right about not finding a lot of maternity wear in a thrift store. Luckily, Kurt had been right in the assumption that red and white were ingrained into her soul. It was to no surprise that she told him she already had khaki capris and a red shirt. He recommended finding a nice jacket, and moved on.

She wasn't the only one who was able to proceed without much guidance. Matt had a graphic tee and black jeans in hand, pleased that they were both something he could wear any day. Kurt was about to suggest a hat when Mike came up from behind and plunked a black leather hat on Matt's curly hair. Mike had one of his own on, red plaid. He had a red jacket draped over one arm, and an incredibly tacky pair of red sunglasses that made Kurt grin when Mike tried them on.

"I figure I'll just stop off at home for a second for some black jeans and a white shirt."

"I can ask Tina if she'll ride with someone else, so I can give you a ride?"

Mike shook his head. "I rode with Brittany and San and Matt. Judging from how they were talking before, they won't mind a quick chauffeur before they spend the rest of the afternoon fooling around in front of him." Mike got a dreamy look in his eye for a second before shaking it off. "Matt's punctual like a fiend though, he'll make sure they show up to the auditorium on time."

Brittany's idea of high-waisted leather shorts, leather jacket, and a yellow sports bra sounded amazing. And hot, in a purely aesthetic way. The outfit was guaranteed to cost more than ten dollars, and possibly a trip to the mall, but given that the three of them had permission to skip the whole afternoon courtesy of Coach, Kurt wasn't too concerned. The day that one of the Cheerios got a detention was the day Kurt stopped his skin regime. Similarly, the jeans in Santana's hand were sure to be cut at an inappropriately high, but entirely sexy, level.

"I'm going to spend like twenty minutes pulling on the white strings. Nothing looks more stupid
than tear offs that don't have scraggly bits. Or maybe I'll make Matt do it." She smirked.

On the other side of the spectrum was Rachel. She was in the sweater section when Kurt finally made his way over. "You're kidding, right?"

"It's red?"

Kurt frowned and slapped her hand. "It has a turtle on it. What about turtles says funk to you?"

Rachel sighed. "This isn't my style, Kurt, okay? At least I'm here, even though it's ten minutes to fourth period, and I know we will not be back in time."

"No style is your style. I refuse to blemish fashion by saying your normal outfits are a style. But yes, I appreciate you coming."

She made a face. "We'd look funny if eleven of us matched, and then there was me. I'm a team player, Kurt. I'll allow you to pick out my outfit. I trust that this time won't turn out like last time."

Kurt nodded. "This is about the Glee club, not about making you look like a streetwalker in front of Finn."

"Good. Finn truly didn't like that look."

The words *that's because Finn likes nudity and leather better* didn't come out of Kurt's mouth, because he was a better man than that. "How do you feel about the knee socks you're wearing now with red short shorts and a white shirt? Good? That's great, so glad you agree."

Tina was similarly open minded but struggling. "I get what you're going for, I do. I just - I can't see it, because it's not me. Like this t-shirt is khaki, is it good enough?"

"It's embroidered flowers, so no. You don't have anything at home?"

"Kurt, you've known me a year. Do I seem like I have a lot of yellow in my wardrobe?"

"So we're going to swing by your house, get that gorgeous black jacket you have. We're going to pair that with the camo pants I saw ten minutes ago, and-" Kurt stretched his arm and pulled out the hanger. "- this shirt."

"Camo and yellow. Wow. I'll look like a weird funky clone of myself."

He smiled at her, then took her hand to lead her to the men's pants section. "You'll look great in canary. And after this performance, we'll get some RIT and dye the pants black. Much more you."

Looking around Kurt saw that Santana's car of people were gone. He took a moment to wish them fun and unbroken condoms, because the last thing Glee needed was another Quinn. Mercedes was with Artie, so he considered that as good as done. Finn and Puck were left, and as Kurt knew they'd be going home to get all of Puck's clothes, it really just came down to Finn.

He looked utterly lost. He possibly was utterly lost, seeing as Kurt had made his instructions pretty clear, but Finn was in the trenchcoat section. Kurt put his hand on Finn's shoulder. He jumped ten feet.

"Hey," Kurt tried again.

"I found this hat," he mumbled, avoiding Kurt's eyes completely. "But I didn't know about clothes. Can a hat be a signature thing or whatever?"
"It could be, if it was absolutely fabulous. That's a baseball cap. It's good, you were right there. But it's not... go to the next rack and find a jacket to wear over black jeans and a black t-shirt, okay?"

"Kay," he replied. He passed Kurt with a wide margin of avoidance, enough to push the jackets into the opposite side of the row.

And that left Puck. He was standing with Mercedes and Artie, though not really engaging. "You're going to wear tight black jeans, and a tight black muscle shirt."

"Am I?"

"You are if you want me to suck your cock," Kurt whispered in his ear. He felt emboldened, being the one that everyone was looking to in this situation, being the one that saved the Cheerios, being brave enough to fix Finn's situation with Sue.

A few minutes later Finn showed him his choice of jacket. It wasn't something Kurt would have picked. White wasn't Finn's best colour. But it wasn't bad enough to tell him to put it back.

"Acceptable. In fact, I think you'll look hot."

He was expecting a small smile. A blush, maybe. He wasn't expecting Finn to look away and rush off like Kurt was a vector of some horrible plague.

Kurt didn't know what the hell that was about. He also didn't have time to pursue it. He needed to get everyone checked out, idle in front of Tina's house, in front of Puck's, and possibly in front of Artie's. He needed to paint two sets of shoes and a jacket, and figure out how to heat set the paint without melting the shoes' rubber. He needed to attend a multiple hour cheerleading practice run by a truly horrific woman. He needed to perform a song not in his wheelhouse to the best of his ability in order to crush the enemy. He needed to have a scene with his boyfriend. He needed to pack. He needed to win a National competition. He needed to find a few hours in all that to sleep and eat. He needed to plan six meals for his father. He didn't have time for Finn's hot-and-cold shit right now. Not until Monday.

Puck considered entering Kurt's room through the garage entrance, but he hadn't come out at school just to perpetuate the hiding and lying at his boyfriend's house. He rang the doorbell and only felt a little nervous about Burt coming to answer the door.

"I'm taking Kurt out for a little while," he said when Burt let him in.

Burt's expression was thoughtful, but he merely said, "Don't bring him back too late. You know he's leaving tomorrow for this Cheerios gig."

He wasn't sure how Burt might react if he explained the reasoning behind this particular venture. Kurt needed to blow off a little steam, but he also needed to feel like he was the most important person in the world. Puck was pretty sure he could achieve both before bedtime.

"We're trying a new thing," he told Kurt, who looked a little startled to see Puck appear on the basement stairs. He held up the roll of duct tape. "But until I can get some of that bondage tape we read about, you're gonna have to deal with this over a long-sleeved shirt."

Kurt stared at him like he'd just asked him to decapitate his dog. "Do you have no concept about how expensive my shirts are?"

Puck sighed. "Fine... we'll run by my house and pick one of mine up."
He watched Kurt's face go a deep, dusky rose, but he ducked into the bathroom before Puck could question him. "What was that?" he asked, even though Kurt hadn't spoken.

There was an indistinct response from around the corner. Puck moved closer. "Sorry, didn't catch that."

Kurt appeared in the doorway, glaring ferociously. "I said, I already have one."

"Have one what?"

"One of your shirts." He made a gesture in the general direction of his closet. "When we... the second time you came over. You took off your shirt, and you left it here. So I kept it. What?" He crossed his arms in defense against Puck's sudden helpless grin. "It smells like you, okay? Underneath that hideous three-dollar body spray you insist on using, anyway."

"Babe..." Puck said, and Kurt closed his mouth, staring at the floor. He moved right in against his body, taking his chin in one hand and bringing his gaze up to meet his own. "You're completely fucking adorable, and I love you."

"Oh," said Kurt, faintly. "I - okay."

He gave him one kiss, not trusting himself otherwise not to break all the rules Kurt had agreed to follow about doing stuff with him in the basement. "So you gonna tell me where you keep this shirt, or do I have to start opening drawers?"

Kurt colored again, but he moved to his bed, reaching into one of the myriad pillowcases and pulling out the folded shirt. He might have cuddled the shirt to himself briefly before handing it over.

"I am getting it back," he ordered.

"Whatever you want, babe, but I doubt it's going to be in any shape to go back in that pillowcase after we're done with it." He grinned at Kurt's scowl. "You can have a different shirt. I'll sweat the fuck all over it and smear it in my come if you want."

"Oh my god," Kurt moaned, scrunching up his nose. Puck knew he had to be in trouble when even that was endearing. He undid Kurt's buttons quickly, knowing Kurt would drop into subspace if he took too long at that familiar task, and hung up Kurt's shirts for him while Kurt slipped into his black Henley. It didn't look half bad on him.

The drive from Kurt's house to his dad's property took less than ten minutes. He let Kurt have that time to complain about the stress he was under, the things Coach Sylvester had made them do, the fears he had about what would happen if they lost. But as soon as Kurt turned off the car, he put his hand over Kurt's mouth and watched him grow still.

"Time to stop talking now, babe," he said. "Do you think you can do that yourself, or do I need to help with that?"

Kurt blinked several times, watching his face, then he gave Puck a quick nod. Puck suspected that, if he put a hand on Kurt's crotch, he'd find him completely hard.

"That's good. You're going to get out and stand behind the Navigator, and wait for me with your hands behind your back."

The instant his hand left Kurt's mouth, Kurt was out the door. Other than a mild whimper, he
stayed silent the entire time Puck was ripping strips off the duct tape and strapping his wrists
together.

"Nod if you're okay like this."

Kurt did, that same obedient, desperate motion, like he needed Puck to know for sure he was
paying attention. *Aren't I a good boy?* the motion said. *Please, tell me I'm doing this right?* Puck
let out a slow breath, trying to keep it even and controlled, because fuck, if he let himself look too
closely at Kurt when he was like this, everything would be over before it began.

"You can stop things any time just by breaking silence, babe. I'm not going to gag you, not tonight.
Later, I'm going to want you to make some noise. But right now, anything you say is your
safeword, and if you talk, I'll stop and I won't start again."

It wasn't a threat, but it was a good reminder of how serious this could be between them. Kurt
nodded again, seeming more calm now. Puck stroked a hand from his head down his back to the
base of his spine, letting his hand rest there. He felt Kurt shudder.

He opened the back door onto the empty storage space, but as he did so, he leaned in, his lips right
against Kurt's ear, just as Kurt had done to him earlier when they'd been shopping.

"You're ready to suck my cock now, aren't you."

Kurt swallowed audibly, breaking off a noise, but he managed to stay quiet, nodding.

"I think you need to suck Finn's. He should be here in the back right now, spread wide open for
you. Ready for you to wrap your mouth around his cock. I know just how much you'd love that."

The only sound was the quiet music of the field at night, mingled with Kurt's raspy breathing. He
staggered forward a step or two as Puck stripped his jeans off, letting Puck help him out of his tiny
briefs and climb into the back of the Navigator. When Puck pressed his head down onto the pillow
in the far corner of the storage space, Kurt went willingly, exhaling his relief as Puck positioned
him on his knees, his legs spread just the right amount apart. He hooked a finger through the layers
of duct tape around Kurt's wrists, checking to make sure his circulation was still strong and he
wasn't too constricted.

When he closed the back hatch, the sound changed again. Kurt held his breath momentarily when
Puck began to spank him with the paddle, but at a sharp, "Keep breathing," he resumed a
reasonable pace. His hips twisted a couple times, but he wasn't trying to get away from the force of
the blows. He seemed to be contemplating each stroke as it hit, taking each one into himself,
making it part of him, and anticipating the next, as if to say *Oh, another one? Really? I get more?
That's so sweet of you.*

Puck put pressure on the center of his back, holding him down as securely as he could while he
fingered him, slick and hot. It would be sloppy, but he didn't care. He needed Kurt open for this, as
open as he could be. As he did it he began a quiet murmur, telling Kurt how beautiful he was, how
perfect, how much he pleased him like this on his knees. He thought by the time he had three
fingers inside him, if Kurt could have purred, he would have been doing that. But Kurt remained
silent. Puck leaned over and kissed him, his face, his ear, the nape of his neck.

"Now, babe," he whispered, as he slid inside him. "Now, you can sing for me."

He could have wished for better acoustics. The inside of a Navigator, even a tricked-out one like
Kurt's, just wasn't sufficient for the sounds that came out of Kurt's mouth. Puck thought an
auditorium, with Kurt center stage, performing for an audience of one - or two, really, two would have been preferable, but he was working with what he had - and filling the room with his remarkable voice. All the things that Kurt was feeling were surely large enough to fill a room of that size, to fill it and make it ring. Puck would have paid money to hear that.

He was pretty sure Kurt came before he did, but he wasn't stopping to find out. He wasn't being harsh or cruel in any way, but neither was he asking for Kurt to give him anything. This was about Puck taking what he needed, and letting Kurt feel him doing that, until he was done. With each stroke, each thrust, he could hear Kurt cry out his satisfaction, arching back and allowing Puck's words and hands and cock drive him further down into submission.

"That's it," he said when they were done, stroking Kurt's shaking back, curled on the blanket behind him. "So good. You're so fucking good, Kurt. You can say anything you want... but you don't have to say anything."

He cut the duct tape and stripped it off the shirt, which was only a little sticky with residue, taking Kurt's hands and bringing them back around to his chest, tucking them under his chin. Then he lay down beside him, one protective arm draped over his shoulder. He wondered what Kurt would do if he cried, himself, but he decided it wasn't worth taking a chance to find out, and instead just held him as tight as he could.

"Scared," Kurt mumbled.

"I know, babe." He kissed his shirt, his own shirt on his boyfriend's back, and rested his cheek against him. "But you don't have to be. Let me handle it."

Kurt cried a little, but it was mostly reaction by this point, and in less than five minutes, he was asleep. Puck considered his options for a couple minutes, because mostly he just didn't want to stop holding him, but eventually he knew he was going to have to do something. He fumbled in the dark for his jeans, stuffed into the space by the wheelwell, and found his phone in his back pocket. Kurt's home number rang for a few seconds, then picked up.

"Hello?"

"Burt, it's Puck," he said, trying to sound like a man talking to another man, instead of a sixteen-year-old kid who might get slapped down at any second for taking advantage of somebody's innocent son. "I'm here with Kurt, and he... had a little freakout."

"What do you mean? Is he okay?"

"He's fine - but he's asleep now. Totally exhausted, I guess. I was just... I didn't want to wake him. We're not far away from the house..."

"Can you get here without crossing any major streets?"

Puck agreed calmly, hung up, put his pants on, got out of the car, and proceeded to completely lose his shit. Burt was going to come after him with an axe. He would, and Puck had no idea what he'd do when it happened. This wasn't like during "Rose's Turn," where Puck knew he was in the right, and even if Burt took a swing at him for calling him out on his homophobia Puck would have just swung back, completely righteously. Nor was it a situation in which he was aware he'd been a
bastard and deserved the shit he was about to get. That had happened more than once in his past.

This was so much murkier. Burt had been like 95% cool, if not a little touch-stingy, and his only request was that they keep their shit PG, in order to keep his son both safe and sane. Puck had gone behind his back, but only because he knew the only real way to keep Kurt safe and sane was to have things NC-17. They were both in the wrong, and there was so much potential for Kurt to get hurt if they couldn't settle this.

Fuck. He didn't have time to stand here and freak out. Burt was no doubt waiting outside for them. The longer Puck took, the more Burt's hackles would be up. Puck tugged on his mohawk one last time, then opened the door again. There wasn't much he could do about the damp patch from Kurt's orgasm, but he could at least take out the carabiners, hooked to the chains under the seats. Once they'd gone in the car they hadn't bothered to remove them, like kinky air fresheners. But the less detail Burt could get from one look into the Navigator, the better. Working as gently as he ever had, Puck got Kurt's underwear up his thighs without getting much more than an unconscious shift. He considered Kurt's pants, but they were skinny jeans, and it would be pressing his luck. Instead he just cocooned him in the blanket.

The drive back was nerve-wracking. Kurt wasn't exactly in a seatbelt, which meant that for the first time in his life, Puck actually came to a complete five second stop at each stop sign. When he coasted into the driveway, Burt was indeed waiting, arms crossed over his bulky chest. Puck got out and met him at the wide trunk door. He pressed the button on the fob and the door raised.

"How much he wearing under that blanket?" Burt was whispering, but his voice was hard.

"Burt- Mr Hummel, with all respect, his freak out wasn't about sex. It was about how insane Sue Sylvester is, and how much pressure he's under. I'll be doing my best to convince him to not join the Cheerios again next year. Until then, I'm only trying to help him survive, just like you are." He made himself hold Burt's gaze. "I love him too."

Burt studied his face. Puck wasn't sure what he saw, but it was enough to make Burt bend down and scoop Kurt up as easily as a bag of flour, not shove Puck to the ground and kick him to death. Puck had no illusions that this was anywhere close to over, but it was enough, for now.

When Finn's mom kissed his forehead on Saturday morning and said, "I invited Puck over to watch the Cheerios' performance today," Finn had no idea how to respond. It might have been something like, You can't orchestrate my social life, except she mostly had always done that, and he'd never cared before. Or it might have sounded like, Can't you warn me before inviting Puck over? which wouldn't have made any sense at all, considering how long they'd known each other. He definitely couldn't have said, I can't be in the same room with him without wanting him to screw me into the mattress, and that's selfish and hurtful and I can't want that anymore. So he just smiled back as best as he could, and made popcorn ten minutes before the broadcast was scheduled to begin, so it would be hot when Puck walked in the door.

Finn also stationed himself in his dad's chair, carefully arranged to point away from the new stylish couch, and stuck to communicating with nods and waves, keeping his body to himself. He could see Puck's reaction to this, but he didn't know how to explain it to him either. He wasn't sure he trusted himself to even listen to Puck try to make him see his point of view. Puck had a way of convincing Finn he was right.

Burt was there, but he didn't seem to want to join Puck on the couch, choosing instead to sit at the dining room table and watch from there. But his mom came and sat with them for a while, keeping up a cheerful patter and appropriately excited commentary when the routine began. Finn ended up
asking her to just listen, because he wanted to hear Kurt, and he could already tell he was going to sound amazing, even if Finn couldn't understand a word he was saying.

"Why is he singing in another language?" he asked during a lull. "I'm pretty sure that's not English."

"She's a French-Canadian singer," said Puck, giving him a duh look, like Puck himself would know that if he wasn't dating Kurt. He reached out and grabbed the bowl of popcorn and didn't pass it back to Finn until the routine was over. Finn didn't really care; he'd made it for Puck, after all.

"Did Kurt really choreograph that whole thing?" his mom asked, sounding awed. Finn tried to resist the pride he felt in Kurt, because none of it had anything to do with him, after all.

"Yeah, with one of the Cheerios," said Puck. He didn't have any reason not to be proud of Kurt, but he seemed restrained, like he was holding back.

That was enough to make Finn speak up. "He worked really hard all week. Like, he put everything into it, even though he didn't really care about it, because the Cheerios needed him." And, shit, saying the words was enough to make him start tearing up, right in front of Burt and his mom and Puck, and he wasn't going to do that. He stood up and took the nearly-empty bowl out of Puck's hands, muttering something about refills, and made a break for the kitchen.

He'd made enough to fill half the bowl by the time his mom joined him. She planted her hands on the counter and faced him, her face resolute. He barely had time to brace himself before she was talking.

"What is going on with you and Puck? And don't tell me nothing, young man, because it's clearly something." She watched him pace the length of the kitchen, ducking away from her eyes. "This isn't about Quinn anymore, is it?"

"No. It's not." He shot her a desperate appeal, but she was too far gone into anxious mommy mode to respond to that. "Mom... can't we just drop it?"

"No, we can not. I need you to be straight with me, here, Finn."

He closed his eyes, struggling to suppress the hysterical laughter that rose in his chest. "Um... don't think I can do that. Not being all that straight these days."

His mom's firm expression softened somewhat, and she sighed. "Oh, Finn."

"I'm sorry," he said, shaking his head when she tried to approach, glancing out the doorway to the dining room, "you can't - please don't tell Burt, Mom."

"But this is about you and Puck?" she said. "Why would it matter for Kurt -"

"Because it's about both of them. Puck and Kurt, and me, and... Mom, don't look at me like that."

She was looking at him exactly like that. "What are you doing, Finn?"

I'm in love, only I can't be. I want them to do things to me and I can't even be in control of myself around them. He hung his head. "Trying not to get in their way."

"Because you think they deserve happiness more than you do?" She looked at him for a long moment. "Tell me, what do you think I see when I look at you and Puck? Neither of you are all that
subtle. I'm pretty sure that whatever you're feeling, he's feeling the same way."

Mr. Schue's words rang in his head. "Yeah, well, Kurt got there first." He couldn't help sounding bitter. "I don't know who to listen to. Some days they're all I can think about. Some days I hate myself for wanting it."

"There's nothing wrong with you, honey."

She was respecting his space, which was what he'd asked for, but at that moment, all he wanted was for her to hug him and tell him it was going to be okay. Eventually she went back into the dining room. He just stayed where he was, slouching against the kitchen counter, and waited for the popcorn to be done.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IiA6Xlg_dgU

Twenty seconds on the backlog, overtime
Just twenty seconds 'til we're swept by the tide
We're treading water in the dead of night
And we're speechless, just speechless

Because you've got me right where you want me
As a tsunami tide rolls over
The landscape that we built a home in
Inside of our minds

We're staring skywards waiting for a sign
Up to our necks in it 'til the day brings us light
And our whole lives are flashing before our eyes
And we're speechless

So we fall and we break
And we make the same mistakes
Like we always, always do

And we crawl, intertwined
Forced apart from the inside
Like we always, always knew

And I'm speechless
Just speechless

Twenty seconds on the backlog, overtime
Just twenty seconds 'til you're no longer mine

- Morning Parade, "Speechless"
In an open prison, now I am trying to break free

Chapter Notes

This chapter is possibly my favourite. It's got great smut, great conversations with parents, and Santana speaking for the people and calling Finn out. -gala

Seconded. I aspire to grow up to be Carole when my children become teenagers. There's still more angst to come, but it's wonderful to see the progress toward the story ending we've known would happen. Puck is absolutely fantastic here. -amy

The pep rally Monday morning was a brief affair. All the Cheerios marched onto the gymnasium floor with the marching band playing background music. Sue gave a speech about how amazing she was, how amazing her team was, and how they'd all been strong enough to work through the trauma of seeing Will Schuester's hair and continue fighting for the win. The t-shirt cannon shot shirts with Sylvester's face on them. It would have been completely obnoxious, except Ben Israel got one to the face, and that made the whole scene worth it.

After being forced to sustain applause for several minutes, Sylvester shouted into the megaphone that all the cretins could leave now. Puck made an executive decision that that didn't include him, and hung around at the bottom of the bleachers as the rest of the students and teachers filed out.

Sylvester spotted him immediately, of course. "Puckerman. Your massive head looks like a landing zone. Seeing as my Cheerios and I do not yet own a bi-plane, your presence is not necessary."

Puck smiled, teeth bared. "I'm here to help you all celebrate."

"You think you can blackmail me? I own this school, city, and state."

"Coach Sylvester, let him stay?"

Sylvester turned to Kurt, ignoring Santana completely. "This is your last favour, Ladyboy." Before Kurt could say anything, or point out that Santana had asked, not him, Sylvester stalked off to her office. She came back with a large box in hand. "If I see any of you in your car, I will cut off your pony tail, and make sure you never graduate."

She began to hand out the flasks. Each Cheerio took his or hers with a sense of awe. Puck knew how much this ritual meant to them. Santana's flask engraved with Lopez, 2009 was the only thing she drank out of. She even poured red cups of beer into it at house parties. Kurt took his with slightly shaking hands. His thumb rubbed over the miniscule indents Hummel, 2010 left on the metal.

No one opened the cap until the last Cheerio got their flask, and then they all drank their first swallow at once. Puck felt Kurt's arms around him first, and then Santana's, and that was definitely Brittany's hand in his mohawk. More and more bodies joined, until the group hug was twenty five wide.

When they broke apart, Amanda called out, "Now who's got the best fake ID?" From the round of
cheers, it was clear it was going to be an all day party. As a few of the Cheerios began to confer, Puck pulled Kurt to the side.

"I don't want to be a buzzkill. And even if we are doing the authority thing in the metaphorical bedroom, I'm not running your damn life."

"Okay?"

"But I'm asking you to be responsible today. Not because I don't like people getting smashed, I don't have any drunk daddy issues. We're gonna go to all the house parties this summer, and I bet people like your drunk ass more than Azimio's. Not because I think you could get in trouble for being underage. Sylvester's been doing this for a decade, and no one's ever said boo. I'm saying it because I have after school plans, and I need you to be sober."

"Plans?"

Puck ignored the question to continue his monologue. "I could be with Matt or Finn or San or Brit and tell them exactly what time they needed to stop drinking, and exactly how many shots they could do, to be sober by three thirty. But I don't know your tolerance. So I need you to be responsible, and figure it out for yourself. Because my plans are great, but we can't do them with you drunk. So hang with the Cheerios all day, and celebrate your win, because you were fucking amazing. Finn teared up, thought no one saw, but he did. But cut yourself off when you gotta."

"What plans?" Kurt said eagerly.

Puck shook his head. As much as the idea of Kurt thinking about it on and off all day, getting hard each time, appealed to him, he wanted it a surprise.

Kurt wrapped his arms around Puck's shoulder and pulled him in for a kiss, like the one swallow had already lowered his inhibitions. Puck returned the slide of tongue with ease. It wasn't until they pulled apart to fill empty lungs that Puck really realised what they'd done, about three seconds before the rest of the Cheerios burst into applause.

"Nice show, Kurt! Wanna incorporate that into the next routine?"

Kurt blushed, but said, "No thanks, Celeste," in a relatively strong voice.

So they were officially out to McKinley now. It hadn't leaked out of Glee, but there was no way that this wouldn't be spread to every last student by lunch. Puck shrugged mentally. Fuck it. It had to happen some time, and he had no regrets. Not a single one.

"What plans," Kurt asked again, this time with a bit of a whine.

"Have fun with your group." Puck said.

"You're a tease, Puckerman," Santana said, walking with him to the double doors of the gymnasium.

"He loves it," Puck replied easily.

"I'll make sure he doesn't get too hammered. Just consider me a fairy's godmother."

"You're such a bitch."

She shrugged and kissed his forehead. "It's obviously what you're attracted to. Go have fun setting
up the sex swing and Crisco oil station or whatever."

Puck's laughter stayed with him almost all the way to the parking lot. He drummed the steering wheel for a moment and then decided to make the trip to Dayton. The drive was slightly over an hour, but for exactly that reason Puck hadn't flashed his fake ID around there. In Lima cashiers knew who he was. A lot didn't care, but Puck couldn't work on percentages and bravado today. He needed a successful purchase for Kurt's reward.

It said something about American culture that Puck drove past multiple gun shops before he saw a shop in a strip mall called The Annex. The name wasn't overtly sexual, it was no Love Nest or Discreet Boutique, but there were neon lights in the window outlining a lady's figure. He was in the wrong lane to pull into the parking lot, but after a bout of swearing and circling the block twice, he managed to get in.

"Do you need any help?" the woman behind the counter asked.

"No. I mean, probably not," he amended. "I've kind of got the whole thing figured out in my head already."

She nodded. "Okay, fair enough. I'll be here if you have any questions."

Puck wasn't supposed to have any spare money. It was supposed to all be going into fucking Vocal Adrenaline's already padded pockets. But he'd be damned if he wasn't going to celebrate Kurt's win with something a little more personal than a flask's worth of vodka. And the toys ended up being not that expensive anyway. Less than thirty dollars for things Kurt was going to love.

Kurt and Santana met him at Kurt's locker after last period. Santana was drunk to the gills, but hiding it pretty well. Puck knew how she got drunk. She could pass for sober, as long as she didn't have to start talking. Kurt, on the other hand, looked like he hadn't touched a drop.

She eyed Puck. "You go to your classes?"

"Third through sixth."

"You get any shit? You shouldn't'a gotten any. We decided that in exchange for watching you two make out sometimes, we wouldn't put out for any boy that gives you shit. I mean, I dunno how long it'll last, we were all pretty messed up when we decided. And most of us are kinda slutty. But maybe it'll help."

"No, there was nothing. Thanks, San."

She rested her head on his shoulder briefly. "You're always my favourite. Except Brit. I love Brit-Brit, so much."

Puck frowned. "How are you getting home? You're not driving?"

Santana shook her head. "I like my ponytail. Me and Brit are gonna walk."

"Kurt, you cool with waiting twenty minutes?"

"Drive them home, I'll meet you at mine?"

He brushed his knuckles against Kurt's, a stealthy show of affection in a still crowded hall. Any other day Puck'd just kiss him and punch who needed to be punched, but he didn't need that marring Kurt's day, any more than he needed Santana to go psychotic and attempt to stab a
bystander with a pen. "Sounds great."

Puck got Brittany and Santana to the Pierce's without a problem, if he didn't count them taking turns undoing their seatbelts and leaning forward to lick the shell of his ear. By the time he got to Kurt's he'd edited the plan a little. Burt wouldn't be home for over two hours. What he didn't know wouldn't hurt him. And as for Kurt's ethical stance on lying to his dad, Puck was sure he could logic him around it.

He took the world's fastest shower, putting his jeans back on and leaving the rest on the chair. Puck had no idea how Kurt managed to keep his room so neat. There was never anything on the floor or out of place, and all his books and CDs and paraphernalia were tucked away out of sight. Puck's room was a complete pit. It was just as well Kurt had never been there; it didn't really go along with making the best impression on his boyfriend. It would probably happen eventually, and he knew Kurt would still love him, even if he was a slob.

His new purchase, he washed with soap and water, as they'd advised in the store. You should make sure toys are clean before putting them in someone's mouth, the woman at the counter had said. Puck wasn't sure tasting like soap was any better than tasting like plastic, but he did it anyway.

When Kurt came into the room from the garage, Puck was prepared. He met him with a fierce kiss that knocked him back against the door, and kept him distracted from what was on the bed. "Go shower," he said, "and come back to the bed."

He didn't say one word about not doing things in the basement. Either Kurt had given up his strict ethics about his dad, or he trusted Puck to make it okay. Neither option seemed all that great at the moment, but Puck wasn't going to question it as long as Kurt was willing. He waited on the bed, listening to Kurt's shower noises and idly stroking himself through his jeans.

Kurt came out of the bathroom rosy, soft and naked. Puck interrupted his script to take several minutes to hold him like that, to feel his skin and appreciate exactly what he had, what Kurt was about to give up to him.

Eventually, he spoke quietly in Kurt's ear. "Your silence was really hot last time, babe. But I want to do something different this time. I want you to be loud. Like, really loud. You're not going to worry about how much noise you're making; you're just going to do it. Understand?"

Kurt nodded, licking his lips. "I'm not sure I can. I've never been loud before during... ever."

"I know. That's why I got you this." He reached down and picked up the ball gag. Kurt's eyes got very round at the straps and attachments, but he didn't try to back away when Puck held it up to his face. He just wanted to see it against his jaw, but he wasn't ready to put it on him yet. Kurt put a hand up and touched the buckles, the soft straps, the ball in its enclosure. He put a finger in one of the holes in the ball.

"What's this for?"

"Keep you breathing," he said. It made him inordinately proud when Kurt just nodded, accepting this as not an unusual concept. Yes, of course you'd want to keep doing that.

"You... want me to be loud," Kurt said, sounding uncertain, "but you want me to wear a gag?"

"I want you to let go," Puck clarified. "And I've got other tools to get you there, but this is the first one." He unbuttoned his jeans and sat down on the edge of the bed, drawing Kurt down to kneel in front of him. "You're going to start here."
Kurt seemed unusually touched by Puck going commando, and he gazed up at him with a worshipful expression that Puck recognized. It wouldn't take much to get Kurt to let go, not tonight. He let Kurt work himself into a desperate state with his mouth on Puck's cock, his hands roaming across Puck's chest, clutching and digging in with his nails just as Puck liked it. It would have been so easy to have him finish him off that way, but there were too many possibilities he wanted to keep in reserve. Not to mention he was pretty exhausted himself, and if he came now, there was no guarantee he'd be able to keep going with the scene. When he put a hand out to restrain Kurt's motion, Kurt obeyed instantly, attentive and willing. Puck could have watched him for hours. Someday, he vowed. Someday, he'll serve... someone else, and I'll be there to watch over them.

"All right, babe," he said softly, and slipped the ball between Kurt's now-swollen lips. Kurt immediately made a low moan that went right to his cock. He hadn't expected him to look so good in it, the straps fastened around his chin and the back of his head. Puck cinched it a notch tighter, watching Kurt swallow. Fuck. He got the cuffs from under his pillow and buckled them on securely, then gestured to the bed, hooking the cuffs to the tiedowns tucked under the mattress. "Face down, with the gag on. I'm gonna put a towel down, so you're not going to worry about drooling or anything. It's all taken care of. Your only job is to be as loud as you fucking can be."

He brought his hand down on Kurt's bare ass, once, and enjoyed his enthusiastic noises. "That's it," he encouraged, and did it again, and then again before picking up the lube. This he worked in quickly, knowing the faster he did that part, the more comfortable Kurt would be. He also coated the new toy, slipping a condom over it to make cleanup easier.

Then he set the plug right against Kurt's ass, giving him a little pressure, so he could feel it. Kurt paused for a moment, then he sighed, relaxing against the intrusion. It slid in a little at a time until it was firmly seated against his body, held in place by the flange. Puck put the flat of his hand against the plug, pressing, and felt him contract and heard him moan, and he smiled. "Just like that, babe. You tell me what you like. Those noises of yours, they're making me so hard for you. Pretty soon it's gonna be my cock inside you."

He pushed, drawing Kurt's legs back and down so he was prone on the bed, his cock trapped between his body and the mattress. Immediately Kurt started squirming, thrusting against the bed, and Puck kept up the patter, telling him so hot and keep doing that. With every louder cry or moan, he encouraged him further. Then he picked up the paddle.

The first blow was on his thighs, a more sensitive spot than his ass, and Kurt jumped a little with the impact. It didn't take long before Kurt was shouting, on the verge of tears. It was going to be impossible for him to give informed consent, pretty soon. Puck paused, running a hand over the red marks, watching him shudder. He reached over and picked up a small handful of marbles he'd stolen from his sister's toybox, and tucked them into Kurt's hand, extended over the edge of the bed.

"If you let go of these, they'll fall to the floor," said Puck. "If you do that, the scene's over, and I'll un cuff you and take the plug out and make you come in ordinary ways. You get to decide when you're done. But I'm gonna push you pretty hard, so I'm saying when, not if, understand? This isn't about being stoic and taking it. I want you to use this to tell me when you're ready to stop. Got it?"

Kurt was listening, even though his focus was somewhere across the room, and he nodded when Puck prompted him. Puck leaned in and gave him a kiss, just behind the strap that hugged his jaw. "Good boy," he whispered, feeling Kurt's body settle further into the mattress. Then he straightened, lining up the next stroke carefully, and delivered it directly over the plug that lay flush against his ass. Kurt took a deep breath and let out an incredibly satisfying wail.
Puck kept up the strokes, covering all the unmarked parts of his ass and thighs, but always coming back to the center, watching the pace of the thrusts of his hips to know how hard and how fast to hit. When he saw him stutter and tense, he brought the paddle down in a quick flurry of swats, directly over his clenching hole, telling him urgently, "Come on, babe, let me hear you." It wasn't quite a scream, but it was close.

Puck used his hand to trace long strokes on the sensitive skin of his thighs while Kurt came down from his climax. It was a long descent, but before he could slip into a resting state, Puck reached inside him with a crooked finger and broke the seal on the plug, letting it slip free. He discarded the condom in the trash even as he opened the package on the next one. He had a vague sense he'd been painfully hard for too long, but it hadn't even occurred to him to do anything about it, until now.

Instead of making Kurt get back up on his knees, he just lay beside him, one leg hooked through and under his, getting a good angle before sliding inside him. Kurt cried out.

"Remember the marbles," he reminded him. "I'm not gonna stop, otherwise."

Kurt's noises were pretty much ceaseless by now, low breathy moans interspersed with exclamations and whines, but Puck could guess that if he'd been able to decipher words in there, he wouldn't be asking him to stop. That was just fine by him. He didn't have to go slowly, because Kurt was wide open for him, but he did anyway, enjoying every moment. But he still hadn't quite gotten what he'd come for.

"Hold on, babe." He raised himself up on his knees, pressing Kurt into the bed, gripping his hips firmly in both hands. "I'm gonna make you scream."

He rode him, high and hard, as drunk on Kurt's sounds as much as the sensation of being inside him, but he managed to sustain the pace until he heard the clatter of marbles on the floor. The response was instant, like a Pavlovian lever being pulled, and Puck let himself be the one to make the noises as he held very still, coming hard inside him.

"Babe," he murmured, over and over, kissing him as he slowly pulled out, keeping contact with his body, "so beautiful, so good. That was just right, you did so well."

Puck leaned over, sweaty and tired, to unhook his wrists from the tiedowns and unbuckle the cuffs. But when he tried to undo the gag, Kurt's hands shot up to cover the buckle, making Puck chuckle in surprise. "Not ready yet?"

Kurt didn't answer. He couldn't answer vocally, of course. But he didn't shake or nod his head either. He just kept the buckle protected, so Puck couldn't touch it. Puck stopped trying, and just stroked his hand through Kurt's sweaty hair. His boy was so perfect. Even after all of that, he still had enough of himself to refuse something he didn't want.

"Okay. You can keep it for now. I'm going to go get some water, I'll be right back."

More specifically, he was going to get some water from the kitchen, and add a spoonful of honey into it. It was one of the few things Rachel'd rambled about that he actually heard. Sore throats were soothed by honey-water. He couldn't be sure that Kurt's would hurt from the screaming, but if it did, he wanted to be able to fix it.

Puck put his jeans back on. He considered the discarded shirt, but he was almost as sweaty as Kurt, and the shirt would stick to his back. Even so, he drew the sheet over Kurt's body, knowing the chilly basement air would make him cold before long. "I'll be right back," he repeated.
There was honey in a glass container, not in a bear shaped bottle. Puck was opening all the drawers to try to find the cutlery when he heard footsteps. It was the first time Kurt had ever followed him after a scene. Puck couldn't say he didn't like the idea of Kurt needing to be close. "Hey babe," he greeted without turning around. "Just show me where your spoons are, and then you can drink this and we can cuddle, 'kay?"

"The spoons are in the drawer under the microwave." And holy fucking fuck, that was Burt's voice. Puck spun around. There stood Burt's body, to match his voice.

Fuck.

"I had a feeling if I came home early I'd find you here."

Puck run his fingers through his hair. There were scratch marks on his chest. What he wouldn't give to be wearing a t-shirt. "After Friday I wanted to make sure we were somewhere that he could fall asleep afterwards. He usually does." Crap. He wanted to slam his face into his palms. The first sentence had sounded so reasonable. And then came the second, and there was no way Burt wouldn't hear what *usually* implied.

"Usually."

"Yeah." Yes, Kurt usually fell asleep after a scene. Wait... Kurt usually fell asleep after a scene, and Puck had left him alone, with an obstruction in his mouth. Puck hadn't spent much time researching, the idea of a gag seemed pretty straightforward to him. But *do not leave lover unattended* was probably in every article that he hadn't read.

"I gotta go."

His voice was grim. "No, son. You're sitting down at this table, and we're having a talk about respecting my son."

Puck shook his head desperately and started to swerve past Burt. "I have to go."

He cut the volume in half, which somehow doubled the intensity of his words. "You are not touching Kurt again, until we have a conversation."

"I left Kurt in a potentially unsafe BDSM situation, because I'm a moron, and I'm not talking to you about shit until I make sure he's safe."

That left Burt goggling at him, not that Puck gave himself any time to take in the expression. Glass of water completely forgotten, he bolted down the stairs. His heart stopped in his chest until he saw Kurt curled on the bed, perfectly fine. His chin was covered in drool, and there was a wet spot on the towel underneath his head, but nothing dangerous or terrifying was happening. Puck took a deep breath, and mentally debated telling Kurt about fucking up. Maybe later he would, when Kurt was in a headspace to hear it. Now wasn't the time to tell Kurt he shouldn't have felt safe.

The decision became moot a second later when Burt shouted down the stairs, "Is he okay?"

"Fine. Give us five!"

Kurt's eyebrows furrowed. His eyes looked a bit clearer, but not much. Puck knew he had to explain it gently. He moved in close. "Your dad is home. Obviously. He knows basically nothing, but we gotta talk to him. Or I gotta, but you need to come with. Let me take this off, okay?"

This time Kurt didn't cover the buckle, and he opened his mouth as wide as it could go so Puck could disengage the ball.
"I'm gonna find you something nice to wear. No buttons, nothing tight. You're gonna wear something nice, and then we're gonna talk and everything will be okay, I promise, okay?" Puck kept up a running commentary as he dug through Kurt's ample closet to find something soft and comforting. None of Kurt's shirts were like his Henleys, and for the briefest of moments he considered just dressing Kurt in his own clothes. But that would be starting the family conversation with an offensive move, and Puck wanted to try to keep things as mellow as possible.

Finally he found a pair of flannel pyjama pants. The matching shirt had about a thousand buttons, so Puck gave up and grabbed a white undershirt. If Kurt got cold he could snuggle in. He was probably going to anyway, if he was still this far under.

"Go up the stairs for me, please," Puck instructed softly. And then, "Come with me to the living room." And then, "Sit beside me on the couch... no, babe, not on me; beside me."

The last didn't go over very well with Kurt. Their thighs were jammed together, and Kurt's head was on his shoulder, and the way he was slumping Puck had to throw an arm across his back to keep him upright. From Burt's expression he felt the opposite, that his son and some punk were about a hundred feet too close.

"Sir, I know you're probably not too happy. But don't shout, okay? He wouldn't take it too well right now."

"What's wrong with him? He barely even looks like himself."

Puck shook his head. "It's nothing wrong. It's called subspace. It's like... like a post sex afterglow, except less about the happy, and more about the safe."

Burt stared at him, his eyebrows working. "Okay?" he said finally.

"We don't do it all the time. But sometimes Kurt's life is really hard, and then we do... bedroom stuff that's more like this, and it makes Kurt feel better. And since I'm being honest, it makes me feel better about not being able to fix everything, because I can fix this."

Burt shook his head. "He doesn't look like he feels better. He looks like he needs a hug."

"Well, no offense, but normally by now we'd either be cuddling, or he'd be asleep. So. That's why he's kind of all over me. We weren't really expecting to get interrupted."

"Interrupted. Puckerman, this is my house. And I told Kurt there was an open door policy, so there shouldn't have even been anything to interrupt."

Puck sighed. He knew they should have just been honest from the start. "We were having sex before we started dating. We sucked at telling each other stuff for a while. And then he told you about me, and you told him the rules, and we figured it could go one of three ways. We could stop having sex like you ordered, we could talk about it like we are right now, or we could do it in other locations so he could still sorta follow your rules. He didn't want to talk, and we didn't think we could stop having sex. Normal sex, or this kind. So we've been using a lot of side streets and parking lots."

Kurt pushed his face into Puck's neck, his eyes nearly closed. Puck stroked his head a few times and continued.

"And then Friday happened, and I knew that today was going to end the same, so I decided that it was better to disobey you then to drive him around without seatbelts, again. So I'm sorry if you're pissed, and you have every right to be, but I don't really care because I'd do the exact same thing
tomorrow."

Now Burt sounded dangerous. "You're trying to tell me Kurt has to have sex to feel good about himself?"

Puck snorted, irritated. "He's not a sex addict. Saying it like that is stupid. I don't know when you started with girls, and I hope to never have a relationship close enough with an adult to be told that sort of thing about them, but just think about that. When you started, did you want to not do it again for a year? Or did you want to do it again in a half hour?"

It was maybe a bit obnoxious to swing it back onto Mr Hummel. But the truth was the more he could relate it to Burt, the less it would become a 'my son is doing what!' horrorshow.

Burt rubbed his face, which was red, but his breathing was fairly even and slow, so Puck didn't think he was in imminent danger. "Okay. Are you at least being... no. No, you're not being safe; you just told me you weren't. Puck, I don't think-"

"We're safe in the traditional way. After Quinn, the first thing on my mind is condoms, trust me on that. I told Kurt from the beginning I cared about him too much not to. The issue you interrupted was me getting water so he'd have something to drink when I undid the gag, instead of undoing the gag and then getting water."

Burt was staring at him again. Puck shrugged with the shoulder that Kurt wasn't resting on. Kurt was pretty much asleep at this point, and there was no need to wake him up. "I figure at this point you'd appreciate bluntness. It was stupid, but it's kind of like Quinn. You fuck up once, and then your own nerves make sure you never do the same thing again."

He nodded, still looking troubled. "Could you have sex and not do all that stuff? If it's so dangerous that you can't leave the room, maybe you should wait until you're adults."

"No. Nope. It's basically like asking Kurt if he could have sex, but maybe try it with a girl, because reasons. We both know how well that went."

Burt sighed, long and slow. "Puck, I don't really know what to say here. I'm not very comfortable with this whole thing."

"With respect - because I'm not bullshitting. I respect you a hell of a lot for this. You're sitting down and talking this shit out, when you could have just kicked me the fuck out, so yeah, respect. But bottom line, you don't have to be comfortable."

"I can do out of sight out of mind. It was just about the best of both worlds, if he was going to be honest. Permission, with no meddling.

"Good."

Puck looked to his side. "Well, I can do it in the future. Right now, I was hoping you could get us a blanket? I don't want to wake him up if I don't have to. If you got a blanket we could just sit here
until he wakes up."

Burt didn't say anything, but he disappeared and returned a minute later, bearing a hideous crocheted thing about the size of a lake. He draped it around the both of them, turned the TV to ESPN, and set the remote control next to Puck's arm before he left the room.

Last night he'd woken up on the couch with Puck, who'd apologised, but had to go home ASAP. Kurt understood; Puck had people in his life other than him, after all. His dad had stuck his head into the living room shortly after, saying there were leftovers in the fridge, and he was heading over to Carole's. Kurt understood that too. He hadn't exactly been present for most of the conversation between his dad and Puck, but Puck wasn't subtle, and Dad no doubt needed time to decompress after learning a whack of things about his child he'd rather not know.

But now it was morning, and he could hear footsteps upstairs. More than that, he could smell frying bacon. Kurt knew without being told that he was expected at the table. He got dressed quickly, a great chestnut plaid jacket on top of a white button down, and climbed the stairs. No matter how nightmarish this was going to be, he had to face it head on.

It wasn't just his dad at the table. Carole was sitting too. She started to get up when she noticed him. "Morning, honey. You want me to make you some eggs?"

"No, thanks." Not only was Kurt perfectly capable of making his own eggs, he was also aware of how much butter Carole used when frying things. If she made him breakfast, it would be enough to turn paper transparent. Besides, her offer felt disturbingly like a bribe for some as-of-yet unknown issue. He didn't want to owe her before he even knew the situation.

"Kurt, Carole and I wanted to talk to you about something."

There it was. He hadn't even cracked his first egg, and they were about to have Serious Meal Conversation.

"I'm not breaking up with Puck," he declared, hand clenching on the frying pan handle. "I don't know how much you hate him now, but I don't care. I'm not-"

"This has nothing to do with Puck. Me and Puck got everything squared away last night."

Kurt blinked at the dials of the oven, then turned around to examine his father's face for signs. What did that mean? Clearly he needed to talk to Puck as soon as he got to school. Glee would give them a private corner.

"This is about Finn."

What did that mean? Had Puck brought him into the conversation last night?

"It's about me, too," Carole chimed in.

Kurt was about to have a fit. Something was going on, that might or might not be related to everything that had happened on Monday, and everyone knew about it except him. "I'm going to need everyone to be more specific, please."

"Carole and I talked last night about the possibility of the Hudsons moving in to the Hummel house."

Of all the things on the world Dad could have said, Kurt would have never guessed that one. "Oh?"
"I'd like to. And I know Finn would end up being very happy. And your father wants us. But it's your house too, Kurt."

"Uh," he said intelligently, before turning once again to the stove. This time he got two eggs cracked before Dad spoke up again.

"I'm going to take a leak. Be back in five or ten, you know how older bodies work."

Once he was out of the room, Kurt commented, "He knows that was the least subtle thing in the world, right?"

"Kurt, he didn't want to say he was giving us privacy for some lady-talk. That song you sung really shook him up. He's trying to be better about that sort of thing."

Kurt frowned. "And what lady talk are we supposed to be talking about?"

Carole smiled. "Well, he'd want me to remind you that while he said he was fine with you and Puck expressing your love physically-"

"He would never say that."

"So it's not the exact phrase he used. He did give you two permission to have your door closed. But he'd want me to remind you that if Finn's going to be sharing your room, you need to have a sock on the doorknob policy, and give him his own privacy when he brings a girl over. Except, the thing is, Kurt? Is that me and my son talk more than you and Burt, and I also notice more myself. I know that he wants both of you, and he's trying desperately to avoid you."

Kurt thought he might break into tiny little fragments on the floor. "I-"

"You don't have to confirm or deny. It's okay, Kurt. It doesn't upset me. Finn's had terrible relationships in the past, girls who never cared if he was happy. At least I know you and Puck care. So, if you tell your dad you're okay with us joining your family, I'll tell you the truth. I don't want you to put a sock on the door. I think Finn could use some walking in on love. I want him to sleep ten feet from you and look at your eyelashes. I want him to be loved, Kurt. It's all a parent wants for their child."

"I want to throw a welcome party," Kurt finally said, once he could breathe again.

She relaxed, smiling. "I'll buy you a bottle of sparkling cider on my lunch break."

Finn escaped from the welcome party into Kurt's bathroom, muttering something about a big lunch. He leaned against the closed door, feeling the panic creeping up his spine. Kurt's behavior was way out of line. He'd said, I am going to put together a palette that expresses who you are and who I want you to be - er, who you want to be. First of all, whatever a palette was, Finn didn't want Kurt putting together one for him. He didn't need Kurt's hands anywhere near who he wanted to be. Second of all, how the hell was his mom thinking that this would be okay with him? He wasn't going to share a room with Kurt, because that way lay all kinds of madness. Even as he gritted his teeth and blinked away tears, he could feel himself getting hard at the idea.

He paced the length of the tiny bathroom, cringing when every glance showed him another piece of Kurt. He wasn't going to welcome Finn into this space; he was going to devour him, to swallow him whole and break him down from the inside. When Kurt was done with him, there wouldn't be anything recognizable left of Finn Hudson. He sat down on the edge of the toilet, holding back a sob. There was really hardly anything left, now.
There was a light rap on the door. "Everything okay in there?" his mom's voice came.

"Out in a minute," he called back. There was a pause.

"You want us to go upstairs and leave you and Kurt to talk?"

"No," he said, a little louder than he probably needed to. He sighed. "No. It's... it's okay. Just give me a second."

Finn could feel all kinds of crazy ideas flickering on the edges of possibility. He could leave town, just get in... well, somebody's car, and take off. He hadn't run away from home since he was seven and he'd packed up his backpack with food and toys and gone to hide in the tall grass by the pond in their neighborhood, wondering if he could get a job at the 7-11.

Or he could... no, he really couldn't. He wouldn't do anything like that. He'd open the bathroom door and try to smile at his mom and eat a tuna crude and deal with this, the fucking mess his life had become.

It was the next day that Kurt dragged Puck into his room, coaxing him all the way, and settled him on the bed against the mountain of pillows. "Open mind, right?" Kurt prompted.

Puck sighed. "You've tried this before. Still don't like Madonna, never will like Madonna. I don't see how this is going to be any different."

"There are similarities, but... trust me. The differences are important." Kurt went to his iPod and fiddled for a bit, then turned back to Puck, hairbrush in hand, a la Rachel. He leaned in, teasing and taunting him with the lyrics. Okay, they were lame, but pretty much any reference to Kurt alone in the bedroom with tissues, Puck couldn't help but be intrigued.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvK0BDWRM4c

Your love is nothing I can't fight
Can't sleep with the man who dims my shine
I'm in the bedroom with tissues and when
I know you're outside banging that I won't let you in
Cause it's a hard life with love in the world
And I'm a hard girl, loving me is like chewing on pearls

You've got me wondering why
I, I like it rough
I, I like it rough
I, I like it rough

He had some rudimentary choreography, which could have been stolen directly from Lady Gaga or invented on the spot; whichever it was, Puck was definitely on board with Kurt dancing for him. There wasn't anything that looked like coy Madonna here; this was dirty, sharp and shameless.

Won't go without my fix tonight
It's a little too rough
Prom girl wipes her tears with silver lines
And she can't get enough

I'm in the bedroom with tissues and when
I know you're outside banging that I won't let you in
Cause it's a hard life with love in the world
And I'm a hard girl, loving me is like straightening curls

You've got me wondering why
I, I like it rough
I, I like it rough
I, I like it rough

Kurt practically climbed on top of him during the last half of the song, until the last lines hit Puck particularly hard. He had to grab Kurt's writhing hips, flipping him and grinding him into the bed. The rest of the song went on without him, but Kurt didn't seem too upset by it.

I'm shiny and I know it
Don't know why you wanna blow it
Need a man who likes it rough
Is it because you don't mean it, or because I don't feel it
Unless it's rough?

"It's pretty much how I felt," said Kurt later, after Puck had shown him exactly how rough he wanted to be. "Sex always seemed a little distant and romanticized. I figured I wasn't ready for it, but it appears I just wasn't looking in the right place."

"Nothing hotter than watching somebody totally turned on by what they're doing," said Puck. "That's been you, since I saw you take off your clothes the first day." He caught Kurt's neck in one hand, making him startle and gasp. "You didn't even care that I was there; you were just lost in what you were doing."

Kurt shook his head shyly. "That's not true. I definitely was turned on by you watching. I still am. That's part of the Gaga theatricality, I think - being looked at, even if it's not always entirely positive, is hot."

Puck scowled. "Don't tell me you like it when Karofsky throws insults at you?"

"Not my kink," Kurt replied serenely. "But Finn... I like the way he pretends not to stare. Even if he's not sure he should, even if he's not thrilled with the way it makes him feel. From a purely selfish standpoint, I want to know, when he touches himself, he's thinking of me." He looked Puck up and down. "Or you."

"Or both of us," Puck murmured, loving the moan it elicited. "How's he handling this moving in together business?"

"I seriously don't know. I can't get him to say more than five words to me." Kurt glanced over at the second bed, waiting against the side of the room, and sighed. "But I've given up trying to understand him. If he's not going to bother to acknowledge his feelings, I'm moving on; he can do the same." He looked up at Puck with a sad smile. "I wish it were as easy for you."

Puck shrugged uneasily. "It's not so bad."

"No, but you feel responsible for him now. I don't think that's going to go away just because he's hiding in the closet. I know how it feels to want somebody to take something from me and to not have it happen. It's like I'm coming out of my skin. I'm guessing Finn's feeling something like that right now. He needs somebody to give him a big, gay push." Kurt's jaw tightened. "And I think I might be the one to give it to him."
Finn could feel the injustices piling up, making him irritable. This thing about Lady Gaga was just the topmost on the pile. He could hear Kurt's annoying voice in his head, going on about how she was the most innovative singer in their generation, blah blah blah. **Whatever.** He was not going to get up on stage and put on a freaking dress. He'd spent an hour and a half poring through iTunes looking for alternatives, and then cross-checked every band to make sure there was no behind-the-scenes drama about being gay. Finn was not going to get caught in a technicality.

Mr. Schue looked up as he paused by his office door. "Oh, hey, Finn, come on in. I'm learning all this amazing stuff about Lady Gaga. She's got this thing called the "Haus of Gaga," which is like, this collective of artists and designers who collaborate on, on her styles and stage sets and her music." He grinned, taking off his reading glasses and looking up at Finn. "I think it's an exciting model for what we could be doing in Glee Club."

"Yeah, that's kind of what I wanted to talk to you about." He took a deep breath. "I don't want to do Lady Gaga. And I suspect that - with the exception of Kurt - that none of the other guys are gonna want to do it either." He watched Mr. Schue's face, waiting for him to tell him he was wrong about this too, and pressed on. "I just feel like we're always doing whatever the girls want us to do."

Mr. Schue nodded slowly, his face unreadable. "Yeah... yeah, you're right. Maybe I haven't been listening to you guys hard enough."

Finn waited for the other, uh, schue to drop, but when that was all, he just nodded once in appreciation.

Schue looked at him expectantly. "So... let's find a solution."

"Well, I... uh, I actually already have one."

Every one of the guys in Glee was excited by Finn's suggestion to do KISS. Matt went so far as to bring his laptop to their first confab and look up instructions on how to make costumes out of t-shirts and glued-on rhinestones. Puck didn't even say one word about Kurt not participating, and Finn felt himself relaxing as the guys discussed how they were going to handle the effects.

"It has to be huge, you know? Larger than life. I can just see it." Finn stood back, taking in the stage, sweeping his hand across. "The brightest lights we can find. Stacks of lights. Everything shiny, on our costumes, the sets, the instruments."

"Dude, Coach Sylvester did this number using these flamethrower things," said Puck, leaning in with a grin. "I bet I could borrow them."

"Just because you're dating the star cheerleader," said Matt, giving his shoulder a little push. Finn tried not to let the mention of Kurt make him lose his momentum, but the other guys weren't letting it go.

"I hear you guys kissed in front of the Cheerios." Mike grinned his approval. "Nice. And nobody gave you a hard time today?"

"Guys, can we focus here?" said Finn. "We only have a couple days to pull this together."

"No problems," Puck confirmed. "I guess liking dudes isn't such a big deal when you're a badass."

"Who knows, maybe you'll inspire a rash of guys coming out," said Artie.

"Jesus," Finn exploded. "Does everything have to be about being gay?"
The four of them zeroed in on him, just staring blankly. As though they didn't know what he was talking about.

"Dude," said Matt mildly. "Chill out, will you?"

"We were just being supportive," added Mike. "Because what Puck did, that was kind of a big deal, you know?"

"It's okay." Puck fixed his gaze on Finn. "Once you start thinking about it, you notice it everywhere. I get it, trust me."

Artie looked between the two of them nervously. "So... what song do you think we should do? I was thinking I Stole Your Love."

Puck sat down beside Mike on the edge of the stage, leaning back on both hands. He had no right to look so calm and collected and hot. "Actually, Kurt made me listen to some Lady Gaga the other day? Dude, she kind of kicks ass."

"I can't believe this." Finn rolled his eyes. Puck set his jaw.

"You got something to say, Hudson, you might as well say it."

He was too worked up to stop himself. "You're just totally whipped. You'll go along with anything Kurt says."

There was a little tiny ooooh from one of the others. Artie and Mike exchanged glances. Puck wasn't moving from his comfortable lounging position.

"Oh, yeah, that's totally the dynamic between us," he drawled. "Boy, you sure can call them, Hudson."

"Yeah, well, I've seen what you'll do for a blowjob," Finn retorted. Mike bit back a laugh, because, honestly, they'd all seen that, but Finn could see he'd gotten to Puck a little by the hurt expression that lingered on his face for a few moments before vanishing. But Puck just shrugged.

"What can I say? I'm a reformed slut." He leaned forward curiously. "Aside from the fact that Gaga's all innovative and shit, tell me where's the bad in the situation where my boyfriend decides to straddle my lap and sing to me about how much he likes it rough?" Puck looked at Matt. "You think you'd be willing to be called whipped if Brittany was in her bra and panties, moaning at you about how she needs a man that -"

"Fuck this," Finn choked out, heading up the ramp to the back of the auditorium. He couldn't listen to one more word from Puck's mouth about what Kurt was doing with him in that bedroom. Nobody called after him, which was probably just as well, but by the time he'd made it back to the choir room, he felt pissed, turned on and betrayed, which was a pretty shitty combination. He grabbed his coat and backpack and prepared himself for the long bike ride back to Kurt's house.

"Jesus, Hudson. What crawled up your ass and died?"

"Why is every fucking thing about asses?" Finn could hear himself, how whiny he sounded, but he didn't feel like he was capable of doing anything about it at the moment. He turned to Santana with a heavy sigh. "It's nothing. Just - I'll see you tomorrow."

"You're bitching about gay references, you just stormed out of the boys practice. What, you pissed
that Puck came out and you're too much of a wimp to do it? You know, I don't blame you. I'm not doing that shit either. Not everyone needs to know everyone's business." She leaned on the piano, frowning at him. "Sometimes you just wanna have fun, without other people ruining it. But look at yourself. You don't look fun. You look like fucking hell. If keeping it bottled up is doing that, maybe you should just tell people."

"Tell people?" he echoed. "Tell them what? That I'm obsessed with two guys who'd rather hang all over each other? That I can't stop thinking about what I saw them - all the things they do together?" He zipped his coat up so emphatically he nearly got it stuck in the collar of his shirt. "All week in Glee, we've been talking about being proud to be freaks. Well, guess what? I'm freak number one. You really think it's going to be any better if I tell people that?"

"Crap. That's complete crap." Satana planted herself in front of him as he started for the door. "And if you try to leave this room before I get to have my say, I will punch you in the throat, and then lecture as you writhe on the ground." She put one hand on his chest, pushing firmly until he stumbled back against a chair and sat down hard.

"What your shit comes down to is two options. Maybe more, whatever, I'm not Pilsbury, I'm not your fucking life coach. But I see two things. One. You don't say anything. You mope about how much Puck and Kurt love each other, completely ignoring the fact that they both love you too, because if you refuse to see it you don't have to let it sneak past your shitty self esteem and have it affect you. No one knows anything about your 'weirdness', and you coast by, alone. Two. You use your stupid lopsided mouth to say something. Chances are the majority of this crap-ass school has an opinion about it. You get slushied and dumpstered for being weird. But Kurt's hand is there to dust the orange peels off your jacket afterward. And instead of kissing Kurt in front of the Cheerios, Puck kisses you while groping Kurt with his free hand in the line in the cafeteria."

Finn was all prepared to come back with something, anything, to refute what she was saying, but the scenario she painted broadsided him with heart-wrenching appeal. The only thing he could do was cover his mouth to stifle his grimace. He shook his head helplessly.

"Here's a fucking hint, Finn." Her tone was gentle in comparison to the harsh words. "There's only one right option."

He sniffed, wiping his eyes, pushing through the words to keep them from coming out wobbly. "So if there's only one right option, why aren't you doing it?"

"Are you blind? Who in this school doesn't know me and Brit are together? We're exhibitionists, duh. I love her, but sex wouldn't be half as hot if someone wasn't watching. And we live in a culture where boys are willing to pay to watch with meals and jewellry and shit. What we do works for us. I don't need to come out and go to a damn parade and listen to Tegan and fucking Sara to get off with her, and love her, and be happy. Everyone would be a fuck of a lot happier if they just did what worked for them."

"You sound like Puck."

"Well no shit, Sherlock."

He laughed, staring at the floor for a long minute. "I think you actually believe that I... that we could do something like that, the three of us. Who knows, maybe we could. I'm wrong a lot, apparently. But there's no way I could handle it. I'm not like Puck. I'm not even like Kurt." He pushed himself to his feet and headed out the door. "I'm not nearly good enough for them."
Cast your mind back to the days
When I pretended I was OK
I had so very much to say
About my crazy living

Now that I've stared into the void
So many people I've annoyed
I have to find a middle way
A better way of giving

So I haven't given up
But all my choices, my good luck
Appear to go and get me stuck
In an open prison
Now I am trying to break free

Be in a state of empathy
Find the true and inner me
Eradicate this schism
No one can take it away from me
And no one can tear it apart

'Cause a heart that hurts
Is a heart that works
No one can take it away from me
No one can tear it apart
It may be an elaborate fantasy
But it's the perfect place to start

'Cause a heart that hurts
Is a heart that works
A heart that hurts
Is a heart that works

- Placebo, "Bright Lights"
You're different from the former

Rewatching the scenes in Theatricality from the point of view of Finn dealing with his own sexuality, and Kurt watching him do that, is torturous. It's no secret I adore Finn, so all you Finn-haters can just go read something else. Meanwhile, Puck continues to be awesome. Heavy quoting from the end of Theatricality, but read carefully for modifications.

-amy and gala

Finn didn't see Puck or Kurt again until the next day at school, and by that time they were largely avoiding one another. He spotted Karofsky and Azimio harassing Kurt and Tina in the hallway, but he didn't even feel like he could stop to do something about that. That sucked more than anything, because it wasn't that he was afraid to be labeled by assholes. They already called him enough names that true ones wouldn't be so different.

It was because what Mr. Schue had said had been right. By standing up against the status quo and making it clear that Kurt meant something to him, he was interfering with Puck and Kurt's brand-new relationship. Finn knew that Kurt had always felt something for him. He had no idea anymore if his own feelings were dependent on what he felt for Puck, or if they were separate from that; he guessed it didn't matter. The point was that Kurt and Puck deserved time and space for their relationship to grow and flourish without him complicating things for either of them. It was better if he would just stay away.

But he was passing by the choir room at the beginning of lunch when he heard a familiar voice, and the sound of an acoustic guitar. He considered walking right on by, but the opportunity to hear Puck sing was rare enough anymore that he decided he wasn't going to miss it. He stood just outside the door, listening, while Puck picked out the guitar part, then began to sing:

Beth, I hear you calling
But I can't come home right now
Me and the boys are playing
And we just can't find the sound

Just a few more hours
And I'll be right home to you
I think I hear them calling
Oh, Beth -

Puck's voice cut off, and Finn heard a curse, then silence. And then a rhythmic, hitching noise. Puck was crying. Whatever issues or fears Finn was having in his mind with Puck were immediately smothered by anxious concern. He hurried right into the room to stand before him.

"Hey," he said. "Um -"
Puck looked away as soon as he'd identified who was talking, wiping his face indelicately on his sleeve. "You here to point out how inadequate my relationship is with my boyfriend again?"

"No, I... Puck, I wasn't trying to do that. You and Kurt... you know how I feel about that." He grabbed a tissue off the piano, handed it to Puck, then pulled up a chair to sit close to him - not too close, but close enough that he could have touched his knee, which he did not.

"I'm supposed to know?"

Finn squirmed uneasily. "Yeah, well... maybe you forgot my reaction to - what we did, the three of us."

"Didn't forget." Puck blew his nose on the tissue. "But every time I turn around, seems like you've changed your mind about what you want."

Finn wasn't going to try to explain to Puck what Mr. Schue had said, because Puck would probably respond with something like he was wrong, that he and Kurt really did want Finn there. And hearing that would have made it totally impossible for Finn to do anything but kiss him, which would completely have missed the point that Finn needed to stay out of their way.

"Right now I just want to figure out why you're sad," he said. "Because... because you're still my goddamn best friend, okay? Can't I be worried about you?"

"Now you're worried?" Puck muttered. He leaned his forehead against the neck of his guitar. "It's not about you, or Kurt, or any other guy, if that's what you're freaking out about."

"Oh." Finn sat with that cryptic information for another several seconds until Puck lifted his head, staring down at the strings, and sighed.

"This was my dad's guitar. I don't think I'll ever know if he left it at the house because he didn't care about it, or because he wanted me to have it, or some other reason. Because he was so wrapped up in partying and rock'n'roll to be around at all." He strummed the song's chord progression, his face set in focused determination. "I don't want to be that guy, Finn."

"You - you're totally not," Finn blurted, shocked. "Dude, how could you ever think you could be like him?"

"Because I'm just as selfish as the next guy. I do stuff because I want to, and screw what anybody else thinks. Only..." He swallowed, fighting the words, and Finn didn't even think, he just reached out and took his hand. Puck looked up in grateful surprise.

"It's okay," said Finn. "I'm listening."

After a moment, Puck nodded. "Only I think I've got something here. Something worth... not being so selfish. He makes me want to be, like, better."

*You're pretty damn great already,* Finn thought. But he just said, "He totally feels the same way, man. I can see it every time he looks at you."

Puck's face settled somewhat as he smiled. It wasn't a smile for Finn, or anyone else, really. It was just what he looked like, being in love with Kurt, and there wasn't one bad thing about seeing it. It made Finn smile, too. He did, at least, let go of Puck's hand before any kissing thoughts could escape the confines of his own head.

"Would you sing the next verse of the song?" Finn asked. "That was pretty. Who sings it?"
He brought his guitar back up. "Dude, it's KISS. Yeah, I know, right? But it kind of... sticks with you."

You say you feel so empty
That our house just ain't a home
And I'm always somewhere else
And you're always there alone

Just a few more hours
And I'll be right home to you
I think I hear them calling
Oh, Beth what can I do
Beth what can I do

Beth, I know you're lonely
And I hope you'll be all right
'Cause me and the boys will be playing
All night

The last note was beautifully sad and sustained. Finn wasn't exactly sure what the message of the song was supposed to be, but all he wanted to do was give Puck a huge fucking hug.

"There're harmonies," offered Puck. "For... for you, and the rest of the band. If you want to sing it with me."

He nodded. Whatever else he might not be able to do, he could definitely sing a song with Puck. "Yeah, man. Totally. I got your... yeah."

Under normal circumstances, Kurt would never wear the same thing twice. Even when he'd had the week of flannel and overalls, he'd had multiple pieces to choose from. These were not, however, normal circumstances. This was Gaga week, and he did not feel one ounce of shame about wearing his fantastic creation for the third day in a row.

Nor was he the only one. Neither Quinn nor Rachel had the courage, and Mercedes claimed even the best of outfits needed to be changed daily. Santana, on the other hand, was wearing her black lace pants with a ruffly shirt, which all the boys of McKinley seemed to appreciate. Brittany's silver lobster was sitting on her forehead, completely incongruent with her blue babydoll tee. And Tina, like himself, was wearing her outfit and wig with aplomb. Kurt wasn't quite sure how she'd created the champagne dress, but there was no question that she looked appropriately avant garde in it.

Mike approached them on their way out of cooking class. "You know, you two look crazy. But in a really cool way."

"Thanks?"

"No, I mean, like... how we dressed up as KISS was totally theatrical, but it'd obviously been done before. I'm pretty sure Finn was Gene Simmons for Halloween the year that I was the Hulk. How you guys dressed up was like some cool art project."

"Thanks." Kurt said it this time, and he meant it. It was his first compliment from someone other than his fellow monsters. Even Puck had avoided an outright compliment, only saying 'woah' when Kurt had shown off his costume.

Mike grinned. "I dunno. I think it would have been kinda cool to wear something insane. Like a
paisley corset on top of stirrup pants or something."

Kurt frowned. "There's never an excuse for stirrup pants. Not even Gaga."

"Well, whatever then. Something weird. Paper mache sunglasses. A velvet romper. Something. But Finn needed us to be his bros, so."

"It's okay," Tina said.

"Maybe next time though. There's more Gaga in the sea than just Bad Romance, right?"

"Yes," Kurt said faintly. He could hardly imagine a reprisal with everyone joining in, but maybe by next year the other male Glee members would be more confident. Mike seemed on the edge, at least.

"And hey. If you ever wanna sing I Like It Rough for Glee, like, individually, feel free."

Before Kurt could stammer out anything, which would most certainly include the words hell no, Mike split off to enter his class with a bit of a wave. Tina watched him go with a thoughtful expression.

"It was nice of him to admit we looked better than they did. We totally looked better. And our song was way better too, right?"

Metal wasn't Kurt's genre, but he tried to be fair. "I thought the boy's KISS number was good, although the lyrics did leave something to be desired."

"Finn kept sticking his tongue out and I couldn't stop picturing him licking stuff. It was distracting. You know, ever since you told me and 'Cedes about Mr X, I can't stop picturing you with, like, every guy in this school. Even Artie, which is kind of insane because he wouldn't even listen to you in the car last week."

"Listen to Puck, you mean. I had no part in that." Kurt would have said more, but he was frozen in his tracks. Coming towards them were Karofsky and Azimio, and neither looked very happy.

"We warned you," Karofsky said, as Azimio shook his head, looking positively disapproving.

"Now Gaga's gotta go."

Kurt knew better than to think his look - their looks - would be appreciated. McKinley had no sense of art. The best the school could produce was the occasional lackluster play. When even half of Glee didn't get it, how was it possible that two brain dead thugs would?

Still, it was more than a little annoying to have the wig ripped off his head. Kurt had used so many bobby pins to attach it that it really hurt when it got yanked. He was so focused on that, he didn't even notice his fabric-covered high heels had been scuffed until just before last period.

It was with extreme annoyance that Kurt rearranged his schedule. He couldn't go to Tina's directly after Glee, not with a project so demanding waiting in the wings. He needed to pull off all the still-affixed rhinestones, tug the glued on fabric off the shoe, cut a new piece, glue that on, and reattach the jewels, making sure that the design pattern matched the undamaged left shoe - and do it all early enough that the glue would be dry by morning.

Kurt got only as far as attaching a handful of rhinestones when Finn came downstairs and slumped into the chair in front of the dressing table. His face was still caked with black and white makeup.
It didn't take a genius to realise that meant Finn had been sitting in the living room, working up the nerve to come downstairs. Kurt's fingers twitched around the tweezers and the seafoam rhinestone went flying. He wondered for a moment if he threw the tool at the right angle, would it bounce off the mirror and impale Finn? But no, he couldn't do that. It would upset Puck if his best friend turned up dead.

Kurt decided to channel his annoyance via more reasonable means. "Could you have a word with Azimio and Karofsky about harassing me without damaging my Gaga outfit?"

Finn wrinkled his nose. "Are you serious? Do you know how difficult it is with those guys? They already think we're boyfriends."

"Let them think what they want. They're Neanderthals." Finn muttered something that sounded suspiciously like just like fuckin' Santana, but Kurt didn't stop to ask for clarification. "In three years they'll be cleaning my septic tank."

"Don't you get it? It's not just them. We live in Ohio, not New York or San Francisco or some other city where people eat vegetables that aren't fried." Finn spun in the chair to look at him. "I don't understand why you always need to make such a big spectacle of yourself. Why can you work harder at blending in?"

"I'm sure that'd be easier for you."

"You know, it would," Finn snapped back.

Kurt sighed. What could he possibly say to that? He watched Finn try to take off his KISS makeup, and fail miserably. He clicked his tongue. "You are such a boy. You're going to have to use a moist towelette if you want to get that makeup off." He walked over to the dressing table to get the item in question and attempted to use it on Finn's face, only to get his hand viciously slapped.

"Don't touch me!" he shouted, shoving the chair away from the dressing table with a violent motion.

"What is your problem, Finn? It's just a moist towelette!" Kurt summoned an appropriate amount of wounded outrage. "What is this? One step forward, so many steps back I might as well cut your legs off?"

It wasn't the best thing he could have said. Finn's reaction was to shut down, muttering, "I'm going to finish in the laundry room."

"Grow up, Finn!" Kurt shouted at his retreating back. He was so infuriating. Setting his phone on the table, he hit speakerphone and dialed Puck, resuming his rhinestone-gluing.

"Hey, babe."

"Since when do you tell Mike Chang about what I do with you in the bedroom?"

There was a pause. "It came up at our KISS rehearsal. What's going on?"

Kurt huffed, tweezing up another rhinestone. "Sometimes negative attention is worse than no attention."

"What do you mean? Mike was fine with it; all the guys were. Is this about Karofsky and Azimio?"

"Not all the guys were fine with it," he muttered.
He heard Puck sigh. "Babe... you can't push Finn into being okay with the way things are. This is just the latest in a series of freakouts. Give him some space."

"Space is what we don't have." He looked around his perfect, pristine Dior Grey room with frustration. "This space is ours now, mine and Finn's, and he just told me I need to blend in better. I've never been able to blend in in my whole life."

"Fuck." Now Puck sounded angry. "You don't have to change one fucking thing about yourself, Kurt. And do you know what? Finn doesn't think you should, either. This isn't at all about you, it's about him."

"I know." He wasn't going to cry on his shoe; the glue would never set. "I don't want to care what he says."

"But you do."

"Yes, I care. When he looks at me in my Gaga outfit and he gets that offended expression on his face - that's worse than Karofsky's response. Because suddenly it's the beginning of the year again, and... and all want him to do is like me."

"Pretty sure liking you is not the issue. He likes you. He totally wanted to be there, when you were fucking me. Sometimes it just gets obscured by all the other stuff."

Kurt glanced over at the stairs. Finn wasn't anywhere in sight, but he leaned in toward the phone and lowered his voice anyway. "Carole. She told me she knows, about how Finn feels about us."

"Um - okay? That's... huh. Wow."

"Yeah. And she said she was okay with it. That... we might be good for him."

"See, I knew there was a reason I liked her so much." Puck sounded so pleased. Kurt scowled.

"But can't sit around waiting to see if Finn can deal with this. I've got to know, before he moves in for real. I don't care if he just wants to be friends or more, but he's going to have to -"

"Kurt." He shut his mouth. "Don't. You do care, babe."

"Shit," Kurt whispered. He managed to direct his tears to fall on the rug instead of his costume.

"It's okay. I love him too. And it sucks, but it has to be his call."

Kurt touched the phone gently, with one finger. "It doesn't bother you?"

"What?"

"That I... love him."

"No way. It's awesome. And I've felt like that about him for years. Just because our dicks are involved now, it doesn't really change much for me."

Kurt considered this. "I think it does, for Finn. It did for me."

"Then let's hope he gets his head out of his ass soon, so we can start involving them again."

The residual weird at being around Burt was starting to wear on Puck. The best way he knew how
to deal with this was to show up and name it, so he came over for breakfast one day without asking Kurt if he could. He caught Finn on his way out the door, but Finn just gave Puck a brief, sad smile before returning his gaze to the sidewalk.

Burt was complaining about whatever healthy shit Kurt was attempting to wave under his nose, ducking away from the fork Kurt was brandishing with an irritated laugh. Puck paused in the doorway, watching the interplay between Kurt and his dad. For a moment, he wondered if he was interrupting their domestic scene, but when Kurt noticed him standing there, the frankly adoring expression on his face said everything.

"Hey, Puck," said Burt. His own smile had dimmed a bit, but it was still intact. "Maybe Kurt can get you to eat some of his sticks and twigs."

"I'm holding out for the turkey bacon." He slid into a chair adjacent to where Kurt was sitting, sliding a piece off Kurt's plate and eating it. He grinned at Kurt's outrage. "You're surprised I'd go for the good stuff?"

"I can always make more," Kurt replied, relenting. Burt stared at him, then shook his head.

"You'd give me hell for hours if I stole your bacon. I guess boyfriend trumps your old man, huh?"

"Only sometimes," said Puck. "The boyfriend could also make more bacon. And I make kick-ass crepes."

"Maybe this weekend you could make those."

The weird appeared to have vanished. Puck might not have to say anything at all about it. He reached under the table and touched Kurt's knee. It made Kurt jump, but he grasped Puck's hand anyway and smiled at him.

"So I hear you're about to become a father."

Well, that was territory he wasn't expecting to cover before eight AM. Kurt squeezed Puck's hand and nodded encouragingly. He took a deep breath. "Yeah, Quinn's baby's due in May. She's giving it up, but it'll be an open adoption, so I'll still get to see her, know her. If I want to."

Burt nodded. "How're you feeling about that?"

"Terrified," he admitted, which made Burt smile.

"It's pretty scary, being responsible for another human being." Then Burt looked back and forth between Kurt and Puck, his smile slipping. "Er -"

"I'm guessing it's not quite the same," said Puck. "Kurt's totally capable of taking care of himself. A baby doesn't have a choice."

"Not really enjoying being talked about in the third person," Kurt muttered, his face crimson.

"You really want me to talk to you about it?" Puck turned to face him. "Babe, being responsible for you is awesome. If being a dad is anything like that, I'm one hundred percent on board."

He watched Kurt simultaneously beam and cringe. Both reactions made Puck want to grab him and kiss him hard, but really, most things made him want to do that. Burt cleared his throat.

"You guys better get going if you don't want to be late."
When Kurt brought the dishes into the kitchen, Burt put a firm hand on Puck's shoulder.

"Having someone else be responsible for your kid," he said quietly. "That's a hard pill to swallow. But I know you're about to learn what that's like."

Puck nodded, wondering where this was leading. Burt's hand tightened.

"I'm just saying, if I'm gonna trust anybody like that with my kid, it should be somebody who understands."

As Kurt emerged from the kitchen, Burt dropped his hand, but Puck still felt the warmth of it there. He supposed it must be connected to the sudden heat that coiled inside his chest.

"I can't believe you said that in front of my dad," Kurt said on their way down the stairs to the garage. He didn't say it in a bitchy way, but more like he was a little awed by the whole thing.

Puck kind of couldn't believe it either, or that Burt hadn't given him more shit about it. What exactly had he just gotten away with? Who was he fooling - he didn't have any kind of credentials for any of this. But he did his best to smile at Kurt and look confident.

"Lying or pretending ain't gonna make your dad trust us more, huh? I'd rather start by being upfront about what I have, and what I don't." He took Kurt's hand. "Thanks for the bacon."

"You owe me," Kurt replied, his eyes shining.

Kurt knew decorating the room would be a quick one-two punch to the gut for Finn. He decided he might as well make it as beautiful and gay as he wanted it to be, if he was going to have to live in it anyway. He also knew the whole thing might backfire. But drastic times called for drastic measures. If he and Finn were really going to be living together, they were going to need to deal with the elephant in the room immediately. *Here goes nothing*, he thought, steeling himself before opening the door to the basement.

"I used Marlene Dietrich and Gary Cooper in *Morocco* as my inspiration," he told him, leading him down the stairs. "It's a perfect blend of the masculine and the feminine; the muted and the theatrical."

As he'd expected, Finn stared at him with barely disguised panic. "Are you freaking insane? I can't live here." He pointed at the carved sandalwood screen. "What the hell is that supposed to be?"

"It's a privacy partition. It's all I could find on such short notice." He frowned at Finn. "Why are you getting angry about everything? I worked hard on this."

"That's not a privacy partition!" he yelled. "Why is it so hard for you to understand why I don't want to get dressed in front of you? Do you know that I put my underwear on in the shower before I come out when you're around? I just... I don't want to have to worry about that kind of stuff in my own room, man."

Kurt let his expression drop another ten degrees. "And what stuff are you referring to?"

"You know." Finn was breathing hard. "You know what I'm talking about. Don't play dumb. Why can't you just accept that I can't be with you?"

"I have accepted that," Kurt said, trying to sound stoic, but having Finn this worked up right beside him and not kissing him was beginning to take its toll. Finn, meanwhile, was pacing back and forth,
"No, you haven't. The way you stare at me, how flirty you get? Don't you know how much that drives me crazy?" Finn clenched his fists, staring at the floor. "Did you think you were the only one who got excited that we were going to be moving in together? Only I can't have that. I can't be who you want me to be."

Kurt tried to keep his cool. He took a step toward Finn, holding out a hand, willing him to touch me, please, touch me. "It's just a room, Finn. It's not you. We can redecorate it if you want to."

Finn gritted his teeth. "You know what? I wish we could redecorate me. Clear out all the faggy freak parts, because I clearly can't deal with them." He whirled on the Moroccan-themed room. "Yeah, this is all way too beautiful and special to be part of me, Kurt. This might be who you want me to be, but... I can't do it. So the first thing that would need to go would be that faggy lamp. And then we'd need to get rid of that faggy couch cover..."

"Hey!" They both jumped at his dad's sudden appearance on the stairs. "What did you just call him?"

Finn looked infinitely guilty. "Oh, no, no, I didn't call him anything. I was talking to - to the blanket."

Burt stared at him. "If you use that word, you're talking about him."

"Relax, Dad," Kurt tried to soothe, willing his dad to take the hint and go away. They were so close to a breakthrough... "I didn't take it that way."

"Yeah, that's because you're sixteen, and you still assume the best in people. You live a few years, you start seeing the hate in people's hearts. Even the best people." He wheeled on Finn. "You use the "N" word?"

Finn was taken aback. "Of course not."

"How about 'retard'? You call that nice girl in Cheerios, with Kurt, you call her a retard?"

He was starting to break down. It was all Kurt could do not to take his dad by the arm and shove him up the stairs. "Becky- no. She's my friend. She's got Down syndrome. I'd never call her that. That's cruel."

"But you think it's okay to come into my house and say faggy?"

"That's not what I meant," said Finn, desperately.

"I know what you meant!" Burt insisted. "What, you think I didn't use that word when I was your age? You know, some kid gets clocked in practice, we'd tell him to stop being such a fag. Shake it off. We meant it exactly the way you meant it. That being gay is wrong. That it's some kind of punishable offense." He cast a bitter appeal at Finn. "I really thought you were different. You know, I thought that being in Glee club, and being raised by your mom meant that you were some, you know, new generation of dude who saw things differently. Who just kind of, you know, came into the world knowing what has taken me years of struggling to figure out. I guess I was wrong."

He gestured toward the stairs. "I'm sorry, Finn, but you can't... you can't stay here."

"Dad," Kurt said, hearing his own voice crack, but his dad wasn't stopping.

"I love your mom," he said to Finn. "And maybe this is going to cost me her, but my family comes
first. I can't have that kind of poison around." He swiveled around to take in Kurt. "This is our
home, Kurt." He turned back to Finn, his face hard. "He is my son. Out in the world, you do what
you want... but not under my roof."

Kurt watched Finn's resolve crumble under the barrage of words. Because every one of them was
ture, even if not exactly in the way his dad had meant them. Finn's hatred was for himself - and it
wasn't any more welcome in their house than the hatred Burt imagined he had for Kurt. Finn wasn't
going to stand up for himself, because he didn't believe he deserved it. He headed up the stairs
without another word.

"The place looks great," his dad said, but Kurt wasn't listening. All he could do was cry as he felt
his tenuous connection with Finn slipping away.

Kurt's phone call to Puck went to voicemail. He could only hope it was because Puck was talking
to Finn, giving him whatever support he was willing to accept. "Finn blew up at me," he said,
without preamble. "Again, only this time my dad overheard what he was saying and misinterpreted
it and he kicked Finn out of the house. And I'm trying not to freak out, but I think... I need you." He
closed his eyes. "Please... just, anything you can do for Finn would help. I pushed him into dealing
with this, and I know he won't tell my dad what's really going on."

Finn curled up on his side on his bed, holding his phone cupped in one hand. Logic said the
chances of this coming out okay were slim. And yet, there was little about this relationship that had
ever been logical. He could push on alone, no doubt. He could solve all his own problems and fix
what could be fixed, without any support. But he was equally sure he didn't \textit{have to}. The thought
was comforting in the midst of such uncertainty, and he hung on to it as he waited for the worst to
pass.

"Honey?"

"I'm sorry, mom," he said. It wasn't quite raining, but it was wet enough to make his clothes stick to
his body. "I really screwed things up with Kurt, and Burt. I'm... I'm really sorry."

"I know. He called me and told me right away. Finn, listen to me. Burt doesn't have all the
information. He can't understand what's going on if you don't."

"Mom!" He startled a woman walking her dog with his panicked yelp. "You can't tell him."

"I haven't. But I think you have to. This is a big step for our family, moving in together, and Burt
deserves to know all the ramifications of making that choice."

"Ramifi- what?"

"Consequences." She didn't sound upset, but Finn suddenly saw, with painful clarity, how much
she was risking by doing this, any of this. He paused in his aimless, driven walk, reaching out and
grasping a lamppost for support.

"You really love him, don't you."

"Finn," she said, then stopped, and sighed. "Yes. I really do."
"I think I'm in love with Kurt." Saying it out loud made him feel a little dizzy, but he pushed through it. "And Puck. Both of them. Mr. Schue said I couldn't be in love with two people at the same time, but I am, I really am."

"I'm not going to tell you you're not. Your feelings are as real as mine." She sounded - proud? Happy? "Admitting it, that's a big step, honey."

He shook his head, trying to clear it. "But - I can't be. Their relationship... that's their thing. And I tried so hard not to make this about me, I really did, but... all I managed to do was make Kurt feel bad."

"That's up to you and Kurt to work out, and Puck. But right now, this is about you and Burt. Burt thinks he knows who you are. He's starting to, but in this case, he's missing a crucial piece of information. I could tell him... but I think it would be better coming from you."

"I can't," he said again.

"... Okay, Finn. Do you need me to pick you up?"

He couldn't bear the resignation in her voice, the disappointment he knew he'd see on her face. "I think I'd rather walk home."

She gave him space when he arrived, letting him take solace in ordinary things: homework, television, a glass of milk. But before he went to bed, she came over and sat down next to him.

"Maybe trying to move in together now was a bad idea... maybe it was too soon." She brushed his hair back, looking wistful and apologetic. "I think I wanted it so much, I didn't think clearly about how many other things needed to happen in order to make it work."

He couldn't do anything but stare at his lap and fiddle with his fingers. "I'm sorry, Mom."

She hugged him, quick and tight. "This is more important. Burt's taking care of Kurt, but you're my son. I can't let you hurt any more than he could let Kurt do that. Just be patient with yourself. If you can't do it, you can't do it. There's no shame in that."

*There's all kinds of shame in that*, he wanted to tell her. But he appreciated the way she was standing up for him, even if he didn't deserve it. No matter what, he wasn't going to stop needing her support, so he just went to bed.

Sleep, which usually descended on Finn without any issue, was fickle. He woke up several times, not to dreams, but for no reason he could tell, just sitting up in bed, listening to the dark, trying to figure out if there was something that was keeping him up. Each time, he gave up after a few minutes and lay back down, an uneasy feeling in his stomach.

In the morning he was tired and jittery, as though he'd already tried caffeine and it hadn't worked to get him going. He went the wrong way down the hallway toward the bathroom, which didn't make any sense at all, considering he'd been using the same bathroom for the past twelve years at this very house.

They sat at the breakfast table, facing one another, Finn with his PB&J English muffins and cereal, his mom with her oatmeal and buttered toast. He looked at her drawn face, the lines around her mouth.

"You didn't sleep so well, either, huh?" he asked.
She sighed. "I can blame it all on my mattress. When we move in together for real, I'm splurging on a great mattress. Bells, whistles, everything."

He took another bite of cereal. "You really think Burt would... understand?"

"Well, we spend a third of our lives in bed, after all..."

"Mom." Finn frowned. Her innocent look was worse than Kurt's. "About what's going on with me and Kurt. You don't think knowing would make things worse?"

She made an inelegant snort. "Tell me what's worse than getting kicked out of the house, Finn."

"Point," he admitted. He felt that same jittery sensation he'd had the night before, and rolled his shoulders, his neck, trying to relax. "I'm really -"

"No more apologies, Finn." She nudged his hand across the table. "I'm in your corner, end of story. Whatever happens, we'll figure it out together."

He swallowed his bite of cereal, feeling it stick in his throat, and nodded. "Thanks," he whispered.

Walking through the school day in his half-awake state was a strange experience. It was as though he was watching himself from the outside: opening his locker, sitting in his desk in class, holding the door open for Rachel. Nothing was unfamiliar, but he couldn't quite reconcile what he was seeing with the feelings lurking inside him. Kurt and Puck avoided him all day, and he was grateful for it. He had no idea what he would have said.

But by the time he got to Glee, the jittery feeling had taken over. He had to take action. He had to, or he was going to fucking blow apart. He sat down behind Kurt and Tina, dressed in their Gaga outfits. When Kurt turned to face him, he leaned in. "I want to talk about this."

"There's not much to say," replied Kurt in a whisper. He looked more hurt than angry. "I feel sorry for you. I thought you were different."

Finn felt like Kurt had kicked him in the stomach. Different. Different from what? Different from the asshole he'd been last night, that was for sure - from the way he'd been behaving for days, really. It was like the experience of staring Puck in the face at the beginning of the year and telling him no, I won't throw Artie into the dumpster anymore, because he's a human being and he deserves better. Only now it was himself he was staring in the face. Finn, get your act together, because you're better than this. You're different.

"I am different," he said, forgetting to lower his voice. But Kurt's attention was already on the front of the room.

"Mr. Schue? I've got something I'd like to say to Quinn, and I'd like everyone to hear it."

Finn's own eyes snapped up, to take in Puck standing there, looking very ordinary in a denim shirt and jeans. He wasn't looking at either of them, neither Finn nor Kurt. Finn wanted to stand up and grab his shoulder, make Puck look at him, and say it so he could hear it, too: I am different.

"At first I didn't really get this 'theatrical' assignment, being larger than life and putting it all out there, 'cause I'm kind of like that all the time." Puck's mouth firmed into a line, his eyes focused on events long past. "That's how my dad was, too. He was too busy being all crazy and rock'n'roll to be there for his kids. And you know what? I didn't care that my dad was a badass. I just wanted him to be there, and he never was."
There went that crazy urge to get up and hug him again. Finn glanced over at Kurt, watching Puck with a stricken expression, and he guessed he might be feeling the same way. Finn had a vision of himself, standing, moving to sit down behind Kurt, enfolding him in his arms, the two of them sitting and watching Puck together like that. The buzzing, jittery sensation in his head had reached almost unbearable levels.

"And then I learned all this KISS stuff, and... well, while Jackie Daniels is a great name for a powerboat or something, it's just not right for a baby girl." Puck looked more apologetic than Finn had ever seen him. "So, if my KISS-mates will help me out, I've got a better idea."

Now he made eye contact with Finn, drawing him up to the front of the room as surely as if he'd reached out with a rope and lassoed him. The rest of the club began to mutter quietly. Finn took the opportunity to touch Puck's arm, to try to convey a little of the epiphany he'd experienced in the last five minutes.

"You gonna handle this okay?" Puck asked under his breath. "Not going to spontaneously burst out in random insults, or do a Rachel storm-out?"

"No, man," Finn said. "I... I was wondering if I could sing the second verse."

Puck blinked rapidly, his gaze sliding away to the corner of the room. "Fuck. Um... okay. Sure." He took a few deep breaths. "But I'd better not sit next to you, all right? Or there's going to be all kinds of... yeah."

They grabbed stools and arranged themselves into a loose semicircle. Puck connected with each of them for a brief moment to go over the changes and cues. When he got to Matt, the guy did what Finn couldn't, what Kurt didn't. He hugged Puck. It was a brief thing, of the bro-hug type, more of a slung arm and back slapping than anything comforting. Still, the affection was apparent. Finn wasn't sure whether he was jealous of Matt's confidence, or grateful for Puck's additional support. Then Brad placed his hands on the keys, and they began.

Finn carefully kept his eyes off Kurt while Puck sang the first verse. He could see Kurt's jaw was set, his expression tense. Why couldn't Tina take his hand? He was all by himself, and that just wasn't okay.

When he came in on the second verse, though, the tension in Kurt's body ramped up to near-flight. His eyes flickered away from Finn, and then back again, but Finn didn't stop singing.

\begin{verbatim}
You say you feel so empty  
That our house just ain't a home  
And I'm always somewhere else  
And you're always there alone.

Just a few more hours  
And I'll be right home to you  
I think I hear them calling  
Oh, Beth what can I do  
Beth what can I do.
\end{verbatim}

Santana and Britt's spontaneous lighter-waving accolade could have been taken as a joke, but Finn didn't think they meant it like that. Santana's smug little smile said she knew what was going on for him, at least. Took you fucking long enough, Hudson. He straightened his back and sat up a little taller on his stool as Puck wrapped up the coda, but he could feel the cards falling inside him, taking him down one piece at a time.
Beth, I know you're lonely
And I hope you'll be all right
'Cause me and the boys will be playing
All night

He avoided Mike's concerned glance, trying to keep it together without drawing attention to himself. This was Puck's performance, for Quinn. He wasn't going to come apart, not here.

The group was quiet as Puck approached Quinn. "I know you're giving her up," he said, "but before you do, I think you should name her Beth. And if you'll let me, I'd really like to be there when she's born. I'd really like to meet her."

Quinn just nodded, not bothering to hide her own tears. Puck's smile was a familiar one: Finn had seen it on his face when Puck had brought the basketball to his house, the morning he had admitted to being in love with Kurt. Finn had even seen it directed at himself once or twice, for brief, heart-stopping moments. It made sense Puck would feel that way about his own daughter.

There was no shift in Puck's expression as Kurt approached him and wrapped both arms around him, holding him tight. "So good," Kurt murmured. Puck buried his face in Kurt's silver costume with a long sigh. It was odd to see Kurt four inches taller than Puck; those platform heels did their job. Kurt would be as tall as he was, if he came up to give him a hug.

He didn't, of course, but Finn hadn't really expected he would. But he could have. And Finn thought, if he had, it would have been so easy to whisper how sorry he was, how much he loved him, and to kiss him right there in front of everyone. It would have been almost okay, hardly scary at all.

Watching Puck and Kurt walk out together, hand in hand, he thought he knew what he might need to do to really make it okay.

Finn bumped into two door frames and nearly tripped off the curb on his way to get his bike, but he made it home without incident. Puck had given Quinn a gift with that song - one that said he was sorry, that told everybody he was wrong and should have taken her seriously. That being the responsible one meant something to him. Finn guessed he could sing a song too, but he'd just given Kurt that, and it wasn't enough. It needed to be bigger. Bolder. Theatrical.

In a fit of inspiration, Finn stormed into the upstairs bathroom. The shower curtain was just hanging there, red and shiny and basically screaming diva at him. It took him a few minutes, but he managed to unhook each of the plastic rings from the perforated holes at the top. He slung it over his shoulder and took it upstairs to his room.

Unfortunately, that was where his inspiration ended. It was the right colour and sheen, but how could a shower curtain all of a sudden become clothes?

He could maybe make a toga out of it, like they did in that party from Animal House. Except that seemed really half-assed, and the entire point of making a gesture was to have it grand and spectacular. Kurt had spent hours making his silver spaceman thing. Finn couldn't just take five minutes to tie a knot and call it a day.

Another option was to lay out a pair of pants and a t-shirt on top of the folded plastic. He could use them as a template, and then grab duct tape and tape where the seams should be. Like sewing, except manlier. But that didn't seem right either. Red plastic pants and a t-shirt were still pants and a t-shirt. Tina's dress had been covered in clear plastic bubbles, and Mercedes' shoulderpads had been like a foot high. Whatever he ended up with, it had to be better than just a t-shirt.
Finn stared at the sheet, wishing for probably the first time in his life that he had taken a semester of home ec. Maybe if he had it would have rubbed some creativity off on him. All he could see in the square of plastic was an abnormally large cape.

Wait. A cape. Shit, that was it - that was the solution to all his problems!

When they were all kids, they'd all had different rules. Finn's had dealt with making sure that he knew, no matter what babysitter Mom had scrounged up, he still had to eat vegetables and brush his teeth and go to bed on time. That had mostly suited him fine because, even at seven, he didn't like change. Puck's rule had said that no matter what Puck did, he had to bring Sarah with him, and if Sarah wasn't happy, it was Puck's job to fix things. Matt's parents had been really lax; he could do basically whatever he wanted and go wherever he wanted as long as he called home once an hour. But Brittany's had been the weirdest. Brittany was only allowed to be around a certain number of people at once, otherwise she had to go home so she wasn't 'overwhelmed'. They'd even tried to home school her for a while. Half of Finn's childhood involved memories of the Pierces running onto the playground, spotting Brittany on the grass laughing hysterically as the rest of them played something, and taking her home.

Brittany's rules had extended to birthdays. Unlike almost everyone else, Brittany's birthdays were never about inviting her whole classroom. She'd had four invitations to hand out, that had been it. Looking back, it had pretty much been like a mob movie, trying to curry favor in order to get one. Everyone wanted to go, because Brittany's parties had the best goodie bags ever. Jumbo sized chocolate bars. Entire tins of specialty cookie cutter cookies. Actual cap guns that made kpow noises and sputtered explosive dust into the air as they went off. Tiny terrariums with real living frogs inside.

Four years in a row Puck had gotten an invitation and Finn hadn't. Three years in a row Finn had handled it gracefully. Then came Brittany's eleventh birthday. Wednesday morning recess, Brittany, Matt, Puck, Santana and Carrie had all pulled customized capes and wristbands out of their backpacks. They'd spent twenty minutes hogging the monkey bars because they could all fly. Finn hadn't talked to Puck and Matt for three days out of sheer jealousy.

The upshot of all of this was: Brittany's mom could make him a cape. Well, not that he wanted a cape. But he could beg her to sew something, and she would probably help. It was the Mom Code, wasn't it? You had to help children and teenagers when they were freaking out, even if they weren't yours.

Finn went back downstairs and did his best to cram the shower curtain into a plastic bag. It might have been a bit easier if he'd folded it first, but it would have taken too long and he didn't have the patience. He had to fix things, he'd figured out how to fix things, at least with Kurt, and he wasn't going to let anything slow him down, especially not some fucking folding.

Finn climbed on his bike and rode directly to Brittany's. It wasn't that far away, and he knew a few shortcuts, after being friends with her for nearly a decade.

Mr Pierce answered the door. "Why, hello, Finn. It's been a while since I've seen you, though from what I've gleaned from Brittany you've been doing well?"

"Uh. Yes." Finn wondered for a second what exactly Brittany had said, and how her parents had read it, but bottom line was it didn't really matter as long as they didn't hate him and would let him into the house.

"Brittany and I were just setting up the fondue machine. No one else is over, so you'd be welcome to come in and eat with us."
"That would be great. Except I kinda need to talk to your wife? Brittany's mom?" He felt immediately like an idiot for tacking that last bit on. Mr Pierce knew who his wife was.

"Sure thing. She'll be in her craft room, at the end of the hall."

Finn didn't really think one way or the other about religion, but that was sort of a sign from god, wasn't it? He hiked his bike over the bump of the bottom of the doorframe and leaned it against the wall, careful to not crush any shoes under the wheels. Then he kicked off his own shoes and headed down the hallway.

The room was insane. Finn had never seen a room so full of stuff, not even the Berry's room dedicated to Rachel. The walls were all lined with white Walmart shelving, but the tiny glimpses of shelves and the desk were the only white in the room. There was fabric of every texture and colour, more than Finn had thought could exist. She had two different sewing machines, and dozens of clear plastic bins full of thread.

"Are you making something?"

Mrs Pierce whirled around on her spinny chair, smiling brilliantly at him. "Oh, hello, Finn Hudson, Mr-Dolphin-Pretending-to-be-a-Shark-Who-Everyone-Thinks-is-Actually-a-Turtle."

"...what?"

She smiled, seeing his confusion. "The last thing Brittany said about you. If I ever figure out what she meant, I'll let you know. But if it makes you feel better, she likes all animals equally, so I doubt it was a bad thing. Oh, and to answer your first question, the only way I wouldn't be making something was if I was dead. Or possibly ten minutes after that, if I died with my foot on the pedal of the sewing machine."

He hesitated in the doorway. "I'm sorry for interrupting, but I need some help."

Mrs Pierce shook her head. "I love being interrupted. The more works in progress the better, I always say. Need a hem let out? You've grown a few inches in the last year."

Finn thrust the knotted plastic bag at her. She took it with a quizzical expression and began to pick the knot open, even though there was a magnetic rack of scissors hanging above the left sewing machine. It only took her a second to get it undone, where it would have taken Finn an hour, if he'd even bothered to try. It had to be a mom thing. She spread the shower curtain out on her lap.

"I've read a few tutorials about how to make raincoats out of shower curtains. I've never attempted it, but that what-the-crap-am-I-doing feeling is the best part of creating something new. But I'd suggest finding a cool novelty curtain, for a better look. Unless...I suppose red is the William McKinley colour. I could add in some black piping around the shoulders. It'll be plain and boring, but at least it's something. I haven't been able to create anything for Brittany this whole year. It's truly criminal that Coach Sylvester makes them wear their uniforms day in and day out. Completely crushes the girls' self-expression."

If you asked Finn, there were dozens of things Coach Sylvester had done that were worse than making the Cheerios wear their uniforms all the time. Like convincing Brittany to eat sand. But the Pierces had sort of selective noticing skills, and none of Brittany's friends had ever really felt like it was their place to school them. Not even Puck, and he was the ballsiest, least adult-respecting kid Finn knew.

She looked him up and down, holding the curtain against him so it draped to his knees. "So, what
do you think about black piping? Nothing feminine, of course. I wouldn't want you to get in trouble with your teammates."

"Well. Uh. I don't want to mess up your creative, uh, stuff. Ideas and brainstorming and everything. But that was kinda the thing. I don't think I really care if it's feminine? I'm sort of trying to make a point, that I can do what I want. Wear what I want. So, really, you can make whatever you want, and I'll wear it."

"Hoooold up." She peered at him through her half-glasses. "Tell me about this 'point'."

Finn moved a pile of patterns off a chair onto the floor and sat down gingerly, trying not to knock anything over. "So you know how you made Brittany that lobster hat? I mean, I'm guessing it was yours."

"Of course it was. When your daughter comes home and tells you she wants to wear a restaurant on her head, after you spend twenty minutes making a diorama before figuring out what she actually means, you make that spectacular glittery lobster hat."

"Did she tell you...why, though?"

Mrs Pierce smiled. It had a twinge of sad in it. "When you have a daughter like Brit, you try not to demand explanations. It just makes everyone miserable. I did rather hope it was to stick it to Coach Sylvester and her conformist soul crushing uniforms."

"Okay, well, it was 'cuz we were doing a theatricality unit in Glee. All the girls and Kurt wore really weird cool things because they were gonna sing Gaga. We were all supposed to, but then I convinced the other guys it wasn't manly enough. But I was wrong, like, totally wrong. And I really hurt Kurt doing that. And I hurt him in some other ways. And I just wanna make it all better, and having a crazy Gaga costume might do it, but I don't have that kind of brain? I looked at it and all I saw was toga, and that's not good enough. Not for Kurt."

"Dolphin, huh," she said to herself. "Okay. Dolphin it is. Good one, hon." Her next words were louder. "So you're officially giving me permission to make whatever I want, as long as it fits you, and is decent enough that you don't get suspended?"

Well, when she put it like that... No. Finn stamped on the cowardice bubbling in the back of his brain, and squared his shoulders. No more of that; he was done with that. He was different. "Yes. Whatever comes into your head. Only... okay, Santana's was really sexy, and it showed a lot of skin, so she had to wear black shorts on top of the underwear area. So just don't, um -"

"Finn, I want to see your penis about as much as you want to show it off. Chill. Now take off your jacket so I can measure you."

Mrs. Pierce moved efficiently, draping the fabric around his neck, then using a tape measure to determine the length from armpit to wrist, making marks and taking notes on a pad of paper. "I'm thinking tight in the arms with an upright collar. Maybe a half-mask. I generally find wearing a mask make a person more invested in what they're doing, and it sounds like you might need it."

Finn held his arms out as instructed, thinking back. He couldn't remember Brittany ever wearing a mask when they played as kids. But to be fair to Mrs Pierce, she probably didn't need one. She'd been just as imaginative back then, just more hyperactive about it, compared to the spaciness of the last few years. "A mask would be good, if that's what you think. But not my whole face. I want Kurt to see me, not some stranger."
"Finn, I promise you, whatever you do tomorrow? Kurt will see you and only you."

Kurt had been alone in wearing his Gaga costume today. He couldn't blame Tina for ditching her champagne dress, though, not when she had a eggplant and navy plaid skirt on, paired with a excellent black jacket and white cameo brooch. Through some dramatics that Kurt honestly would have paid to watch, Tina had managed to convince their moron principal that her dad would suck Figgins' blood if he didn't let her wear what she wanted.

Tina had said it to him in the hallway, before she'd gone ahead to Glee without him: *I refuse to dress like somebody I'm not to be somebody I'm not*. She'd been confident and comfortable in her own clothes, and Kurt had felt proud to watch her walk away, entirely secure in her image. A little bit theatrical was a good thing.

It was too bad not everybody agreed, but to be honest, having Karofsky and Azimio throw him up against the window felt tired and overdone. This was their own dramatic dialogue, and Kurt was sick to fucking death of it.

"You want to beat me up," Kurt sneered, "go ahead. But I swear to you, I will never change. I'm proud to be different. It's the best thing about me. So go ahead. Hit me."

"I believe I will. Sir?" Azimio gestured grandly to Karofsky. "Would you like to go first?"

"You're not hitting anyone."

Kurt's first impression was that of a great wall of crimson, looming behind Karofsky, who actually did a doubletake when he saw Finn standing there. Finn's eyes were hooded by a glittery mask, but there was no way he was disguising his identity. Kurt thought, actually, he might be showing his true colors for the first time, ever.

"Oh, my god," he breathed.

"Is he wearing a red rubber dress?" Azimio said in obvious confusion, "because I'm not -"

"I want to thank you, Kurt." Finn's expression seemed familiar, but Kurt didn't quite recognize where he'd seen it before. "I realize I still have a lot to learn. But the reason I'm here right now - in a shower curtain - is because of you." He took a step toward Azimio and Karofsky, looking as menacing as anyone in glitter and red latex ever had. "And I'm not going to let anyone lay a hand on you."

Karofsky was obviously not taking him seriously, which Kurt thought, judging by Finn's attitude, might be a big mistake. "Oh, really, dude? Cause I'm pretty sure we can take both of you."

"Yeah?" They all turned to see the rest of Glee, gathered behind them in their theatricality costumes. Puck was right in front, his eyes on Finn, smiling broadly in his KISS makeup and wig. "Can you take all of us?"

"Okay... I get it," said Azimio, backing up. "I took biology. You know what, Karofsky? We done disturbed the freak hive. The worker freaks is trying to protect the queen freak."

Karofsky scowled. "Next time we'll bring some friends, too." With that, they disappeared down the hall. The Glee club didn't bother to watch them go; the main attraction was clearly right here, where Finn stood gazing at Kurt.

Rachel rolled her eyes. "I'm sick of everyone calling us freaks."
"Well, look at us." Mercedes shook her head and grinned. "We are freaks."

"But we're all freaks together," said Finn. "And we shouldn't have to hide it."

Mr. Schue came to collect them and bring them back to the choir room, but Kurt wasn't moving more than a few inches away from Finn, and the rest of Glee seemed in no hurry. It was all Kurt could do not to throw his arms around him right there. Instead he reached out a hand and touched the puffy shoulder of Finn's dress.

"Where did you get this?" he asked. It was a safe beginning, nothing like, *You did this for me?* or *When do I get to kiss you?*

Finn smiled, touching Kurt's pointy sleeve in return. "I had a little help - okay, a lot of help - from Mrs. Pierce."

"My mom hooked them up." Brittany dropped back to walk beside them. "My mom is better than any of your moms. Except Kurt's, because zombies are the best."

Kurt couldn't even be annoyed. Santana, on the other hand, could be. She rolled her eyes, falling into step with Britt. "Really? Arts and freakin' crafts was the answer? Not calling him out on his Twelve Tasks of Hercules-ian mound of shit?"

"My mom's the best," Britt insisted stubbornly. Santana slipped her arm around Britt's waist, shrugging in defeat.

"Okay, then. Next time I'll bring along the popsicle sticks and pipe cleaners."

Mr Schuster sighed. "Class, guys, come on. And what do you mean, hooked them up?" He dropped his voice, taking Finn's arm and attempting to pull him aside. "Finn, I thought we spoke about this."

"Why do you assume it was cheating?" said Mercedes. "I mean, me and Tina knew about Mr X, so if we knew, I bet Puck did."

"Dude," drawled Puck, crossing his arms. "I told them to do it. Hardly counts as cheating."

Mike tilted his head. "And, Mr. Schue, didn't you make out with Rachel's mom when you were supposed to be dating Ms Pilsbury?"

"I don't think-" he stammered.

Santana snorted. "We don't payz you to think, we payz you to teach us music and dancing. So how about we all leave Kurt and Finn to the epic end of their unresolved sexual tension, and while they're getting their mack on, we come up with something to actually do for Regionals, instead of just another life lesson? Tina's got her groove back, after all. Pretty sure the rest of us are too swag to ever lose ours."
Kurt watched Santana usher the rest of Glee back through the doors of the choir room, giving the two of them a meaningful head-nod. He stepped off to the side, away from the door, eyeing Finn with hesitation.

"You really don't have to," he said quietly. Finn's lips twisted into a half-smile.

"I kind of do," he replied. "Not because Santana says, though apparently I need to listen to her more. Because I want to. Because... I want people to know that I want to." He reached out and touched Kurt's face, just a gentle gesture, but it made Kurt's heart skip. "You deserve that, Kurt."

Finn took Kurt's hand and tugged him back into the center of the hallway, in full view of the rest of Glee, not to mention various other curious passers-by. Their outfits were drawing enough attention, but Finn wasn't looking back at them. He was only looking at Kurt.

"I saw you," said Finn. "Way back at the beginning of the year, when Puck shoulder-checked you against the locker. We talked about you. I thought... you had a lot of courage, being who you were. There was no way I would have had the guts to be myself, back then." Kurt's pulse, already accelerated, raced as Finn's hand brushed against his chest. His other hand was still holding Kurt's, squeezing his fingers. "You've taught me so much about what's possible, who I can be. I want to be better for you. For both of you." His smile softened, became hopeful. "I mean... if you think you guys still want that."

"If we - we want that," Kurt stammered, "yes, so much. Please."

Finn breathed a little faster, laughing nervously, and stepped in, the fabric of his dress chafing against Kurt's. He fumbled a little with where to place his hand, but finally settled with it around the back of Kurt's neck. Finn's palm was sweaty, but whether it was from anxiety or the rubber dress, he couldn't tell. It didn't matter. Finn was gazing at him so intensely, with such fierce determination, it took away all his stability, leaving him wobbly and tingling.

"I want to be be the kind of guy who deserves the way you look at me," Finn said. "I want that more than I can tell you."

"Finn, you do. You deserve it." Kurt gave up any semblance of reticence, and placed both hands on Finn's face. The spangled half-mask didn't budge; he must have used glue or something. Finn caught his breath, his eyes widening, but Kurt didn't let up. "I don't want to change you. I just want you, just like this."

"Really?" His voice was choked and hoarse. "Like - this?"

"Exactly like this," Kurt said firmly. "I always thought so. Even when you're being a complete idiot, I still..." He paused for only a moment before plunging forward. "Love you."

Finn let out a broken little noise before pressing his lips against Kurt's. In the choir room, the Glee club's ambient noise dropped into silence. It was followed by a muffled whoop that might have been Puck, but really could just as easily have been anybody else, and then a smattering of applause. Finn laughed first, but Kurt couldn't keep a straight face either, and it was nearly impossible to kiss when you were smiling that hard anyway.

"I'm sorry," Finn whispered into his ear. "About the being an idiot. I'm going to do my best not to do that again."

"Try running to instead of away from," Kurt advised, placing a tender kiss on his neck. "We can help with the rest."
Don't let it go away
This feeling has got to stay
Don't let it go away
This feeling has got to stay
And I can't believe I've had this chance now
Don't let it go away

New, you're so new
You, you're new
And I never had this taste in the past
New, you're so new
My normal hesitation is gone
And I really gravitate to your will
Are you here to fetch me out?
'Cause I've never had this taste in my mouth

Oh you're not old
And you're not familiar
Recently discovered and I'm learning about you

New, you're so new
You, you're new
And you're consuming me violently
And your reverence shamelessly tempting me
Who sent this maniac?
'Cause I never had this taste in the past

Oh you're different, you're different from the former
Like a fresh battery, I'm energized by you
Don't let it go away
This feeling has got to stay
Don't let it go away
This feeling has got to stay

And I can't believe I've had this chance now
Don't let it go away

Why am I so curious?
This territory is dangerous
I'll probably end up at the start
I'll be back in line with my broken heart

New, you're so new
You, you're new
And I never had this taste in the past
Don't let it go away
This feeling has got to stay
Don't let it go away
This feeling has got to stay
And I can't believe I've had this chance now
Don't let it go away
And I can't believe it
Can't believe it
Can't believe it
Don't let it go away, this feeling has got to stay
Don't let it go away

- No Doubt, "New"
They put Finn's bike in the back of the Navigator and drove home together, the three of them, Finn in the front seat and Puck behind them. Finn kept glancing at Puck, his eyes asking, *are you sure this is really okay?* Puck wasn't sure how to respond, other than to allow the shit-eating grin on his face to show as he watched Finn and Kurt making eyes at one another. *Goddammit, yes, this is okay,* he wanted to say. *This is my fucking dream come true. Just don't stop.*

"I don't really know what to say," Finn said, about halfway back to Kurt's house.

"You don't have to say anything," Kurt assured him, reaching across the span between the seats to touch his hand. "If my dad has questions, he can talk to me. We'll resolve this. Until then, the three of us, we'll figure out our own limits, and he's going to have to listen to them. Remember, your mom's on our side."

"Yeah. That's... that's a little weird." Finn shook his head. He had what seemed to be a perpetual smile on his face, too, but it still looked a little anxious. Puck thought he might know what that was about, but he wasn't going to say anything about it until they got back to Kurt's. He felt a little anticipatory thrill.

"I'm gonna be the one to talk to Carole and Burt about that stuff." Finn glanced back at Puck, startled, but Puck gave him a reassuring smile. "Dude, if it were my Ma, I know it'd be weird for me to talk to her about sex. This'll be way easier for me than it is for you. I'm the third party, right? No baggage. I've got it covered."

Finn nodded, taking measured breaths, his free hand clenching on his knee. "Okay. I'm not freaking out. Just so you know, I'm pretty sure I'm not. And if I am, I'll... I'll let you know."

It was starting to feel like way too much distance between the front and the middle seats, but Puck held it together until Finn climbed out of the front seat. At that point, they were in the garage, and even though the door was wide open, it was the middle of the afternoon. Nobody was going to notice two guys making out against the door in Kurt's garage. Or three.

"Jesus," Finn gasped, tilting his head back, writhing against the door under the assault of Puck's
mouth. He might have been using a little more teeth than Finn had ever expressed wanting before, but Puck couldn't bring himself to care very much. He caught Kurt's amused smile, and he was pretty sure they were both thinking something similar: *He has no idea what he's in for, does he?*

"If you'll move a few feet to the side," Kurt suggested, putting both hands on Puck's hips and giving him a polite nudge, "I can open that door and we can go inside. I suspect that might be a lot more comfortable."

Puck was second through the door behind Kurt. He stopped, stunned, in the doorway. Only Finn accidentally kneeing him in the back got him going again. "What the crap happened to your room?"

"I redecorated, in preparation for Finn moving in."

Puck blinked a few times. It didn't make the peach and red curtains covering each wall disappear, nor the patterned carpet, nor the vase of flowers wider than his shoulders, nor the bowl of oranges. "Okay, but... there's redecoration, and there's Holy Shit Trading Spaces Hilde Just Glued Straw To The Walls redecoration, and this is pretty close to the second."

"I think it looks amazing," Kurt protested.

Puck put a hand on Finn's shoulder, guiding him into the room. "His favourite colour is green. Did you even ask before you decorated?"

Kurt frowned. "I was making a point, and you know it."

Puck had to ask. "Was the point that Aladdin exploded and chunks landed on the walls?"

"This room may not cater to Finn's aesthetic," Kurt retorted, "but there's no question that it's perfect." Puck wondered for a second about what else he could say. He didn't want to hurt Kurt, but the room was kind of awful. Maybe for a middle-aged woman, or a brothel in Nevada, but definitely not for teenage boys. Then Kurt spoke again. This time his tone was less annoyed and more thoughtful. "I wonder if I can get another three hundred out of Dad to redo it a nice shade of forest? Or maybe a tinge bluer? Finn, how do you feel about pine?"

Finn shook his head so rapidly Puck wondered if his glittery eyemask would fall off. "You don't have to, it's okay. This is fine. It's not that bad, really."

Puck was prepared to stand up to his boyfriend for his best friend's right to a comfortable living environment, but it was unnecessary. Kurt had clearly been caught by the decorating bug. "No, no. After we're done here, I'll start making another baseplan. I'll get some swatches, and when I consult you I'll actually take your opinions into account, I promise."

"Done here," Finn repeated. He looked at Puck, tensing up. "We, um... we are doing what I think we're doing, aren't we?"

"Depends on what you're thinking, doesn't it?"

Kurt was clearly feeling far more forgiving than he was; he put both hands on Finn's shoulders, drawing them down his arms. "Maybe you could start by taking off that dress. I'd hate to tear it with any overenthusiastic movements."

"Hold on a second." Both Kurt and Finn paused in their efforts to get more naked to look at Puck. He tried not to let it go to his head, two amazing guys turning to him for direction. For a moment, he wondered how Quarterback Hudson managed to stay so humble in the face of all the attention he usually got - but of course, he knew the answer to that, too. Finn's confidence was only skin
deep. In a lot of ways, he was more vulnerable than Kurt was, here. Puck was going to have to be careful. "I think I want to hear the answer. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining, but I've got to wonder what you are thinking we're doing?"

Finn didn't back down or shrink away from the question, which seemed like a good sign, but he still appeared jittery enough to fly off the handle at any minute. "Like I told Kurt at school, I want... to show you I'm different. To be better, for both of you. I mean, I guess I owe you an apology for how I've been acting as much as Kurt, so..."

"You - what?"

Finn had said in the car he wasn't panicking. He still wasn't. This was blank shock, and disbelief, but his legs weren't taking him anywhere. He was standing in the same spot, squinting at Puck like he was trying to get the scene back into focus. Puck recognized this look, too.

Kurt, in the meantime, wasn't waiting for Puck's cues anymore. He knew as well as Puck what needed to happen. The negotiations weren't up to Kurt, so he was getting into action, starting with moving the pillows on his bed to the floor and untucking the leather tiedowns from under the mattress. Puck took Finn's arm and gave him a little encouragement to sit on the edge of the bed. He barely appeared to notice Kurt unfastening the snaps on the back of his dress and stripping it off his arms.

"Let me be clear. This isn't a punishment. Yeah, it was annoying as hell to see you changing your mind about what you wanted every five minutes, but that's not enough of a reason to spank you. It's because, under your skin, you're still freaking out. If we don't deal with it, it's gonna come up again and again, and it's not going to go away. Like Kurt and the handcuffs. He needs them."

"You're gonna have to trust us on this one." He indicated Kurt's bed with a jerk of his head. "Face down, on your stomach, right here."

Finn gave a little half-gasp, half-moan, and immediately moved to his hands and knees, crouching. Puck tugged off Finn's boxers, not shying away from his heavy erection, but not paying any special
There was no way he would have used the paddle on Kurt without knowing his pain tolerance first, or how much damage he could inflict with just his hand on Kurt's behind. But things were different with Finn. Puck had spent the last eight years tackling and wrestling with Finn, in play and in sports. Now they were doing it in bed. Well, in Kurt's bed, but whatever. No matter how different Finn claimed to be now, Puck knew him. He knew how much he could take before he'd crumble.

"Kurt," he said, "get the paddle out of your drawer and hand it to me."

Kurt didn't hesitate; he didn't even look surprised. Finn moaned again as Puck pressed him into the bed with one flat hand, then took the paddle from Kurt and hefted it into the air. He tapped Finn's bare behind once with the smooth side, making him jump. Puck leaned over to stroke his back.

"Still not freaking out?"

It was almost a test to see how Finn would react under this kind of pressure, but Puck wasn't really worried either way. If Finn told him to stop, he'd stop. If Finn trusted him to keep going... well, Puck might eventually get so turned on he'd have to stop and do something else, but he guessed Finn would be okay with that, too. He watched as Finn paused, considered it, then shook his head. He turned to one side, facing Kurt.

"I want you to hold my hand," he murmured.

Kurt broke into an incredulous smile, but he was already kneeling beside the bed and reaching for Finn's fingers, twining them in his own. "I'm right here," he promised. He brought his head down close enough to touch Finn's, kissing him. Puck paused in the process of undoing the buckles on the cuffs to watch them make out for a few minutes. It wasn't long before Finn was rutting against the bed, dragging the length of his cock back along Kurt's comforter and thrusting forward again.

"Tell me it's okay for me to get turned on when you watch us doing that," Finn said, his voice pleading.

"Just as much as it's okay for me to get turned on watching you." Puck kept his jeans on, but he let Finn feel his hard cock press into his thigh as he reached over him to fasten the cuffs on his wrists. They fit Finn's arms differently than the way they fit Kurt's, but they looked no less amazing on him. Finn Hudson in bondage gear, he thought, swallowing hard. Who would have thought that'd be my kink? "Tell him, babe, how amazing he looks. How fucking hot he is, on his knees for us like this."

Kurt's enthusiastic affirmative response had Finn crying before Puck even delivered one swat to his behind. Finn didn't even react when Puck attached the carabiners to the tiedowns; he was too focused on Kurt's gentle hand, petting his face and whispering in his ear. Puck considered it a success that Kurt was able to break Finn down without any force at all, but it didn't stop him from carefully lining up the paddle and bringing it down in a series of strokes on the most sensitive area of Finn's thighs. Finn choked off his increasingly desperate cries into Kurt's mouth.

"Yeah, I'm not gonna tell you not to come like this," said Puck. He kept one hand wedged against Finn's back, keeping him down - with some effort, because Finn was a hell of a lot bigger and stronger than Kurt was. He thought there would be no way he'd be able to handle him over his knee the way he'd taken Kurt, though the idea left him a little breathless. "Not today. You've been holding back enough. You just let it go, man. We're here to take care of it."

He could hear Kurt saying something about him being perfect, just this way, and Puck only had to
land three more short, sharp swats Finn was gasping out his frantic release. Puck couldn't even make a joke about Finn's hair trigger, not considering the way he was fighting for control himself. He gritted his teeth at the friction of his jeans against his cock and kept his hands off himself as he lay down on the other side of Finn, kissing him.

"So good," Kurt cooed, his cheek brushing Finn's ear. He reached across Finn's sweaty back to grasp Puck's hand, gripping it tight. The way he was gazing at Puck - it seemed like he'd taken Kurt down into subspace by spanking Finn, and wasn't that a hell of a charge?

"It's hard to know what you want, after," said Puck. He could tell Finn was listening, even though his eyes were closed. "You kind of lose yourself, and usually that's fine, I can make the decisions for you. But this is the first time with us. You have to tell us what you want."

Finn licked his lips, taking shallow breaths through his mouth. "What... what I want."

"We'll do anything you want," said Kurt, his voice gentle and so fucking hot. Finn clearly thought so, too, judging by his whine. "But you have to say."

Finn struggled to get his hands under himself, lifting up high enough to turn his head over, so he was facing Puck. "I want..." He swallowed, squeezing his eyes shut. "God."

"We don't have to do anything," Kurt added. He brushed wisps of saturated hair back from Finn's forehead, and kissed his neck. "We can just stop right here."

"No," Finn said quickly, "no, I want..." His words trailed off, too indistinct to be understood.

"Finn." Puck made his voice as no-nonsense as he could. Finn gulped.

"I want you to screw me into the mattress."

"Oh," said Kurt, his eyes wide and round as marbles, "oh, fuck. His hand, splayed on Finn's back, dug into his skin, his nails seeking purchase.

Puck didn't have to ask him if he was sure. He could see it plain as day on his face. "You've been thinking about that. Ever since I said it."

"Yes," whispered Finn.

He moved his lips close to Finn's own, letting him feel the words against his skin. "You can't stop thinking about it, can you?"

"God," Finn moaned, his head writhing against the pillow. Puck smiled.

"You want me, or Kurt? Because either way, you're gonna get fucked, and either way, one of us gets to watch. But if you can't pick, we can probably -"

"You." Finn was breathing hard now. "You, I want you."

Kurt looked more than okay with this decision, his pupils blown wide and his cheeks flushed. Puck stood and came over to Kurt's side of the bed anyway, taking him in his arms.

"You could hold him," Puck said. "While I fuck him. But it's up to you."

"I want that," Kurt agreed, sounding a little strangled. "Later. Right now... I want to see. I want to see all of it."
Puck nodded, unsurprised. He took his time, biting a path down Kurt's neck to his throat, loving his incredibly responsive noises even more with Finn here to hear them.

"Do you want me to cuff you, on your knees in front of him?" he asked. All of Kurt's motion stilled entirely for several heartbeats, before resuming again with a sigh.

"Yes... god, yes. But Finn needs those cuffs right now, more than I do. We have time. For all of it." Puck could hear the smile, even without looking at his face. He kissed him, hard and breathless.

"I'm going to take off the rest of your clothes," he said. "Right here. And you're going to sit right here next to him and get yourself all slick, and we're going to watch you fuck yourself."

Finn's response to this, and Kurt's response to it, was nothing short of amazing. His whimpering noise when Puck passed him the lube made Kurt's eyes roll back into his head, and the echoing noise when Kurt added a second finger made Finn's thighs quiver. Puck took advantage of every moment of their reciprocal arousal, getting Finn absurdly wet and slick with patient fingers, and waiting until his straining hips thrust back to take Puck's first finger to the knuckle.

"Hearing you, Finn," Kurt told him, propping one foot up on the bed and tucking the other underneath himself as he spread his own fingerful of lube, "and seeing you, watching Puck take you like this... I'm never going to be able to imagine anything else, when I touch myself."

Puck helped Finn get up on elbows and knees. He really would need to remember to put a towel down under him the next time, to minimize the wet spot; two guys made enough of a mess, but he could already tell three was going to get a little crazy. Finn's eyes never left Kurt's fucking beautiful body, watching his hand moving steadily on his cock, the other thrusting into himself with increasingly erratic strokes. Kurt faltered each time Puck added another finger, and when Puck grasped Finn's hips and moved to kneel behind him, Kurt averted his eyes, digging his teeth into his bottom lip.

"It's all going to be over if I watch," he said.

"Your call, man." Puck definitely got what Kurt was saying. He kept his own focus on the center of Finn's back as he rolled the condom on and pressed into him, a fraction of an inch at a time, listening for changes in his breathing, until he was flush and trembling against him. Several times he had to stop and close his eyes to regain his self-control, because this wasn't just anybody, this - this was Finn, this was - fuck, this was the guy he -

"Holy shit," he whispered, hearing his own voice come out in a panic. He clutched at Finn's hips for support, feeling suddenly dizzy. "I'm... I don't think I can -"

Kurt was already in motion, unfolding from the chair and moving close beside him. He slid two strong, slender arms under Puck's, holding him up. "You're okay," he said, and then again, more certainly, "you're okay. Finn... honey, can you hear me?"

"Mmm. Yeah." Puck could feel Finn shifting under him, and he held on tighter with his hands, not wanting to lose the ground they'd just worked to gain. At the same time, he could feel his world being rocked. Finn. I'm inside my best friend. Holy shit.

"You're doing so well, and... just hang on a minute. Everything's fine." Puck felt Kurt's hand touch his face, and then Kurt's tongue was in his mouth, he was kissing him hard and wet and dirty, and it was both incredibly hot and made Puck want to burst out crying at the same time. When Kurt pulled back to break the kiss, he stared at him.
"What is it?" Kurt said urgently. "Tell me, what's wrong?"

"Nothing," Puck replied. He shook his head, not caring about the tears streaking his cheeks. "Nothing. I'm - I'm just so fucking happy."

Kurt broke into a surprised laugh, and he hugged Puck quickly one more time before crawling onto the bed alongside Finn. He could almost have tucked himself in underneath Finn's body, but he didn't exactly do that; he just stayed close to him, drawing Finn's attention. But one hand remained connected to Puck's, holding tight to Finn's hip as Puck regained his focus. Puck thought it might mean something that he'd barely lost any of his erection, even in the midst of the freakout. With care, he ground up against Finn's ass, hearing him curse.

"Is that okay?" Kurt asked, looking somewhat anxious. It made sense; Kurt wouldn't know what Finn could tolerate, or even what he wanted. He was learning him. Luckily, Finn had enough of himself left that he could nod slowly, letting Kurt kiss him.

"Feelings," Finn said, his voice getting stuck in the middle of the word. "Definitely okay, but... it's a lot. A lot of feelings."

Neither Puck nor Kurt were going to stand in the way of that. They both understood what Finn meant. It was the sensation of being filled this way for the first time. The emotions were at least as overwhelming as the physical experience. Puck could easily have taken it down a couple notches, relaxing on the bed beside him, making it gentle and easy. He could have, if he thought for one second that was what Finn needed. It was a good reminder of what he was doing there, and why.

"You're not supposed to hold back. You asked for something, and I'm here to give it to you."

Puck didn't hold back after that, either, though he made sure to remain as attentive as he could to Finn's progress as he fucked him slowly and methodically. When his own climax seemed unavoidable, he said Kurt's name, once. Kurt immediately slithered out from beneath Finn's shaking body to touch Puck's face, to kiss him and press their foreheads together.

"Close?" he asked, needlessly, but Puck nodded as he lengthened his thrusts. Kurt just wanted to hear him say it.

"Finn, I'm gonna come inside you unless you tell me otherwise."

"Yeah, no, that's exactly... exactly what I want." Finn's words were as fragmented as he was, but he was still present, still straining back to accept Puck's cock, driving into him.

It was fucking incredible, was what it was. Puck felt like he could have started talking about how incredible it was before he started coming, and he still would have had more words left to say after he'd finished. Instead, he said nothing, because Finn deserved to have this first experience all on its own, complete with feelings, without dealing with all of Puck's feelings on top of it. He just listened, drinking it all in, storing every little detail in his memory to take out later and examine and appreciate.

Puck pulled out and ditched the condom, almost too lightheaded to do anything but collapse on the bed beside them. He wondered if part of the redecorating budget could include money for a bigger bed. But he managed to notice, in the process of running a light, assessing hand over every inch of Finn's body, that he was still hard.

"Kurt," he said, but Kurt was already rolling Finn over and trailing kisses down his sticky chest and stomach. Finn took a few moments to respond to Kurt kneeling between his legs, and he made a
feeble noise of protest.

"I came already," he said. "Really, I don't think I -"

"Don't care," said Kurt, before descending on him. Finn arched up at the contact of his mouth, and Puck, still buzzing, propped himself up on one arm and watched them, not bothering to hide his delight.

"You know," he said, speaking conversationally into Finn's ear, "he's been wanting you for months. Probably longer. For fucking ever. And now he's got you, or you've got us, or whatever, and... I can't even tell you how good it's making me feel to see him so happy." He pressed gentle lips to Finn's jaw.

Finn turned his mind-blown face against Puck to accept his kiss. For a minute, Puck wasn't sure he was going to get any words at all, but eventually Finn came up with, "Thank you."

Puck decided Finn's claims at having already finished were completely irrelevant, because either Finn had no idea what he was talking about, or having a couple orgasms in the span of fifteen minutes were nothing unusual. Either way, that definitely looked like another one, and Puck doubted that Finn was capable of faking it even if he'd felt motivated to do so.

Kurt's response to Finn's climax was to climb on top of him, straddling both their legs, his face a picture of determination.

"Puck came in you," he said, his voice uneven, stroking himself roughly, "but I'm going to come on you. Because you're ours. Finally."

Finn's astonished groan was followed almost immediately by Kurt's. Puck gave the skin of Kurt's thigh a little pinch with his nails just before he came, which he knew Kurt wouldn't experience as anything other than pleasure in that moment. He didn't wait before slipping away to the bathroom and getting a warm, wet washcloth and a dry towel for Kurt to use to clean Finn up. Kurt wouldn't be down with making his boyfriend the wet spot. *Either one of his boyfriends*, he thought, watching Kurt wash, dry and snuggle against Finn's chest. The idea warmed him from the inside, and it only increased as Finn's arms enfolded Kurt and held him close. Finn's sigh was pure contentment.

Puck reached out and ran his fingers through Kurt's hair. "Happy?"

"You're amazing," Kurt said. *Happy* was definitely in the neighborhood of how Kurt was feeling, glancing between himself and Finn, his face glowing. "And I love you, and... that's about all I've got."

"All we've got, babe." He leaned across Finn to plant a kiss on his boyfriend's swollen lips, tasting Finn's distinct flavor on them, and smiled.

Puck stayed until Finn and Kurt were both asleep, which didn't take long. He could easily have joined them, but he had some additional business to to handle, and it would be easier to do it while Kurt and Finn were otherwise occupied. He spent a few minutes showering, because he figured smelling like both of your boyfriends might not be the best vantage point from which to engineer an apology.

Then he took a walk up the street to Hummel Tires and Lube. The weather was pleasant, even this late in the day, and it wasn't very far, but mostly he considered Burt's dignity. Coming home to your own house to get dressed down by your kid's boyfriend probably wouldn't feel very good; it
was better to do it in the slightly more neutral territory of the garage.

There was only one car in the service bay when Puck walked through the door, the bell jingling. Burt saw Puck standing there calmly, his hands in the pockets of his jacket, and turned to the mechanic beside him, saying, "Hey, Luke, go ahead and take off a little early. I can close tonight."

Luke gave Puck a curious look, but he didn't complain about his boss taking twenty minutes off his shift. Puck waited in the vinyl chairs by the window and looked at the stupid magazines until Burt came to sit beside him, wiping his hands.

"Kurt was the only one in his theatricality costume today at school," Puck said.

Burt sighed. "Yeah, well, he's the bravest person I know."

"Me, too," he agreed. "But you would have been proud of Finn, too."

"Of -?" Burt paused, eyes wide. He looked hard at Puck. "What happened?"

Puck made it a short story. He wasn't worried about outing Finn, assuming Burt had either already heard it from Carole, or sure as fuck needed to hear it from somebody before he got home and found Finn in his son's bedroom. Judging by his minimally shocked expression, Puck guessed the former. In any case, Burt listened, rapt, while Puck told him about the red dress and the kiss in the hallway.

"He's got the whole Glee club on his side," said Puck. "Well, maybe not Mr. Schue, but we'll work on him. Anyway, three hours later, Finn still wasn't freaking out. I think he's gonna be okay."

Burt nodded slowly, running a hand over his head under his ballcap. Puck watched the gesture with startling fondness.

I'm just a big ball of sap today.

"And you're obviously okay with this," said Burt.

Obviously. Puck tried to suppress his laugh. There was no way Burt would really get this without the evidence before his own eyes, but Puck could do his best to frontload the shock, to minimize Finn's trauma.

"Kurt's in love with him," he said. "And so am I, and he is with me, so. Yeah. Okay with it."

It wasn't anything like the look Burt had given him when he'd said I left Kurt in a potentially unsafe BDSM situation, which was to say, neither dangerous nor angry, but Burt was clearly floored by this idea. Puck let him sit with it for a few long moments before giving him something new to chew on.

"We've been trying to get Finn to be our third for the last couple months, but Finn was dealing with his own big gay freakout, so it took him a while to come around. Kurt redecorated the room, hoping it'd trigger Finn to -"

"Oh," Burt said, the light dawning. "Jesus. That... makes a hell of a lot more sense now."

"Yeah, and Kurt's going to try to get you to let him re-redecorate, and I'd say please let him? Finn can't handle the swanky boudoir motif any better than I can."

Burt looked a little helpless, leaning against the counter. "I'll tell you, Puck, I really didn't know what to do when Carole came to me and told me about... what was happening with Finn. It seems pretty irresponsible, tossing a guy who's just figuring out his own feelings into the same house, the
same bedroom, with a guy like Kurt..."

"But he's not. Just figuring them out, I mean. Trust me, when you talk to Finn, you'll see what I mean. He knows what he wants. Finn does this: he thinks about things for freaking-ever, but when he makes his mind up, that's just the way it's going to be."

"God," said Burt faintly. "And here I thought Kurt was throwing himself at him, making Finn uncomfortable."

"Oh, he was totally doing that," Puck nodded, grinning. "But Finn got over it. I thought you might want a heads up before you came home."

"Before I... oh." Burt stared at him. "You mean they're...?"

"Well, I guess Finn's kind of breaking your rule about not coming over right now, but he was willing to risk it, considering he and Kurt definitely aren't letting go of each other's hands." He shrugged. "And I'd be willing to put money on Finn having at least one more gay freakout at some point, but I'm equally confident he'll stick around and let us help with it."

Burt cycled through a whole series of expressions before settling on curious. "I really don't get how you're handling this without getting jealous."

Puck considered his initial reaction to Kurt flirting with Finn over swatches, and Kurt's own anxiety around attempting a threesome. They'd come a long way since then, that was for sure. "It's not about not being jealous," he said. "It's about all the rest of it making up for that."

Burt stood up and walked the length of the floor, then turned around and came back to stand in front of him. "Puck... I love Carole."

"Okay?" he replied. If Burt could handle this stream of new and sort of awkward information, he could handle a non-sequitur.

"I want her in my life, as much as possible. To be blunt, if there had been a way to make Finn leave while keeping Carole, I would have."

"But you get that Finn wasn't doing what you thought he was?"

"That's my point. You're saying there's no reason to keep Finn out of the house. If he's as certain as you say - and believe me, I'm beginning to trust your judgement more than I do some of my employees - they could move back in tonight. But then there's the problem of arrangements. If I'm okay with you and Kurt having a closed door policy, then it would only be fair to allow Finn and Kurt the same."

Burt looked at him. "But you don't live with us, Puck. You have a home, and your own people. Now, I want this with Carole, I really do. But it wouldn't seem appropriate to my son to push my relationship on him. Not to mention how letting the Hudsons move in runs the risk of throwing his relationship with you off kilter, because of the... imbalance?... of two-thirds of you always being together."

"Right." Puck rubbed his face for a second. It was a little embarrassing to admit to himself he hadn't even considered that. "It's kind of been a long haul trying to get Finn to stop being so scared he had to act out like a shithead. I haven't really spent a lot of time thinking about future issues. But I have to think it's better for them to be together than to be apart."
Burt glanced behind them at the Lincoln in the service bay. "I have to finish up this tune-up and close up shop."

Puck guessed he knew a brush-off when he heard one, no matter how gentle Burt was being. He stood up, nodding. 'I should get home, anyway. My own people are probably wondering where I am..."

"Now, wait a second." Burt put a hand on his shoulder. "You've given me a lot to think about. I'm not telling you to get lost, I'm saying I could use a hand here. Unless you know how to remove a set of spark plugs, you can grab a broom and sweep up."

"Um. Yeah, maybe you'd better let me handle the sweeping."

Burt didn't give him a hard time about it, but it made Puck's insides do funny things when he handed him the long push broom and said, "I can take you through a tune-up sometime. Or Kurt can. It's not so complicated."

The garage was silent for a while as they worked. It was fine with Puck to be alone for a while with his own thoughts, and it appeared that Burt felt the same way. Every time he looked over at him, he was deep in concentration, and Puck assumed it wasn't a standard tune-up that was absorbing his attention that way. Eventually, Puck made his way over to the service bay, sweeping the little pile of dirt together. As Burt bent down to hold the dustpan for him, Puck spoke again.

"Me and Finn are always gonna have interests that Kurt would rather stab himself than pretend to be into. Like when football starts up again. We're gonna be practicing three times a week, and Kurt is either going to be at Cheerios practice or reading magazines at Mercedes' house. And then me and Kurt have the, um, stuff we do, and I'm not sure how deep into that Finn's really going to end up getting. So if Finn and Kurt have a shared living situation that I can't be part of, I think it'll still be okay. It's not like I'm not welcome to come over." He glanced up from the broom at Burt. "I mean -"

"You know you are," Burt agreed. "We had that talk already."

He nodded. "So if I see them at school, and at Glee, then I go home to my sister, and then come back in the evening and, for lack of a better euphemism, tuck them in, then come over in the morning to carpool to school? It's a little bit of driving, but it's not really that separate. And there's all summer."

Puck closed his mouth on discussing any further future plans, because he knew adults tended to discount kids' ability to know anything about what they wanted beyond tomorrow. He wasn't in any hurry. But Burt was giving him a funny little smile. Puck considered how things were with him and Carole. Maybe Burt did understand what it felt like to have something like this in his hands, to know just how important it was, and the lengths to which he would go to protect it.

Burt pulled the Lincoln into an empty space in the parking lot while Puck shut off the lights on the floor and pulled the glass door closed behind him.

"I'm thinking, if you can, you might want to come back to the house tonight," said Burt, reaching past him to lock the door. "I have the feeling we're going to need to do some renegotiation with Kurt and Finn, and it'd be helpful to have you there."

"Yeah, well." Puck made a face. "My Ma's pretty much grounded me for the rest of the year for sneaking out at night. I've been working around it as best as I can, but..."
"I think you'd better stop at telling me you're lying to your mother. I'm not sure how much I'll be able to help if you keep doing that." Burt looked remarkably sympathetic, but he didn't say anything more about it. "Need a ride home?"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klHpznbGeYc

It's getting late, and I
Cannot seem to find my way home tonight
Feels like I am falling down a rabbit hole
Falling for forever, wonderfully wandering alone
What would my head be like
If not for my shoulders
Or without your smile
May it follow you forever
May it never leave you
To sleep in the stone,
May we stay lost on our way home

C'mon, c'mon, with everything falling down around me
I'd like to believe in all the possibilities

If I should die tonight
May I first just say I'm sorry
For I, never felt like anybody
I am a man of many hats although I
Never mastered anything
When I am ten feet tall
I've never felt much smaller, since the fall
Nobody seems to know my name
So don't leave me to sleep all alone
May we stay lost on our way home?

C'mon, c'mon, with everything falling down around me
I'd like to believe in all the possibilities

Try not to mistake what you have with what you hate
It could leave, it could leave, come the morning
Celebrate the night
It's the fall before the climb
Shall we sing, shall we sing, 'til the morning
If I fall forward, you fall flat
And if the sun should lift me up
Would you come back? C'mon!

It's getting late and I cannot seem to find my way home tonight

- Fun. and Panic! At the Disco, "C'mon"
When Rachel called after dinner and mentioned Shawn, Finn felt a little guilty he hadn't been back to visit him, but not all that much. His world had been turned upside-down, after all; as of that afternoon, he suddenly had two boyfriends. It wasn't likely that he was going to be noticing much else outside their little sphere for a while.

"I've been giving him voice lessons," she said. Finn could hear her making noises of effort and the whir of the ellipse machine in the background. "When I mentioned you'd been going through some changes, he asked about Puck."

Finn felt his face heat up. "Yeah. He knew about Kurt, too."

"But he brought up Puck. Finn, I saw the way you kissed Kurt at school today. Are you telling me things with you and Puck are... just as complicated?"

"No, Rach. They're not complicated at all."

Beside him, Finn watched Kurt's face split into a smile. Though he didn't lose focus on his homework (on a goddamn Friday, Finn wasn't sure if he should be impressed or exasperated), he reached out with a hand across the table to take Finn's. Rachel's words receded into the background as he relived the sensation of Kurt's hands on his skin.

"Puck left us here together." He nuzzled Finn's neck with a little sigh. "I'm pretty sure we have the best boyfriend in the world."

"We?" asked Finn, feeling a thrill. "He's my boyfriend now too?"

Cue the shit-eating grin. "Yeah? I mean... yes. I want that too."

That apparently had been the right answer, because they were still very much in bed together when...
they heard the door slam and Burt's voice call, "I'm gonna get started on dinner, all right, guys?"

Kurt blinked at Finn, then replied in as loud a voice as he could manage, he called back, "Um... okay?"

"How's fish sound? Finn?"

They stared at each other until Kurt started giggling. Finn whispered, "Do you think I should answer?"

"He knows you're here, and he sounds like he's forgiven you, at least the worst of it. I don't see why not."

"Fish would be great, thanks," Finn yelled up the stairs. Kurt collapsed, laughing into his hands. "What? I like fish."

"Sounds good," said Burt. "Come on up, you know, whenever you're ready." Then there was the sound of the door at the top of the stairs closing, and silence.

"Oh, my god." Kurt craned his neck to peer up the stairs, then turned back to Finn, his hair adorably disheveled. "My dad shut the door."

"He did." Finn twisted out from under the comforter and sheets, climbing over Kurt's startled limbs until he was kneeling over him, grinning like a madman. "Thoughtful of him, huh?"

When they eventually made it upstairs, following the world's fastest shower, Burt was looking determinedly cheerful. Kurt immediately began setting the table. Finn watched the two of them do the pleasant avoiding thing for about three minutes, thinking, if Puck were here, he'd just say what was going on, and it would all be out there. But Puck's not here. So he bit his lip and asked, tentatively, "So... are we okay?"

Burt lifted the first piece of tilapia out of the broiler pan and served it onto a plate, adding a spoonful of rice from the pot on the stove. "Well, I've gotta say I'm still not crazy to hear words like faggy come out of your mouth. No matter who you were talking about."

"Yeah, I'm... I think I'm over that. I mean, I'm not going to call anybody that. Including myself. I don't know what kind of word to use about myself yet, but it won't be that one, okay?"

Burt smiled at him, and Finn felt something settle inside. He smiled back.

"So when we were talking at the ball game, you and me, you already knew how you felt about Kurt." Burt passed two plates of fish and rice across to Finn, who set them on the table, and started making two more. "You, talking about somebody holding his hand and telling him he was awesome... that was about you, not about Puck."

"I see some pretty ambitious relationship stuff for a bunch of teenagers." Burt handed him the next two plates, looking at him hard. "But I also see how happy my son is, and I know Puck's not the only reason for that."
Finn let Burt see the shit-eating grin. It startled him for a moment, but Burt rolled with it. "Thanks, man," Finn said. "That's definitely my goal here." Then he looked down and realized he was holding a fifth plate. "Oh - is, um -?"

"I invited him," said Burt. "We'll see if he can swing it with his Ma. She's not feeling so charitable about him being away from home all the time, and I can't say I blame her, but... Carole said she would talk to her."

"Table's set." Kurt paused in the doorway to the kitchen, looking expectantly at Finn holding the plate. "Who's that for?"

"For your boyfriend." Finn watched his cheeks turn pink. "Our boyfriend."

"Okay, guys," muttered Burt, setting the broiler pan on the stove with a muted bang. "Let's keep things under control here until after dinner, at least; I promise, then you can be as ridiculous as you want to be."

Puck still hadn't arrived by the time Rachel called, but Finn didn't feel too anxious about it. When he hung up with her, he explained to Kurt about Shawn and his C4 injury at football camp.

"He helped me see the two of you as a good thing, instead of something to freak out about. I think you'd like him."

Kurt seemed interested. "Would he like some company this weekend? We could all go."

That could easily have devolved into pointless hand-holding and eye-gazing and comments about how thoughtful and sweet Kurt was, but Finn managed to restrain himself, considering Burt was sitting about ten feet away watching the news. "Yeah, okay. Thanks."

But Puck didn't show. Finn sat with his ankle pressed against Kurt's, wondering how he could have ever not wanted to touch him, but feeling the beginnings of that jumpy sense in his core. He knew the solution to that jumpiness involved Puck and the red leather slappy thing and probably his cock. Knowing all he had to do was wait and he would get it was remarkably calming, even though the actual waiting was still hard.

When Finn's mom arrived at the house, she saw the fifth place setting and got all teary.

"I think you'll all have to bear with hugs from me, to start with," said his mom, prompting Kurt to push out his chair and take the first turn. She swung an arm around Finn and pulled him in before Kurt could decide he'd had enough, holding on, eyes shut tight. "I'm so proud of you young men. All of you. You've been dealing with all of this complicated stuff on your own, and -"

"It was Puck, mostly," Finn said. "For a while, I got stuck listening to... some other people, telling me there was something wrong here, that I shouldn't bother, but he didn't give up on me. Or Kurt."

"Well, I'm stubborn that way." Kurt managed to extract himself from his mom's squeeze and ended up with his arm wrapped around Finn's waist. "It was a lot easier to handle, knowing Puck was there."

"So have you had a chance to talk, the three of you?" She watched them expectantly as she sat at the table with her dinner.

Kurt looked a little embarrassed, but he answered smoothly. "We had a little time after school, and then he went home. We haven't heard from him since then, but he thought he might not... well, he had things to do at home?"
She looked sympathetic. "You boys have had a big day. An evening apart won't hurt any of you."

Finn tried his best to make that true. He did a little of his own homework. He watched some monumentally bad television. He made an ice cream sandwich with graham crackers, and then he made one for Kurt when Kurt pointed out how bad it was for him, and they ate them together. Eventually, though, he got his phone out and sat down next to Kurt, holding it in front of him with a frown.

"Either something's happened -" started Finn, but Kurt cut him off.

"Don't even. He's not going anywhere. You have to trust that."

"Okay." He sighed. "Then he's not allowed to call, and... we should just leave him alone."

They both looked at the phone, then at one another.

"I could just -"

"Maybe he wants us to -"

They both stopped talking amidst embarrassed laughter. Kurt put his arms around Finn and held him tight.

"I'm so glad you love him like I do. That we're in this together."

Finn smiled. "You really don't mind?"

"No!" Kurt snuggled closer, his head on Finn's shoulder. "First of all, hot. And second, you might be the only other person who understands Puck like I do."

"Maybe your dad," Finn pointed out.

"In a completely different way," Kurt agreed. "And it took us a while to get to this point. But now I know just how much he's worth appreciating, so it's nice to know I'm not the only one who does."

"Yeah. I always did, you know? Appreciate him."

"Mmmm." Kurt put his mouth up to Finn's ear. "Maybe we should plan to sleep in our own beds if he can't be with us, though."

Finn quivered under the assault of Kurt's breath on his skin. "Maybe. But I don't think he'd mind if we did some other stuff before bed. Do you?"

"I don't think so." Kurt's expression was solemn, but his eyes were grinning. "It makes going to bed early a whole different experience, doesn't it?"

Kurt didn't care what time his digital clock said it was, or that his body felt fully rested. It was Saturday morning, and he'd woken up for the fifth time to Finn's weird snuffling noises. The only thing he could think of was revenge. The way Kurt figured it, there was bound to be an awkward in-between stage. Prior to Finn committing, Kurt had been focused on other issues, and Finn waking him up with snoring had been the least of them. In the future, Kurt knew he would grow accustomed to it, or even find it an endearing quality. Until he reached that point, however, he was going to do what he'd done three times already: pick up one of the numerous pillows on his bed and chuck it at Finn.
It was a success, for which values of success that meant Finn had temporarily shut up, but had not dropped to his knees with his palms flat on the floor, begging forgiveness for waking Kurt up yet again. Unfortunately, it seemed that fifth time was the charm. He was wide awake now. Kurt could tell by the way he was blinking that he wouldn't be falling back to sleep. Fucking snorers.

"Well, Kurt," he said to himself, "you can either be a crankypants, or you can use this time."

Kurt didn't regret his decision to save sleeping together for times that Puck could join them. It was the only fair way. But he was wearing fleecy pajamas and one of his boyfriends was snuffling softly in the bed near his. It was Saturday morning and his homework was already done, and he didn't have plans with friends, apart from the possibility of seeing Finn's other friend. Kurt quickly made his own plan. He was going to go upstairs, get finger foods, come back downstairs, drag Finn into his bed and convince him to not leave it. He was going to cuddle with Finn the whole day, and as soon as Puck made it over it was going to be a bed of three, the way it should be.

Rather than whap Finn with another pillow to get his attention, Kurt shook his shoulder. "Get up and go lay in my warm spot before it gets cold."

"Get cookies and milk."

"The milk will get warm," he warned.

"I like warm milk." Finn rolled onto his side as though he wanted to look at Kurt, but didn't actually open his eyes. "What kinda cookies you got?"

"I... have no idea." Cookies were more of a girl's night food, which meant that Tina and Mercedes were in charge of them.

"But you have some?"

"I... probably? Dad eats everything that's unhealthy for him."

Finn pushed the blanket off and swung his long legs over the side of the bed. "If we don't have any we can make some."

That sounded like at least double the amount of work that Kurt was willing to do for snacking. But Finn was already halfway up the stairs, and there was no reason to not follow him. If his dad did have a store of junk food Finn found acceptable he'd probably need a second set of hands to help him bring it back down.

Finn's "morning, Mom' was a clue that they weren't the only ones up. As he rounded the corner, he saw she was much more ready for the day than they were in a t-shirt with rosettes on the bib and jeans. Kurt could tell they were high waisted, but he could forgive that because of her proper accessory choices.

"There should be some coffee left," she offered.

"Actually, we're going to have more of a milk and cookies morning," Kurt replied. "But I'll be a lot more grateful for the gesture Monday morning."

"So what are your plans for the day?"
"Snuggling," Kurt said firmly, just as Finn said, "I thought we'd go see Shawn. Rachel kinda guilted me a bit, and even though it doesn't matter what she thinks about me anymore, she's being a better friend to him than me, and that's weird."

Carole gave Kurt a commiserating glance, as though she understood the pain of men that didn't want to cuddle. Kurt appreciated it, even though she didn't know the whole situation. Then she turned to her son. "If you're planning on leaving soon, I could give you a ride?"

Finn titled his head a bit. "Oh yeah? Where you going? You don't have a double shift, do you?"

"If I did, I would have been up a lot earlier. No, they're just errands."

Kurt didn't look down on Finn for accepting that at face value and turning to rummage the pantry. Finn was a lot of things, a lot of great things, but he wasn't a person that looked for a lot of depth in conversation. Kurt was used to reading micro-expressions, judging people, figuring out if they meant what they were saying, and what they meant that they weren't saying. It was automatic by this age. There was no way Carole was just doing errands.

"What kind of errands?" he probed.

She laughed nervously. "Oh... just errands. Maybe some jewelry shopping."

Kurt thought about that for a second. She was nervous around him, and looking for jewelry. Rings were jewelry. "Are you planning on proposing to my dad? Because you've only been here one day, and as much as I've been planning weddings since I was five, I think that's a bit quick."

Finn whirled around, elbow knocking a box of cereal out of the cupboard in his haste. "You're getting married? That's definitely super quick, Mom, and I-"

She chuckled again, this time genuinely. "Burt and I are not getting married. Where did that even come from?"

"I'll explain my thought process when you start being honest. You're not just going grocery shopping."

Finn looked back and forth between him, his brow contracting in confusion. If Kurt hadn't been revving up for battle, he would have laughed. Didn't Finn know how to argue with a parent? He and Dad did it all the time.

Carole nodded reluctantly. "Okay, no, I'm not. But I really don't think you want to know what I am doing. It'd ruin your first day together."

Finn's eyes hardened. "It's not our first day together until Puck gets here."

Kurt knew before Carole said a thing that there was something wrong with Puck. It was in her eyes. She sighed. "That's sort of the problem, boys."

Finn's eyes slowly widened. He shook his head wildly. "No. No no no no. You said- you- you were on my side no matter what, you knew this was going to be good even before I did, you knew. You can't just switch sides. You can't just suddenly be on Schue's side, that's not fair! I-"

Carole stood and enfolded him into a tight hug while Kurt waited on the periphery. It was clear from the way she was holding Finn - one arm firm, the other looser - that she was willing to include him, if he wanted in. Kurt didn't. Comfort and affection like that were for friends and lovers.
"Oh, honey. I love you. I do want you to be happy, you and Puck and Kurt, together or apart. That's why I'm doing this."

Kurt's bones turned to blades. Those sounded like the words a parent would say before sending their kid to straight camp. It was hard to believe of her, she'd instigated this when Kurt had been almost ready to give up. But nice people sometimes did shitty things. Every member of Glee was proof of that.

"Doing what?" he asked coldly.

Carole looked tired. "I have to go talk to Ruth. She's Puck's mother. We've been friends for a long time, with Finn and Puck and Matt and Santana and Brittany growing up together. She called to - well. I thought it would be better if I could talk to her in person, so she couldn't hang up on me."

That was simultaneously better and worse than Kurt had expected. Carole wasn't full of hate, suddenly abandoning her child, but it seemed like Ms Puckerman might be. "She was in a hanging up mood, was she?"

"Kurt, hun. Don't ask for details; just let me fix this."

He knew Finn would let his mom walk out of the house without sharing. Finn was like that. When he finally broke, he trusted that his mom would pick up the pieces. Kurt couldn't do the same. He loved his dad, but losing control around him had never seemed like an option. The few times he had, like that awful moment on stage singing Rose's Turn, or coming out, he'd immediately tried to regain his footing. Kurt had to go through life prepared to save himself, along with the few he considered his own. His eyes narrowed.

"What did she tell you?"

Carole grimaced uncomfortably. "Are you sure you want -"

"What did she tell you?" he repeated, more insistently. "Carole, please. We can't call Puck and avoid the landmines if we don't have at least some idea of the terrain." As Kurt heard his voice rise, Finn stepped back and over to him. He didn't refuse the arm around his waist, but wondered if Finn knew that he didn't need it.

"She started the conversation by apologizing. For..." She sighed.

Kurt clutched at her arm. "Look, I promise that I won't internalise your words. We won't. Repeat it verbatim; it's fine. It's not something I'm going to walk away without hearing." He stared into Carole's eyes. "For all of us."

He could see her defenses crumbling, a little at a time. When she spoke, though, her voice was tight and controlled, the words spat out, in the same way his dad had spoken to Finn for saying *faggy*. "She wanted to apologise for her slutty son convincing Finn he had to be bi-curious and get involved in crazy orgies. That it was just a phase, and Finn would be back to normal soon, even if there was no telling what new lows Puck would reach next. That she didn't raise her son to be a sex addict. That it was probably her shitty ex-husband's fault, there was something twisted and whorish in his sperm, it wasn't her fault, she couldn't control how the genes split up. That..."

"Mom!" Finn put a horrified hand up to ward off more. "We get the idea, okay?"

Kurt left absent kisses on Finn's neck to comfort him. He could have stomached hearing more, but if Finn was self-aware enough to say he couldn't handle it, Kurt wouldn't push.
"Verbatim, you said, Kurt. You know I don't think of your love like that. But I couldn't exactly tell her to stop being ignorant on the phone. She would have hung up on me. Ruth likes to vent when she's upset. So I'm going to go to her house, and sit down with some coffee, or maybe a cocktail even though it's not even noon, and she'll say all of her nastiness to me. And then once it's out, I'm going to help them have an actual conversation. Because she's a good woman, really. She just doesn't understand her son."

"Puck's just..." Finn shrugged. "Puck's Puck."

Carole smiled. "Yes, well, him being himself means he's not the perfect gentleman she wanted to raise because she never got to marry."

"Wow. That's like the opposite of epidermis rex."

Kurt twisted to look at him, racking his brain for the word Finn really meant before he got it. "Oedipus rex? Yes, actually, that would be. Since when do you read Greek literature?"

"The Simpsons talked about it, I think."

"So," Carole went on, "that's what I'm doing this morning. And I think the sooner I go the better. Knowing her, she's on the phone to another friend right now, but sooner or later she's going to run out of people to call, and then it'll be round two for her and Puck. I'd really like to get there before that happens. So if you were planning on asking for a ride to Shawn's, you've got five minutes to get dressed."

"I guess you're used to helping Finn, but I've got the Navigator, remember?"

"Right. Of course." Carole shook her head, smiling faintly. "I don't know how I forgot my son has a... a boyfriend with a ride, now."

"It's easy to get distracted when you're worried about someone."

"Isn't that the truth." She picked up her keys and headed for the door. "I'm not sure when I'll be back; it might be a long day. Don't have a healthy lunch, it's Saturday and I think Kurt's plan of pajamas and cookies is the best I've heard. Any phone calls to the house phone for me or your father, please write them down, Finn; there are bound to be plenty of important calls while we're transitioning over here. And do anything in your room with the door closed and music on, like you promised your father."

She kissed Finn's cheek quickly before heading down the front walk.

Kurt watched her go, then turned to Finn. "Do you think we should call him?"

Finn didn't even ask if he was talking about Shawn. "I want to. I don't know, though; his mom might have his phone. Sometimes when he gets grounded she tries to take it before he steals it back. But we can just hang up, right?"

"If we call from the house phone she won't even know it's us." Not that Kurt cared. Worst case scenario would just be another how dare you be a fag insult, like the ones he was used to getting.

They couldn't put the house phone on speaker, but with it sitting face up the rings were pretty audible. And then, just as Kurt feared it would go to voicemail, they heard Puck say, "Hey."

"Hey, man," said Finn, his voice anxious.

"It's us," Kurt added. "Are you okay? We heard your mom's pretty mad."
Puck snorted. "Ma's mad at me? Thanks ever-so for enlightening me, I never would have fuckin' guessed!"

In the background another voice came into play. "Noah, don't you dare swear in my house! Sarah could hear! And get off the phone to one of your ten thousand boyfriends! It's eleven goddamn o'clock, you can't be making a booty call already."

"Who the fuck is swearing now!" Puck shouted back. Then, quieter, "I gotta go. I dunno if I'll see you before Monday."

He hung up before Kurt could say goodbye, or I love you, or what she thinks doesn't matter.

"Shit," Finn groaned.

Kurt sighed. "So much for happily ever after."

"Yeah, well, I guess your drama wasn't the only drama."

"But I got better. Mom will make Ms Puckerman better."

He sounded so trusting. Kurt didn't know how Finn could do that, just assume that as soon as an adult said they had a situation under control that meant it actually was. Maybe it came from not trembling under years of utterly useless bullying rules, or having a score of adults in black outfits saying that things were better now, she was in heaven now, not in pain. He couldn't believe, but he had to pretend he did, for Finn's sake.

"I'm sure she will," he said. "Things will be better tonight."

Finn was starting to feel the tension more acutely when Puck finally arrived at the house after dinner on Saturday. He came over to Finn and Kurt immediately, accepting their hugs, then standing close to them, hovering but not touching. Kurt warmed up his plate of fish and rice from the night before.

"My Ma's not thrilled with me being here," he said under his breath. "And that's kind of an understatement, but I told her I'd be home in an hour. You guys seem cool, though?"

"Yeah," Finn confirmed, looking at Kurt, who nodded, smiling. "Burt just somehow knew I was here yesterday. So I stayed, and things are okay. Good, even. I don't even know how he knew; maybe my mom talked to him?"

"Something like that." Puck shoveled in another bite of fish. "You probably guessed I've been in the midst of my own freakout with my Ma, pretty much since Friday night."

"Uh, I don't think my mom's conversations were like your mom's conversations." Not that Finn knew for sure. Once she got home she'd refused to talk about anything that had happened, saying that they had to ask Puck if they wanted to know.

As though she had dog ears that picked up on hearing her name, his mom appeared in the doorway to the kitchen, Burt following her. She didn't say anything, just grabbed a measuring cup and stuck it inside the glass jar that held the flour. It was a very subtle way of spying. It wasn't like Finn could tell her to get out and make her cake in the hallway.
"Well, yeah. Just saying that I might not be around so much, and that sucks, but... better to take care of it, you know?"

"You're good at that," said Kurt softly. "Taking care of it."

"It certainly seems that way," Carole agreed, her voice placid.

Puck, suddenly caught in the impact of simultaneous admiration coming from Carole and Kurt, looked more uncomfortable than Finn had ever seen him. "Fine, I got it," he snapped, holding up both hands. "I'm a goddamn saint. And I'm on a schedule, so whatever you need to say, you'd better say it quickly."

Carole set a hand on Puck's shoulder and smiled down into his scowling face. "I don't have much more to say. I'm pretty talked out for today. As far as I'm concerned, as long as nothing you're doing is interfering with school or making one or more of you miserable, it's your life; you can make your own decisions. But this look of happiness on Finn's face... I'm reasonably certain it has something to do with you, Noah."

Puck didn't roll his eyes, and he stifled his sigh well enough that they could barely tell he was doing it, so that was something. "Thanks," he said tersely.

"Don't mention it," said Burt. "Really. You can bet this is just going to get more complicated from here. Finn... before you guys go any further, I need to know that I don't want what your mom and I are doing to feel like pressure to do anything. Or not do anything. If you and Kurt need separate rooms, we can make that -"

"No!" Finn and Kurt replied in unison, making his mom laugh. Puck shifted his rice around on his plate, still frowning. Finn shook his head. "No. Burt - I'm really sure. I told you, you and my mom, you deserve to be happy."

"And so do we." Kurt took Finn's hand, clasping it with their fingers interlaced, and smiled broadly at Puck. Puck grinned back, somewhat reluctantly.

"That's true," said Burt, nodding. "But let's be honest, Kurt. You're not always going to make each other happy. There're gonna be days when you'll be mad at one another, or you can't get along, because that's what happens when you live with someone. So I think the rules need to be something you guys talk about. For now..." He looked at each of them in turn. "All I'm going to ask is that you all be straight with us. Even when it's hard."

"This isn't the kind of thing that most people are going to easily accept," his mom added. "You can't assume there won't be repercussions for being open with others." She smiled at Finn. "But I'm proud of you for doing that."

"Yeah?" Finn wasn't really surprised; his mom had never judged him for anything, even for things she couldn't stand behind, but it was still good to hear her say it.

Neither he nor his mom said one word when Puck took one of Kurt's arms and one of Finn's and hauled them downstairs. But once he got there, he didn't go for the kissing. Instead, he set them both down on Kurt's bed and started pacing back and forth.

"You're not freaking out, are you?" Finn asked, watching him curiously.

"Not exactly. It's just... all this stuff with my Ma, it's made me realize we actually need a plan. Me and Kurt, we're out at school. I'm pretty sure enough people saw you and Kurt together that they'll know about you, too."

"What about us?"
"We already made out at school, against the fence by the kitchen." Finn grinned at Kurt's surprise. "Oh, he didn't tell you about that? It was totally hot."

"So you're saying you're in? The three of us, out at school?" Puck was getting antsier by the moment, but Finn couldn't bring himself to feel anything but calm. He looked at Kurt, who nodded.

"I didn't want to interfere with your relationship with Kurt. You guys have something amazing; everybody can see it. But the two of you have been telling me I don't. That I make it better by being here." Finn touched Kurt's arm. "Do you still think that's true?"

"Yes," Kurt said, with complete confidence. They both looked at Puck. "What's going on?"

"What about us, Finn?" Puck repeated, with increasing irritation. "Seems like you've got everything you might want, now, with Kurt right here in your bedroom, a new house, Burt and your mom."

Finn blinked, feeling his heart give a twinge. "Puck..."

"So I'm just asking. I can take it, whatever it is, but I need to know, okay? Sitting up there in your dining room listening to your mom spouting bullshit about me making you happy, when it's pretty clear I'm not needed for that."

"Are you being serious?" Finn reached out and stopped him from walking any further. Puck let out a furious noise, gripping his forehead with one hand. "Puck, for fuck's sake, when my mom said this was all about you, she was totally right."

"Yeah, but you remember how you thought it couldn't be, for you? It really can't be, for me." Puck shook his head, looking pissed off. "I'm kind of at the end of my rope with my Ma, and she's not going to give me any more just because I'm in love with two awesome guys, no matter how much I..."

"I love you, too," said Finn, his hand still on Puck's chest. Kurt let out a quiet oh while Puck stared at him, but Finn didn't look away, he just stared right back. "I'm serious. I'm pretty sure I've never bothered to say it before, but it's been true forever, and you..." He swallowed his ridiculous tears. "You deserve to hear it."

Puck took a long breath, nodding. "Okay. I guess... I believe you. But I want you to know you don't have to say that to get me to fuck you. I'll pretty much do that whenever you want, and the two of you, you can get your happy ending."

"Puck," he protested, but Puck wasn't stopping.

"It wouldn't change how I feel. I'd be happy for you, but I'd rather know if you change your mind about wanting the three of us together." He looked so serious, it kept Finn from blowing up at him about how stupid this was. "Okay?"

"Yeah, man, definitely. Can you... just, come here?"

Finn wished for a moment he'd taken Santana up on the blowjob lessons, even though he was pretty sure neither Kurt nor Puck was going to fault him for not being too skilled at it. He touched Kurt's arm as he was getting ready to kneel.
"Can I?"

Kurt's eyes were wide, visibly dilating as he watched Finn take his place. Finn decided his reaction was at least as hot as getting to look up close at Puck's erect cock for the first time ever. *Don't ruin this, Hudson,* he told himself sternly. He started the way Puck had started with him, by licking him in long, firm strokes. He didn't expect Kurt's hand to reach down and tuck into his pants, waiting for him to be ready, and god, he was ready; he could have come right then just sitting there staring at the head of Puck's dick, waiting to be sucked.

"You're really fucking beautiful," he said, hearing the wonder come through in his voice.

"That's why I was in the mood to give you a thorough beating and nothing else," Puck replied, his voice answering the question before Finn could ask it. Finn gave a little gasp of surprise, and Kurt's hand tightened in his pants. "You're ready, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am. But..."

Puck gave him a squeeze, firm but gentle, until Finn nodded. "Puck, Puck, Puck. I'm ready. Just like Kurt does. Just like you do, Puck."

Finn wasn't quite sure what he meant, making that beckoning gesture, because there was no way Puck wanted him to - he shook his head. "Uh, dude, I'd squash you."

"I'm not as big as you think I am, Puck," Kurt said. "You've got a lot of room for improvement, Finn."

"But..."

"But what?"

"But I can't be that big."

"You're not going to hurt me, you're not as big as you think you are."
"I beg to differ," murmured Kurt, sounding absolutely delighted at Puck's direction. Finn felt like he had fifty thousand extra arms and legs as he clambered onto Puck and gingerly lowered himself on top of him. Eventually, though, he gave up trying to hold himself up and relaxed. Puck made a contented noise. Then he reached up with one hand and hauled Finn's face over to his to kiss him.

"That," he said, once he'd reduced Finn to something breathless and limp, "was fucking incredible. I'm totally going to make you blow me every day."

"... Okay?" was all Finn could say, because he wasn't even sure how to reply to that without sounding eager. It made Kurt laugh so hard he nearly fell off the bed. Puck just grinned. He looked three hundred percent more himself.

"Well, now that I've gotten what I wanted, I'm even more motivated to give back. But neither of you guys need what I'm used to giving you, not tonight, so... hey, the floor's all yours for the next half hour. Anything you've been wanting to try?"

He glanced up at Kurt first, which seemed fitting to Finn. Kurt smiled. "You've been inside me and Finn, and we've been inside you, after a fashion. Don't you suppose it's my and Finn's turn?"

Puck nodded approvingly even as Finn felt his own ass contract. "You're on, babe."

Still on the floor, Finn watched with a faint, fluttering heart as Puck began to undress Kurt. "You want - how do you want me?"

"Oh, no." Kurt's eyes were positively glittering. "You're on top tonight."

"Oh. Finn rocked back on his heels, suddenly breathless. "Um... Kurt, I'm flattered, and yeah, I totally want that, but I don't think I... I mean, you've seen how quick I finish. I don't think that's really going to cut it."

But Kurt was already rummaging in the drawer beside his bed, the drawer that Finn had already mentally labeled the scary sex drawer, because if Burt opened it he'd probably have a goddamn heart attack. He emerged, triumphant, holding a plain leather ring with a series of snaps on it. "I think this might help."

"A tiny little collar?"

"Kind of exactly that." While Puck undressed him, Finn kept watching Kurt as he talked, unsnapping the ring and wrapping it around the base of his cock, pressing his balls down and out of the way. "The cock ring keeps the blood inside and prevents you from having an orgasm until you take it off."

Finn stared at him. "It...? No way. No way."

"Way," Puck affirmed, back to smug. He took the strap from Kurt and shucked Finn's jeans off his legs, not even bothering to take them off all the way before binding Finn's half-hard dick. It didn't feel bad, not at all. Finn stepped out of each leg of his jeans, probing the taut skin around the cock ring.

"Wow." Finn turned to Kurt, who looked startled and a little wary at Finn's grin, crawling toward him. "I'm suddenly feeling a lot more... aggressive."

"Oh, um," Kurt squeaked, backing up against the mountain of pillows on the bed, "maybe we should... mmmmmmm. " He trailed off into breathless moans as Finn kissed him hard.
"Hold down his wrists," Puck urged. "He totally gets off on that."

"Yeah, I can tell." Finn could, to his amazement. He knew what Kurt wanted. Whether it was because he was learning Kurt and what his needs were, or because he himself apparently wanted so many of the same things, he had no idea. He knew, and he wanted to do them all for him. Finn brought his hands up along Kurt's perfect, slender arms and trapped them against the bed, gripping his wrists. Kurt cried out.

"Hang on, I'm gonna put on some music. I have the feeling you guys are going to be loud." Puck wasn't kidding. Finn was working on embedding his teeth in Kurt's shoulder when Puck returned with the lube, and Kurt had already reached Glee levels of loud and was working on Cheerio levels. He wondered if it might not be a good idea to bring out the gag Puck had mentioned, but he couldn't bring himself to take away Kurt's ability to kiss him.

Finn's question about what he should do with Kurt's wrists while he got him ready was answered when Puck knelt beside him on the bed, spreading lube on his own fingers. Puck's tongue in Finn's mouth did what Puck's fingers were doing in Kurt's ass, probing and thrusting, stretching him slowly and with complete love. Finn found himself making simultaneous whimpering noises along with Kurt. Puck smiled in satisfaction.

"You're gonna let me do that to you while you fuck him," he said. "I'm counting on the cock ring to do its job, but if you come, you come, okay? Nothing's wrong here."

Finn nodded, gazing back down at Kurt with renewed determination. "I'm not going to finish before Kurt does."

Puck's eyes softened. His hand slipped between Finn's legs, grasping his cock and making him groan. "I know you won't, babe. You're gonna take good care of him, just like I'm gonna take care of you."

Finn gasped, feeling Puck roll on the condom, then slick him up again with a couple quick strokes. Even with the cock ring on, he could tell it was going to be quick, and he could only hope Kurt didn't mind. Puck's slippery hands guided him right against Kurt's hole, and with a little pressure and encouragement, he pressed into him. Finn suddenly had eight thousand times more respect for both Kurt and Puck for being able to keep their cool while doing this, because it felt tight and hot and more amazing than he could have imagined it would.

"Hey." Puck traced a shuddering trail up Finn's spine with one sticky hand. "You know what to do now."

"I do. I mean... I do?" Finn glanced over at his patient, encouraging face, and wanted to ask, tell me what to do now, please? He tried to focus. But Puck was smiling, leaning in against his neck, kissing him with whisper-light touches.

"Yeah, man. Now you screw him into the mattress."

Finn's hands flexed, but he had no idea whether it was that or Finn's sudden thrust forward that made Kurt cry out. He thought maybe he should let go and check to make sure Kurt was okay, because he was big and clumsy and fuck, he could really hurt him. But he had to trust that Puck would say something. Puck was spotting him, now. There was no way he'd let Finn do something wrong.

The cock ring was really doing its job, too. Finn was seriously going to have to figure out who'd invented that and buy stock or like him on Facebook or something, because wow, that dude might
have saved his sex life. Instead of feeling like he had to focus on something else the whole time, he
got to enjoy the way Kurt was biting his lip and straining against him, and the sensation of Puck's
roving hands on both of them. He kept his cool the entire way through - until Kurt started begging
Puck to make him come. That undid him; he had to stop and bury his face in Kurt's neck and take
several deep breaths before going on. That's when he saw the bruises already mottling Kurt's wrists.

"Oh, shit, man," he moaned, reaching out to flutter fingers along the red and purple marks. "I'm so
sorry, that was too hard - "

Puck actually laughed. He moved to kneel behind Finn, wrapping his arms around his chest,
hugging him from behind. "You've got to be kidding. Are you looking at him? Does he look even a
little bit upset about this?"

Finn had to admit Kurt didn't. He looked, in fact, a little like a cat napping in sunlight. When Finn
leaned back over him, he cracked his eyes open just the tiniest bit, and Finn could see they'd rolled
back into his head, his eyelids fluttering as Finn resumed fucking him. Puck's hand came around to
grip Kurt, stroking him slowly and firmly. The more noise Kurt made, the slower Puck went, until
at the last second he was writhing and whining, his mouth running with please god please. Finn
was about to ask what he wanted when he felt Puck's wet fingers enter him from underneath.

And then there was no question at all of what he was going to do, he just did it, grabbing Kurt's
hips and grinding into him. There was no thinking involved, only three bodies, moving in rhythm,
two of them coming hard while the third kept watch. It was, in retrospect, nearly perfect, but in the
moment Finn just took what he wanted, not thinking about Kurt's needs at all. By the time rational
thought returned, Puck was already smiling and nodding and making it okay.

"You gave him just what he needed," he whispered, mouthing kisses over Finn's neck and ear and
cheek, "that was so fucking hot, and I'm so proud of you, god."

Finn felt almost guilty, the way Puck was fawning all over him; he couldn't help wondering when
Puck was going to do the same for Kurt. Then he realized he was the one who was supposed to be
doing that for Kurt, and he could have smacked himself. He pulled out, cleaned up and adjusted
Kurt in the bed to make room for him beside him in the mound of pillows.

"Was..." Finn choked back his question, because the look on Kurt's face told him everything.
"Wow, that was... I had no idea it was going to be like that."

"Yeah." Kurt folded drowsily against him. "I know exactly what you mean."

Finn watched with half an eye while Puck put his clothes back on. He was definitely doing a lot
better than he'd been when he'd arrived, but he still appeared to be on edge. "Is there anything else
you need?" he asked.

Puck shrugged. "Only for a miracle to occur, and my Ma tell me I can spend the night here. It's a
lot better knowing you're here, but..."

"But it's not the same as being here yourself," Kurt murmured. He rolled his head to look at Puck.
"You know we didn't sleep together last night."

Puck looked startled. "No. Dude, why not? That's just stupid."

"Because it didn't feel right. Not without you." Kurt reached out his hand. It wavered a little in the
air until Puck finally took it. Finn couldn't figure out a way to join their hand-holding that wasn't
completely awkward, so he reached out his own hand to take Puck's other one. "If you can't come
over tomorrow, we'll come to you. I'll make your mother see reason."

"Yeah." Puck didn't sound particularly convinced, but he leaned in to kiss both of them before giving them a brave smile. "That was totally hot. And you guys can sleep together if you want to, I don't care. Whatever feels good, okay?"

They watched him walk out the door with a palpable sense of loss. Finn sighed into the silence left behind. "You think he was lying?"

"I know he was," Kurt replied. "But he'd never require any different from us. It's not about making us do things we don't want to do."

Finn gathered Kurt closer and listened to his breathing for another few minutes before they separated, aiming at the shower. "You can go first," he offered.

Kurt paused in the doorway. "Together?"

That was better. Finn followed him into the bathroom, trying not to worry. With so many people making an effort to fix it, it was bound to work out somehow.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKTjUre_wZo

Hold on, to me as we go
As we roll down this unfamiliar road
And although this wave is stringing us along
Just know you're not alone
Cause I'm going to make this place your home

Settle down, it'll all be clear
Don't pay no mind to the demons
They fill you with fear
The trouble it might drag you down
If you get lost, you can always be found
Just know you're not alone
Cause I'm going to make this place your home

- Phillip Phillips, "Home"
For the love of all that is holy, shut up, Ulysses. I can't hear myself thinking.

"I'm not the one doing the thinking, Tug!"

I don't think I've ever heard a more unhelpful answer in all my life. How am I supposed to think about anything if you're always arguing with me? Don't you have anything better to occupy your mind with?"

"I'm not arguing, Ulysses. I'm simply expressing my observations."

I don't understand why you insist on calling them observations. To me, they sound more like accusations.

"Observations are simply recorded facts, Tug. They're not accusations."

I don't know why you insist on making everything so complicated. Can't we just have a normal conversation?"

"Normal conversation? What's normal?"

I do not understand you, Ulysses. How can something so simple as a conversation be so difficult for you to comprehend?"

"Simple things are often the most difficult to understand, Tug."

I can't believe how much more you make things sound like a complex puzzle. Can't we just keep things simple?"

"Keep things simple? That's not possible."

I just want to know why you always have to make things so complicated. Can't we just have a normal conversation without all the extra words?"

"Normal conversation? What's normal?"

I have no idea what you're trying to say. Can't we just have a normal conversation?"

"Normal conversation? What's normal?"

I don't know why you insist on making things so difficult. Can't we just have a normal conversation?"

"Normal conversation? What's normal?"

I just want to know why you always have to make things so complicated. Can't we just have a normal conversation?"

"Normal conversation? What's normal?"

I have no idea what you're trying to say. Can't we just have a normal conversation?"

"Normal conversation? What's normal?"

I don't know why you insist on making things so difficult. Can't we just have a normal conversation?"

"Normal conversation? What's normal?"

I have no idea what you're trying to say. Can't we just have a normal conversation?"
Puck shrugged, did his best to smile. "I don't need to talk to anyone. It's fine. Pee and bed, that's an order."

"No."

"Sarah -" "I'm coming back," she insisted. "And don't even try to lock the door because I'll pick it. Winona taught me."

Puck snorted as she went down the hall. His sister was headstrong to the point of bullying him, and now she knew how to break and enter. Yeah, this was gonna end up being his fault, if Ma ever found out.

Five minutes later, she was sitting cross-legged on the end of his bed, his blanket pulled over her lap. He could smell the berry hand soap they had in the bathroom on her; she needed to learn how to rinse better. She looked hard at him. "It's not a nightmare, because you didn't go to sleep long ago enough for waking up again. So what is it?"

"I'm not jealous," he said firmly. There was no way that he'd spent months making this happen, working all the angles to make sure everyone relevant was okay and happy, only to flare up with the most deadly emotion at the first possible time.

"Okay?" Her expression said that she thought he was full of shit, even if she was too young to be swearing like that.

He owed her something closer to the truth. "No, that's not true. I'm jealous as fuck."

"Okay?" she repeated, this time already sounding consoling.

"No. That's not true either. I'm not, not really. I just... it's really complicated, Sare."

She leaned her chin on her hand. "I would be sleeping if things weren't complicated. Tell me already, I don't get paid by the hour."

Puck sighed. It felt like he'd had about a thousand serious conversations in the last two days. And in those he'd at least been able to be super-honest. This was going to have to be said in kid-language, so he didn't warp her fragile little mind.

"Okay, so you know how I told you guys a while ago that I liked kissing boys and girls?"

She rolled her eyes. "It's called being bisexual, Noah. That's what the pamphlet said."

He chuckled for a second, wondering if her elementary school had a Pillsbury clone. "Right, yeah, bisexual."

"And you haven't said anything, but I know you've got a boyfriend, because you're always sneaking out, and when you were dating girls you always just brought them home."

"You are a perceptive little shit, I ever tell you that?"

She shrugged. "Someone's gotta be the smart one in the family."

"How much else have you figured out? Did you hear anything me and Ma and Finn's Mom were talking about?"
"No. I had to go to my stupid room." She frowned. "Except..."

"Except what?"

"I don't want to say it. Mom was being mean."

Puck raised his eyebrows. "Did I hear her say it?"

"I dunno. Probably."

"Then I've already heard it, and it won't hurt my feelings to hear you repeat it."

"She said you were being, um, slutty. Doing stuff with every curious boy in Lima, just like you used to do stuff with everyone's moms."

"That's not true!" He stopped himself from shouting just in time to not attract attention, but his tone was still forceful. "That's, like, ninety-five percent not true."

Sarah got to her knees and hugged him. "I did hurt your feelings. I'm sorry."

"Then I've already heard it, and it won't hurt my feelings to hear you repeat it."

Sarah got to her knees and hugged him. "I did hurt your feelings. I'm sorry."

"No, kid-sister, it's fine. I just... she didn't say that to me, I guess she was on the phone or something." And wasn't that a fun game, trying to guess to which one of her friends she'd vented about her son's sex life? "You don't have to apologize; I told you you could repeat anything."

"What's the five percent? You don't have to tell me."

"I'm dating two boys. But it's not because they're curious. I definitely love them, and they definitely love me."

She tilted her head. "But you're dating? Not just doing stuff?"

"I'm dating two boys. But it's not because they're curious. I definitely love them, and they definitely love me."

She nodded, absorbing this. "So you love two boys. Do you love any girls?"

"No. Just them."

"But Mom's mad because most people only love one person, and she found out you do more, and she thinks it's just the sex, even though it's not?"

Sarah frowned. "I still think boys are stupid, but I don't think you should have to stop loving someone just because someone else tells you to."

"Yeah, I know. You are exactly right, and definitely the smart Puckerman."

She frowned harder. "So what's the problem? If you already know that you love them both, then
that's not what's making you not sleep. And it's not that Mom's mad because you never care when you're in trouble, not even that one time you got suspended."

"Seriously, you are smart as hell."

"Stop swearing and tell me why you're up so late."

He squirmed on the bed. "I'm just... kind of a little jealous."

"Well, you said you weren't, then you said you really super were, so I guess 'kind of a little' is in the middle. But why?"

"Okay, well, Finn-"

"Wait." She flailed her hands at him. "Finn? Finn Finn? Your best guy friend?"

"Yeah. Him."

"Oh." Her eyebrows were way up on her forehead. "Is the other one Matt?"

"'Cause Matt is your second best guy friend, and Santana and Brittany are your best girl friends, and I know you did stuff with them a whole bunch of times, so Matt would make sense. Then it would be all your friends."

"It's not Matt. You'll meet Kurt soon, I promise. Probably not here, I don't really need Ma being mean. A lot of people are already mean to him. But we'll go to Breadstix or something."

She brightened at this. "I'll ask Brittany if she'll get Santana to give me her wheelbarrow."

"You do that." Shit, he loved his friends. Sometimes it was like he had three or four older siblings to keep Sarah happy. "So Finn and Kurt, they have single parents, like us. And their single parents are in love. And they've moved in together."

"Ohhh." Sarah made a face. "That's not fair. They get to have a sleepover every night and you don't?"

"I know, right? Except it's not really fair to say it's not fair."

"Because you can't just say Finn's mom and Kurt's... wait, is it Kurt's mom or dad? It could be either. You can't tell if someone is straight or bi or gay or lesbian or trans by looking. And you can ask if you want, but they don't have to tell you, because it's not really your business."

He grinned at her. He loved his sister even more than he loved his friends. "Kurt's dad. Yeah, I know that. A lot of people don't, but that's because they're dumb and closed-minded. They should read the pamphlets you did; I'm really proud of you for that."

She waved this off, intent on the content of the conversation. "Okay, so you can't just say Finn's mom and Kurt's dad can't be in love even if it makes it uneven?"

"It's not just that, Sarah. It's not even mostly that. Kurt's dad and Carole are both really cool, some of the best adults I've ever met. I want them to be together. It's more like... I know that me and Kurt are different from me and Finn. It makes sense that Kurt and Finn are different. I just-"
"That's kind of exactly it."

She crawled up the bed and wedged herself up against his side in a poky-elbowed hug. "I'm sorry you can't be with them right now. But with Jasmine and Winona, sometimes when they do their thing at lunch, I watch and cheer, because being kinda there is better than not at all. So, like, maybe you can go over to Finn and Kurt's some nights? When Mom's not paying attention?"

"And watch. And cheer."
Puck sighed. "Ma and Finn's mom argued about that, actually. But thanks for trying to help."

She noogied his bristly scalp. "I'll always try to help, dumb-dumb. You're my brother."

Finn was an optimist, but he also could keep it real when he had to. He knew his strengths and weaknesses, and he wasn't embarrassed to admit it when he couldn't do or didn't know something. He was good at football, but only okay at basketball. He could write an essay, although it would never be inspired, and all his science labs came out like brown sludge no matter what the result was supposed to be. He liked Spanish, even though he could never remember how to conjugate the verbs.

But his real strength was the people stuff. He couldn't always predict what he was going to say in a crisis, but when he closed his eyes and went for it, he usually ended up surprising himself. This was the hope he was hanging on to as he drove the Navigator over to Puck's house. Yeah, he could have walked or ridden his bike, but this was important, and he didn't want to show up sweaty or messy-looking.

He'd deliberated before talking to Kurt about it, because Kurt had sounded pretty adamant about trying to fix things himself, and Finn knew that was absolutely not going to work. Whatever Ms. Puckerman's type was, it definitely wasn't guys like Kurt. She would end up ignoring whatever he said and just reacting to the way that he said it, and then she'd never come around to accept Kurt for the awesome guy he was. No, Finn thought he knew her weakness, as well as what would get Ms. Puckerman on his side. Like when Burt had thrown him out of the house, and his mom had pointed out that there wasn't much that could be worse than that. It made him a little fearless. Not reckless, because he didn't do that, but courageous enough to say things he normally wouldn't say. Some of them were running through his head on the way over. They might come out, or they might not, but it wasn't something he could plan out, or the conversation wouldn't work; he'd just sound like he was making it up, which was the opposite of what he was going for.

Kurt had bristled at Finn's suggestion, but in the end, he'd acknowledged that when it came to dealing with Ms. Puckerman, Finn had more experience. He also guessed Puck wouldn't appreciate him interfering. That was okay. He didn't like the idea of causing more stress between the three of them, but being quarterback and team captain had taught him that doing the unpopular thing was what leaders had to do. He didn't mind taking a hit for his team of three.

Finn didn't bother to knock or ring the doorbell, because he hadn't done that in years and it would seem just as weird for him to do it at Puck's house as it would have been for Puck to do it at his house. Ms. Puckerman was sitting on the couch in front of the television with Sarah. Her mouth tightened when she saw him. "Hello, Finn."
"Hey," he said.

Sarah was watching him closely but not suspiciously. She'd been more and more frequently absent around the house when he'd come over this year, but she'd always liked playing with them in the past, and for a kid sister she was pretty cool.

"Do you want me to get Noah?" she asked. He mother gave her a stern look, but Sarah's eyes were fixed on Finn.

"Actually, I came over to talk to you, Ms. Puckerman."

Now she was doing that same look at him. He remembered it from sleepovers when Puck and Matt would play some crazy stunt and he'd end up getting punished along with them. It didn't feel any better to see the look now, but it was a little different knowing he was in the right. He met her gaze and didn't let her see he was scared.

"Sarah, honey, you go back to your room." Finn wasn't going to object to this. It would be easier to do this without worrying about upsetting her. Besides, she would go tell Puck he was there, and maybe he would call Kurt, and that would be almost as good as being there himself. Sarah disappeared down the hall without a word.

Ms. Puckerman stared at him a little squinty-eyed for another few moments before gesturing to the couch. "You might as well have a seat."

He let his eyes travel around the room, looking at all the familiar pieces of furniture, the photos on the wall, the books on the shelves. That afghan had been on their couch since Sarah was a baby. "I guess my mom already came over to talk to you."

"She did." Ms. Puckerman's stubborn expression looked a heck of a lot like Puck's, which just made Finn feel sappy, but he wasn't going to go there, not now. Puck's Ma didn't do sappy any more than Puck had before this year. She smoothed her skirt out across her knees. "Honestly, Finn, I don't know what you're thinking you're going to tell me that's going to make me –"

"Begging your pardon, Ms. P, but I don't really think I'm going to change your mind about any of this. I just got the idea that you think some things that aren't true about me, and I wanted to be sure you heard my side of it, from me."

She looked a little startled, but she nodded back. "All right. I'm willing to listen. You've always been a reliable boy – which makes this whole situation all that much harder to take."

"Well, that's the thing. I think you know me pretty well. My mom says I haven't changed a whole lot since I was little. I kind of like things settled and familiar."

Ms. Puckerman's mouth relaxed into a faint smile. "That time we took you and Noah and Matt down to Cleveland for the baseball game. They didn't care when the tire blew on the highway; it was just another adventure for them. But you were more of a wreck than I was."

"Well, we were going to miss the opening pitch!" he protested. She laughed, shaking her head, before reverting to her sour expression. "Anyway. I'm still like that. I don't want to rock the boat too much."

"And you call this not rocking the boat?" She said this with a dismissive hand-wave.

"Well... yeah.. To be honest. You know I went out with Quinn, and Rachel, and it was just... stressful, and confusing. Lonely. I guess I was looking for something from them that they couldn't
She frowned. "I'm not sure I want to ask."

"Not like that, Ms. P." He could feel his face heating, but he drove forward through his embarrassment. "I was looking for a best friend. Somebody I could trust, who really knew me. Knew my family, and cared about my friends."

"You can have those things with Noah without… experimenting with him, Finn."

"Well, I thought that, too? Like, I didn't believe it when Kurt told me I should sing about my feelings, because I thought I wasn't having any feelings that mattered enough. But when I did it, it was amazing. It just didn't even occur to me that I could have those feelings with my best friend. That was supposed to be something I felt about girls, because everybody else did."

She was looking more uncomfortable, but he hadn't lost her yet. "I don't think being gay is wrong. I just don't think Noah needs to pull all the rest of you into his games."

Finn stifled his irritation at her assumptions. He knew he wasn't going to get anywhere by trying to convince her she was wrong about her own son. "That's not how it started, though. It was me. I was the one who realized what I wanted. I just didn't think I was ever going to get it because Puck and Kurt already had it."

"But, Ms. P, you haven't seen him with Kurt." He leaned forward, feeling a rush of desperation. She seemed to pick up on that, shrinking back a little. "Puck didn't even have to tell me how he felt about Kurt. I could just see it. He's working harder at this than at anything he's ever done. He told me he wants to be better, for him, and…" Finn swallowed. "I feel like that, too."

"About Kurt." Her mouth twisted.

"No – about Puck. About… Noah." Yeah, it was about Kurt, too, but maybe she couldn't hear that right now.

She shook her head. "Finn, this is never going to work out. Please, try to see reason. He's just going to hurt you."

He took a deep breath. "I guess that's possible. I mean, maybe even probably going to happen. Maybe it'll fall apart tomorrow. But do you really think I'd even try it if I didn't think there was a good chance of it being worth it?"

Ms. Puckerman sat with this question for long enough that Finn wondered if she thought he might not actually be asking. He wondered if he should ask it again. But eventually, she nodded slowly. "I think… I've seen Noah go through too many phases to believe this one is any different. But I can believe you're really feeling these things. Even if I think it's doomed to failure, I've always allowed Noah to make his own mistakes. I can allow you to make your own, too." She looked hard at him. "Can you believe I actually care about him and want him to be happy?"

"Yes," he said, and he meant it. "So… if that's true, I think I need to ask you for a favor."

She raised an eyebrow. "What is it?"

"Let him come over. He wants to be there for us, more than anything. He really does. So we need
time together. Like Puck and I had all those years to get to know each other, to trust, he and Kurt need that now. I need them to have it, if this has any chance of working out. Just… time."

But she was already shaking her head. "Finn, he has responsibilities. His sister; his family. He can't be gone all the time."

"Well, now that you know about us, he doesn't have to be. We can be over here, too." He looked expectantly at her. "We can be, right?"

There was no way she could say no in the same breath she'd said she didn't want Puck to be gone, as much as she obviously wanted to. "You're always welcome here, Finn."

"Even if I'm here as Puck's boyfriend?"

It was a risk to bring it up, but he thought she might be ready to hear it. She rolled her eyes, but she didn't yell at him. "For crying out loud…"

"Well, that's the way it is," he pressed. "Me, and Puck, we've been best friends for years. And now it's more. It's not what he tried to make me want. It's what I want. I didn't catch anything from him, or get talked into anything." He smiled. "I'm not asking you to accept it, or like it, or even like me. I just want this time with him. Okay?"

"Finn," she said, shaking her head. "I do like you."

He shrugged, smiling wider. "That's cool. Because I'm kind of crazy about your son."

She pressed her hands to her eyes. "I can't believe we're having this conversation."

"Trust me, I felt the same way last month. Maybe more than once a day. Whatever happens, I don't think this is a mistake. And I won't let him forget his responsibilities. You can count on me to be a good influence on him." He was laying it on a little thick, but if she really thought he was the responsible one here, he was going to play it that way. "Can I see him? Just for a few minutes?"

Either she was beyond arguing, or she'd capitulated under his charm. Whichever it was, she nodded. She might have accepted a hug from him, but he wasn't ready to give her one. Instead he reached over and took her hand, grasping it tight for just a moment. "Thank you."

He didn't linger in the family room any longer, but took off down the hall to Puck's room. No need to knock here, either. The Puckerman family had never had a prohibition against closed doors. He didn't think his Ma was going to insist on it now.

Puck and Sarah were sitting on the floor playing War, but as soon as Puck saw him, he abandoned his cards, knocking against them and sending them spinning out of formation. He looked pissed, but his hands immediately landed on Finn's shoulders, his arms, his face, touching him carefully, like he might disappear.

"She's gonna let you come over," Finn said, reeling a little from reaction as he realized what he'd just done. He let Puck hold him up, conscious of Sarah's eyes on them, but not really worried about what she would think. She deserved to see her brother happy. I make him happy, he thought, and broke into a huge grin.

"What, are you, like, a miracle worker or something?" Puck's hand cupped his neck and pulled him into a kiss, just a brief one, but it was enough to remind Finn of all the things they'd done just the day before. He gazed into Finn's eyes, marveling, then hugged him.
"Hey, I've got a lot of idiotic shit to make up for."

Finn thought maybe he could use some more *taking care of it*, judging by the shaky-quivery sensation in his stomach, but he let himself relax against Puck's chest. "It's going to be hard. Your Ma's not on board with this, not really."

"Yeah, but so what? She's not the one fucking you."

"No-ah," Sarah sighed. "Are you going to play this game? Come on, it's war. Three cards."

"You win, sis," Puck said, not moving one inch from where he was. "I'm done with war for now; I'm ready to make a little love."

Kurt didn't consider himself a light sleeper, but it was impossible to not wake up at the noises coming from the other side of the room. He and Finn had decided they'd each sleep in their own beds, at least until it was summer and Puck could spend his nights with them. As it turned out it was a good decision, because whatever rabid bear was mauling Finn, it had ignored his bed completely.

It took Kurt a few strangled 'no's to care enough to roll over and crack his eyes. His stupid boyfriend was on top of his other stupid boyfriend. Tickling, from what Kurt could tell, though Finn was less giggling and more grunting oddly and swatting at Puck.

There was no part of Kurt that had any interest in being tickled. Any minute now they would get the wise idea to tag team him, and Kurt intended to be as far away as possible. If that meant he had to rearrange his grooming schedule a bit, well, so be it. In a few swift moves Kurt got out of bed, grabbed the first robe he could, and scurried up the stairs. They'd come upstairs when they were done, and he could get his proper good mornings in then.

Carole and Dad were eating breakfast together. He had a section of the newspaper, she had a paperback with the cover completely curled back on itself which led Kurt to guess embarrassing harlequin.

"I need coffee. Tell me you didn't drink the whole pot."

"There should be at least a cup left, honey," Carole answered.

Kurt poured himself a cup, added the requisite creamer and sugar and sat with his hand propping up his head. He took his first sip then said conversationally "Whichever one of you let him in, I hate you."

"Lovers' quarrel already?" Dad asked. "I figured you'd want a good morning...you know."

"The only good morning there's been is Finn making enough noise to raise the dead - or, you know, me - as Puck tickles him within an inch of his life."

Carole smiled a touch nostalgically. "Ah, yes. I remember the days of sleepovers. If it wasn't Matt waking up everyone needing to call his parents yet again, it was Puck having no patience in being the first awake."

"It's a lot less endearing when Puck's not seven and in footie pajamas," Kurt snapped.
"It's Monday. You had to get up anyway."

Kurt opened his mouth to explain in scorching words that there was a mile of difference between waking to an alarm and a routine, and waking to screeching and boyish idiocy, but a voice interrupted him. "Burt, it's cool. Sometimes he just needs to get his bitch on."

Kurt whirled to see Finn and Puck, both dressed, if not exactly fashionable. "I'm not making you turkey bacon."

"Can we have real bacon?" Finn asked eagerly.

His dad snorted. "Kurt doesn't believe in real bacon."

"Okay, while you sit here and complain that your arteries aren't as clogged as you want them to be, I'm going to go have a shower and do my hair."

The annoyance rinsed off him like soap. By the time he turned the taps the other way, Kurt was nothing but settled into the steps to get ready for school. He had to sculpt and dry his hair, moisturiser, apply concealer, and pick an outfit. Something with long sleeves, of course. His finger-shaped bruises were none of anyone's business.

Kurt barely had his towel around him when the door opened and Finn came in. Kurt scooted a bit closer to the sink. "I doubt I used all the hot water. At least, Dad never complains when he showers after me."

"It's probably 'cause you'd scalp him if he said you needed to change your getting ready routine. But I'm not here for that. I showered yesterday."

Kurt was about to insist showering was an everyday necessity, as much as changing underwear or eating dinner, then stopped himself. He could either lecture Finn about hygiene or ask what he was here for, and chances were that line of conversation would end a lot more satisfactorily.

"And you're here for..."

"I want to dry your hair. Puck could tell I was thinking about you, like, showering, and he said I should."

Kurt's heart swelled. The bitchy little queen in him sneered that Finn spent half his life looking like he'd just rolled out of bed, that he couldn't be trusted with style, but Kurt stuffed that voice into a box. Finn was being affectionate, or he wanted to be, and Kurt wasn't about to tell him no.

"If you want to help me get ready you can."

Finn didn't go to the sink for the hair dryer. Instead he stretched past Kurt to grab another towel from the rack. He spread it over both his hands, and moved to stand behind him. A moment later there were ten points of contact. Finn's fingertips began to knead through the layer of terry cloth. It was a scalp massage more than anything else. The longer he continued the softer the world felt.

When he stopped it was too soon. Kurt tilted his head back instinctively, coming up disappointed as Finn twisted to put the towel back on the rack. "Do you want me to comb your hair too?"

That was where Kurt had to draw the line. "I'll do it myself. But if you want to wait, you can help with the hairspray?"

"Puck's charming our parents, and I don't have anything better to do." Finn dropped back and sat on..."
If he'd wanted to, Kurt could have taken Finn's phrasing as an insult. One way of looking at it was that he was the last resort. But Kurt didn't interpret it that way. Not with Finn watching him with a sweet sort of fascination as he scooped a bit of gel from the container on his fingers and worked it into his hair. There was no way that Finn hadn't ever used gel before. He was a jock, not Amish. So he was watching Kurt for him, not for technique. Kurt liked being looked at like there was nothing else in the world that could possibly be more interesting.

Finn turned the water on for him so he didn't have to get gel on the tap, and had a towel ready to dry his hands. Kurt kissed him and bent to get his hairspray from the cupboard under the sink. "I'm going to cover my eyes. You spray and make sure to cover everything." And if Finn's coverage was bad, he could just fix it at school. No need to make Finn feel like a failure by redoing it immediately.

"What do you do next?"

Finn swallowed. All of a sudden this event had so much more potential than just domestic semi-bliss. "Moisturiser. Kind of like your biofreeze, except mine doesn't burn my eyes if I accidentally touch my face." He smiled. "In fact, I generally try to focus on my face."

"I could do that too. I mean, if you think I could?"

"You want to rub fluids onto my skin and you think I might say no?"

Finn made a face. "Oh, that's not fair. I wasn't thinking like that, and now I've got a boner."

"If we have time after we're done this, I can help you with that. We just need to be efficient."

"What do I-?"

"Just rub it in. Anywhere you see skin, just rub it in."

Finn's hands untucked the corner of the towel and unwound it from him with a gentleness Kurt would have never thought possible if he hadn't had sex with him before. He rubbed both hands up either side of his spine once, before pulling them away. When he repeated the movement his hands were cold with the shock of lotion. Kurt shook a little as Finn's hands roamed, every once in a while pulling away to spread more moisturiser on his fingers. This had always just been ritual, before. Now it was so much more. It was almost a scene, for all that there were no cuffs or deep kisses.

"I need to do your front," Finn said, voice low, sounding just as affected as Kurt felt.

Kurt turned around to give Finn access. He wasn't expecting Finn to drop to his knees. Finn's face was inches away from Kurt's cock, but he ignored it completely, choosing instead to curl both hands around his left calf and rub the lotion upwards. Legs, then thighs, then hips and stomach and chest. By the time they were eye to eye again, Kurt felt like every micron of his skin was aching for Finn.
"You want me to do your face, right?" Finn didn't wait for an answer, just swiped his thumbs over Kurt's cheekbones. Kurt's eyelashes fluttered at the touch. His hands were still cool as they worked the vanilla lotion into his chin, his forehead, his temples. As Finn's hand dropped to the column of his throat Kurt had to bite his lip. He couldn't remember closing his eyes, but each time he considered opening them Finn touched him again.

"Are we done now?"

Kurt hesitated. There was nothing left to do, but he didn't want Finn to stop.

"You're kind of killing me here," Finn admitted. "I don't want to mess this up, but I really want- I need-"

He couldn't look away from Finn's lips. It took a second for the way they moved to coalesce into understandable words, and for Kurt to form his own. "We're done."

"Oh thank god," Finn said in a rush. He surged forward and rubbed his denim clad erection on Kurt's bare thigh, Kurt's own against the fabric. Kurt stood on his tiptoes and Finn steadied him with a hand on his ass, and the second rut was much closer to dick to dick.

"I have to-" Kurt trailed off, knowing that Finn would let him do everything, and this wasn't much of anything. His fingers undid Finn's zipper. The jeans were tight, they didn't sag much. Kurt didn't have the patience to undress him, just pushed his hands down the back of them to touch the swell of Finn's ass. Finn rocked forward onto him. They weren't kissing, breathing too hard for it, but this pushing-shoving need felt like the most romantic thing in the world.

Kurt twisted away just before he came, angling towards the sink. It was a bit of a heartbreak, but if he rutted into Finn to do it, he'd get come all over himself. He didn't have time to shower and groom all over again. More than that, he didn't want to wash off all the places Finn had touched him. By the time Kurt turned back, Finn had a dry facecloth pushed down his underwear to clean himself.

Finn chuckled and rubbed his brow. "So that was really hot. You do that every morning?"

"Well, most mornings don't go exactly like that. Actually, this is the first that did."

Finn removed the cloth and tossed it in the hamper. When he started to readjust his clothing Kurt saw a damp streak. "I think you'll have to change. I didn't move away fast enough, some of my precome got on you."

Finn glanced down at his underwear, then tugged up his zipper. "It'll dry. And I'll have you on me all day."

Kurt whimpered as his spent cock gave an interested twitch. If that wasn't the hottest thing in the world, Kurt had a very good future to look forward to.

"How long does that normally take you? It probably took longer this time. You should probably get dressed now?"

Kurt smiled. "It's the next on the list anyway."

Puck was sitting on the edge of Kurt's bed. "Clothes and we gotta go. It's getting kinda tight for time."

"How long were you sitting here?"
"Why didn't you come in?"

Puck grinned. "If all three of us had to be together before one of us got to come, none of us would ever get anything done." He gestured to Kurt's closet. "Dress."

Kurt considered his beautiful articles, then turned back to his boyfriends. "Finn, since you helped me get ready, I'll allow you to pick the main piece around which I create the rest of the look."

After all, it wasn't like Finn could choose wrong. It was his wardrobe; he'd happily wear any piece of it.

Puck swatted Finn's ass when he didn't step forward to start examining his choices. "Come on, bro. Big honour there. I never got to pick out anything."

"Half the time he has to wear his Cheerios uniform, anyway," Finn pointed out, flushing.

"He rocks that uniform. He's also rocking this nudity. Except Figgins might not agree. So pick something, 'cause we gotta get going."

Finn flicked through a few hangers before muttering 'fuck yeah' at one in particular. He unhooked it from the rod and passed it to Kurt. It was a grey t-shirt, the neck an asymmetrical v. The front and back were plain, a bit texturally distressed, but nothing exceptionally noticeable.

"Hold it while I pick a jacket?"

"Why do you need to wear a jacket? I picked it because I liked the sleeves."

Kurt had to agree. The real detailing on the shirt was in the sleeve, the hems being ringed with tiny grommets. "That's why I bought the shirt. But my wrists, Finn." He held up the blue and purple evidence of their fun.

"Could you wear wristbands or something?"

"Do I seem pop-punk to you?"

Puck slid behind him, hand on his hip. He whispered, just loud enough for Finn to hear, "Think about it, babe. They'd be pressing on your bruises all day. You'd be feeling us touching you all day, even when we weren't in the room. We could leave McKinley altogether and you'd still have us on you."

"Shit," Finn breathed.

"Well, when you put it like that, I do have those Cheerios sweatbands. They're white, if I wore a white hat and possibly white shoes with a bold coloured pant, I could make it work."

"Great. So do it." Puck swatted him once on the ass before retreating to the bottom of the stairwell. Kurt guessed that it wouldn't be a good time to tell him he normally put on at least a little bit of makeup. Well, he supposed he didn't need it today. His skin was fairly clear, no obvious breakouts, and the ensemble didn't call for eyeliner. But if this was going to become a thing Kurt would have to put his foot down in the future.

Puck didn't think for a second about getting into his car. Once they were out of the Hudmel house - and, seriously, if Burt and Carole didn't take the opportunity to namesmush in a few years once they got married, it was going to be done for them - he opened the back door of the car and climbed in before either of them could say anything. He had a key, but Kurt liked driving the Nav.
First in line was shotgun, but Finn had longer legs. The back seat was fine.

"Kurt, is your clock set right?"

"What?" He finished backing the car out then glanced over to see what Finn was talking about. "Puck, I could have finished getting ready! We've got like half an hour before class."

Finn snorted. "A, you look great, you don't need more grooming. B, we're gonna need every minute."

"To what?"

"Really? Everyone claimed to know what was going on, on Friday. Hell, maybe some of them did, since Finn told Santana and Brittany -"

"I didn't tell either of them anything," Finn assured him. "Although I think Santana's psychic or something, and she tells Brittany everything."

"And Kurt told Tina and Mercedes -"

Kurt glared over his shoulder at Puck as he turned the corner onto Findlay. "I used an alias!"

"But there's a big difference between them thinking they know, and them knowing they know. All nine of them have had the entire weekend to think about it, and text each other about it."

Kurt nodded. "You have a point. Honestly I'm surprised our phones haven't blown up with texts from Tina. She likes details."

"Santana," Finn groaned. Puck had to chuckle. He'd gotten a bit of out Finn about their past conversations, and he had to say, he liked her style. If the trio in question had been a Matt/Mike/Mercedes, for example, he would have been all over Mike the exact same way Santana had been for Finn.

"Yes. I bet you get at least five minutes of dirty talk from Santana."

Finn looked woeful. "Why me?"

"Because she already knows my sex life is happy and healthy. She knows I wouldn't settle for less. You, on the other hand... whatever, all is forgiven. But yeah, she's gonna wanna be your incredibly bitchy therapist."

"Lucky me."

Puck's theory was confirmed when they walked into the choir room and every Glee member fell silent. He snorted. "Nice job being subtle."

"I was on a subtle once," Brittany smiled. "They had a lot of subtles at Disneyland."

"Speaking for the room, if you think any one of us didn't spend the last forty-eight hours imagining everything you guys were up to this weekend, you're mental. Of course we're gonna stare when the three flaming polygamous elephants walk into the room."

"Speak for yourself, Santana," Quinn said, but without any real spirit.

"I speak for the room when I wonder how many buckets Finn filled with his sweaty runoff, and if Kurt cried when he stained his sheets."
Matt shrugged. "She's a total bitch, but she's got kind of a point. How does it work? I mean when you two hooked up it was the whole Hermione-Draco opposites attract thing. But with Finn... I mean he's not really either of your opposites. He's kind of -"

"Finn risked public humiliation to show adoration and respect for his lover," Rachel replied hotly. "Finn is perfect!"

Puck carefully didn't burst into laughter. Everyone would take it the wrong way and assume that it was about Finn's crossdressing gesture, not Rachel's eternal crush. Meanwhile, the others were going on.

"I just can't believe you didn't say anything, Kurt! I even said Finn was distracting me with licking and you couldn't confirm?"

Puck's belly rippled, but he managed to keep the sounds inside. Clearly this was another conversation he'd have to have as an aside. Tina was a pretty great soundboard for bouncing details off; the drive to the thrift store had proven that. If Tina had thoughts about Finn licking things, he wanted to know, even if Kurt and Finn looked like they might be about to die.

Mike shook his head. "Kurt couldn't have said anything. Outing people is never cool."

"But Finn was licking things, and Puck said he had whore lips. It could have been so amazing if only I'd known."

Puck was at capacity. One more funny thing and he'd explode.

"Puck didn't have whorelips; Starchild had whore lips," Artie said matter of factly.

And that was it. Puck started cackling. He folded in half and braced his hands on his thighs.

"Oh my god. You fucked him stupid."

"We didn't fuck him," Finn began to protest before trailing off, "he..."

Tina's reaction was a loud inhale, and if Puck could have looked up he would have had no doubt her hand would be over her mouth and her eyes would be full of gay sex dreams, but he was a bit busy hooting with laughter.

"He what?" Tina prompted. "Continue."

"No," Mercedes corrected. "Don't continue."

"Feel free to continue or not continue as needed," Matt chipped in.

Puck laughed harder. His friends, oh, his fucking friends. Thank fuck for joining Glee, the football guys never would have reacted like this.

"While I wouldn't say that Santana's completely right," Artie started, "I didn't spend any time at all fantasizing, you'd need approximately two more vaginas to get that reaction, I did wonder. I looked up movies about long-term threesomes, to get a baseline for you guys, you know."

Finn scratched his neck. "Thanks?"

"There really wasn't much. There were more religious documentaries than anything else, and I don't really see any of you wearing headscarves and getting married at thirteen. Seeing as you're sixteen already. The only fictional film I could download was Shortbus, and it was kind of
depressing. One of the major plots was about a sex therapist who'd never had an orgasm -

"Oh, we've had orgasms."

Kurt turned to Finn. "Did you take drugs that made you lose your brain to mouth filter?"

"Anyway," Artie continued, "I just wanted to say I don't really get what you're doing, because I can't find much to view about it, but I respect your right to do it."

"That's cool. Thanks. Better than Schue, anyway." The comment turned the mood a bit more serious. Puck could feel the collective hackles of the club raising.

Mercedes crossed her arms. "I can't believe how hypocritical he was being about cheating. Like half of Glee has cheated, and the only time he cares is when it's you two?"

"Just because it's two boys," Tina added, murder in her voice.

"That's not cool." Mike said.

Finn shook his head. "No, guys. I mean, I appreciate the anger, but it wasn't a gay thing. Isn't, I mean. He didn't care about that part. He said that there were more things than gay or straight, and I could decide what I was."

Rachel nodded wisely. "Many people's orientations are far more fluid than they realise. Mr Schue was right in saying that only the individual can decide where they lie on the continuum, and even then chances are they may move."

"He just thought I was being selfish. That I could go ahead and be gay with someone else, but not try and ruin anyone's relationship."

"Ruin? What the hell?" Santana rolled her eyes. "Like Puckerman and Hummel haven't had a hard-on for you for a year. Ruining, my ass."

"Are you though?" Puck turned towards the voice; Quinn sitting on the piano bench with her arm curled over her round belly. She looked so pretty and pure, it was always startling when bile poured out of her mouth. "It's a legitimate question. If threesomes were the natural thing, why doesn't everyone date that way? Sooner or later, one of you will like one of you more than the third, and you'll all break up. In a pair you'd at least have a chance at happiness."

"It's not a contest!" Finn protested. "I don't care if Kurt loves Puck more than he loves me. That's not the point. Puck makes him happy. Why wouldn't I want Kurt to have that? Like, as much as he wants, whenever he wants?"

Quinn rose to her feet, indignantly righteous. "Mr Schue is wrong. You're not selfish. You're all just stupid and over-indulgent! Trying to gorge yourself on sex and love like it's just another slice of pie to cram in your mouth!"

"So what...they're fat with happiness?" Matt tilted his head like the fresh perspective would help him see her point. "I gotta say I don't really see the problem."

She was practically stamping her feet with rage. "Of course it's a problem! People run out of love every day. They divorce, or they stay together because of their vows, but there's nothing left. You can't just take everything! You can't just take it all, and take it again and again, more and more, and expect that you'll always just be that happy! You're going to end up alone, and starving, and hating yourself because you had everything and thought you always would and you never prepared
"I hate you! You're all so stupid! This will never work and I hope it doesn't! You don't deserve to be happy when you're not even trying to be normal!"

She was full out sobbing when Mercedes put her hand on Quinn's shoulder. "Come on, girl. Let's go crash the nurse's office for a bit."

Puck stood strong until the two girls left the room. Then he sagged a bit and rubbed his face with his still-balled hands. "I really don't want to do that all over again with Schue. It'll be less hysterical, but it'll suck just as much."

Kurt sighed. "We're going to have to. He has to know that his advice was unhelpful at best, and far closer to cruel."

"We'll do it," Mike said abruptly.

Puck shook his head as if that would make Mike's few words make more sense. When things didn't suddenly become clear he asked, "What?"

"I'll tell Mr Schue that I'm dating one of the couples. Artie and Tina, or Matt and Santana. Or I guess since Santana's not really monogamous and it won't have as much impact, maybe Matt and some random Cheerio? And I'll ask him if he believes certain passages of The Ethical Slut would work in our situation, and read them out loud. Obviously he won't at first, but he'll have to think about why he doesn't. Hopefully he'll realise that his arguments are baseless."

Matt shook his head. "Man, sometimes I forget you're in debate club and on the Brainiacs."

"What the shit is a Brainiac?"

Brittany rested her head on Santana's shoulder. "You know. One of them is a genius, the other is insane."

"Brainiacs, not Animaniacs. Me and Artie and Liz Schneider are all on the team. We've talked about it like ten times, how do you keep forgetting?"

Finn tilted his head. "Wouldn't you feel bad lying for us? It's, like, as bad as my I'm not in love with two people thing?"

Mike shrugged eloquently. "There's what, a month and a half of school left? If Tina and Artie don't care that I'm pretending to date them, then I don't care about not actually dating for that long. I'll be busy choreographing us for Nationals anyway, as soon as we win Regionals. We'll 'break up' over the summer."

Tina shrugged and dropped her hand on Artie's shoulder. "I don't mind if you don't."

"I've always felt that points are best made with examples. Hence my trying to find films. No kissing on the mouth, Chang."

Puck had no words for several long moments. He shook his head. "You guys would do that for us?"
"Glee's family, dumbass." Santana snapped.

"Except when it's not," Matt added. "Because otherwise we're highly incestuous."

Rachel raised her hand. "Will I get laughed at if I call for a group hug?"

"You heard the girl! Group hug!"

Thirty seconds later Puck had someone's hair in his mouth, and he was about eighty percent sure the hand on his butt wasn't Kurt's or Finn's. But it didn't matter, because he had love, and family, and friends-like-family, and music, and what else was there to be concerned about, as long as he held on and didn't let go?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMytwypjTZY

Digging a hole
And the walls are caving in behind me
Air's getting thin
But I'm trying, I'm breathing in
Come find me

It hasn't felt like this before
It hasn't felt like home
Before you

And I know it's easy to say
But it's harder to feel this way
And I miss you more than I should
But I thought I could, can't get my mind off of you

I know you're scared that soon I'll be over it
That's part of it all
Part of the beauty of falling in love with you
Is the fear you won't fall

It hasn't felt like this before
It hasn't felt like home
Before you

And I hate the phone
But I wish you'd call
I thought being alone
Was better than, was better than

And I know it's easy to say
But it's harder to feel this way
And I miss you more than I should
But I thought I could, can't get my mind off of you
- Joshua Radin, "The Fear You Won't Fall"
As much as we love the Furt speech, it didn't fit in this dynamic for a number of reasons. Other dialogue from 2.08 has also been altered to suit our needs. Thanks to everyone for reading. This has been so much fun. Follow/subscribe to this story to read more one-shots in this 'verse in the future!

-gala and amy

Chapter Notes

Finn was startled when he looked up from the crap lining the bottom of his locker and saw the group of people walking towards him. Mom and Burt each had an arm linked with Kurt, and Burt's other hand was on Puck's shoulder.

"Uh? What's going on?"

"They bombarded me and forced me to bring them to Puck and you. I just found him first."

Mom and Burt bickered for a second over who was going to tell them something. The longer they went on, the more delighted Kurt looked. Clearly, he knew what was happening. Finn glanced at Puck, who shrugged minutely, not enough to redraw Burt's attention. So whatever this was, he wasn't the clueless one. Kurt was just being ultra-perceptive.

The bickering ended with Burt agreeing to tell. They let go of Kurt and Puck, who joined him as Mom and Burt hugged. Burt started telling them about sneaking into the classroom where they'd first met and Kurt's eyes got even more moony, kinda like how he got after their best sex, and then Mom shrieked, "He proposed! He proposed!"

"You just stole the punchline!"

They started to make out in the middle of the hallway. Finn wanted to bury his head in Puck's shoulder. He suddenly understood all the times when Burt had shouted *music a little louder please* when they were doing stuff in the basement.

"This just happened?" Finn asked weakly.

"We wanted you three to be the first to know, after those kids in that room. Come on, family hug."

Kind of against his will, Finn got pulled into a hug. He wasn't sure he was ready to be thrilled about this. If Kurt was going to be his brother, what did that mean for what they had? Brothers weren't supposed to kiss, never mind have sex, never mind submit. Brothers had never been on his post-high school plan.

And of course Kurt was excited, and wanted to arrange everything. He was kind of the stereotypical gay guy, which involved knowing what russet and cognac were, and how they looked
together. And of course Puck was taking it calmly, because he knew how to handle, like, everything ever.

"Finn, you haven't said anything."

"I guess I'm just kinda stunned."

She gave him a reproachful, wistful glance. "Come on, honey. Be happy for me."

"I am, Mom." It was the truth, even, as long as he could separate how he felt for her with how he felt for himself, and for his boyfriends. It was great for her.

"Okay, you guys are totally in charge of booking the band," Burt was saying, but Finn was having a hard time paying attention. He could feel the pressure in his chest, and wondered if it would be a bad idea to ask what it felt like to have a heart attack.

Puck noticed. He drew Finn away from the three of them discussing colors and bridesmaids' dresses, and put a little subtle pressure on his shoulder, right by his neck. "What's going on?"

"Kurt's going to be my brother," he muttered. "Like, incestuous for real, or at least legal real. I don't think I can deal with this."

"Of course you can." Puck stared at him until he took a deep breath and nodded. "Who the fuck cares what other people think about this?"

"Because..." Finn wasn't sure how he could explain the difference between their existing relationship and one in which he and Kurt would be seen as especially deviant for doing sexy things together. He gave it a shot. "I don't want things to get any worse for Kurt. He's already getting so much shit from Karofsky."

Puck didn't look like he disagreed, but he leaned in to knock their foreheads together briefly. "You're forgetting about the third badass in the relationship here. I'm not going to let anything happen."

"Thank you both for attending the Kurt Hummel Wedding Dance seminar," Kurt announced, opening his arms.

His dad grinned. "What do you mean, both? Puck's sitting right there, too. And how come he gets a chair and me and Finn get stools?"

"Because he actually has dancing skills, while the two of you are sorely lacking."

"I'm here to be Simon Cowell," Puck explained from his seat on the Glee risers.

"Dad, you're going to have to pull off the first dance with Carole, and if Uncle Andy's fortieth birthday party was any indication you're going to need some work."

"What are you talking about? My moves were great; it was the damn sangria-"

Kurt cut the weak explanation off, pulling his dad to his feet as he did so. "Okay, dance to the beat, not to the words." He adjusted his father's hand placement and continued. "Have you guys chosen a wedding song?"

"Yes, we're thinking Stairway or some Bublé."
"Great, so basically one-two-three-four." He nodded to Brad. "Gentleman leads with the left, the opposite of me... okay, one-two-three-four..."

"Look at me, I'm dancing!"

Kurt had to laugh. It was just so adorable, his dad being so pleased that he shouted like a four year old. "Yeah, okay. Now come over here and dance by yourself, practice-"

"Come on, Finn," said Burt, "no chickening out, I did it, you gotta do it too."

Finn got off the stool and, with only a moment's nervous hesitation, took Kurt's hand and his waist. They'd been dancing for a minute when Finn's posture stiffened and he ground to a halt.

"Puck Cowell says freezing mid-show is deplorable!"

"Shit," Finn muttered. Kurt pulled back a little to figure out what the problem was and saw Karofsky staring at them from the doorway. Shit was right. If Puck saw him, this would only end hideously.

Kurt could identify the instant Puck saw him. The room's tension shot up about a thousand increments before Puck took a deep breath and called out with the most dominant control Kurt had ever seen him employ, "Private lesson, buddy. Go away, I'm warning you."

For a moment, Kurt thought Karofsky would be smart enough to actually listen. Then he flapped his wrist in the classic derogatory gesture for gay people. Kurt's eyes closed as Finn repeated, "Shit." Then Puck was shoving past both of them, running into the hallway. He and Finn had no choice but to follow, Burt one step behind them.

By the time they got out there, Puck was shoving him against the bulletin board, his arm against Karofsky's throat. "How many times do I have to tell you to fuck off?"

Kurt thought that his dad would pull Puck off Karofsky as soon as he joined them, but he didn't. Evidently he trusted Puck's judgement in who needed pushing around. Actually, no one else in the ever-growing crowd was doing anything; intervening apparently went against William McKinley standards.

"You don't scare me, Puckerman," Karofsky said, the last few words coming out like a wheeze as Puck increased the pressure. He'd heard that sound before, the one time Finn convinced Puck to try breathplay. That had been scary, but incredibly hot. This was just a nightmare.

"What the hell is going on?" his dad asked. His tone was almost conversational, as though he was sure the situation was well in hand, and he just wanted the context.

Kurt hesitated, long enough that Finn said, "Tell him, or I will."

He took a deep breath. "His name's Dave Karofsky, and he's been harassing me."

Now his dad's tone got dangerous. "Harassing you how?"

"Just... shoving me, calling me names." He couldn't talk about the rest, not in a crowded hallway. "Puck's not one for talking out a conflict."

"Puckerman's too busy with dick in his mouth to talk." Karofsky retorted.

Finn snapped, "Don't you think this is a good time to shut the fuck up?"
But his dad was shaking his head. "That's not it. There's more; there's something else you're not telling me."

Kurt couldn't lie. His dad would know. But he could obfuscate the truth that would out Karofsky against his will with a different portion of truth. "He threatened to kill me."

"You've got to be kidding me," Finn breathed.

"Is that true, Dave?" Puck asked. His eyes were daggers. "It'd be hard to turn your big gay crush into two-sided love if he's dead."

"Puck!" Kurt should have expected he would go this route. It was too late now. With the way the students clustered around them were murmuring, there was nothing that could be said to put this animal back into the barn. He should have guessed that there was only so far Puck could be pushed before he retaliated.

"No, Kurt. We did it your way for a month. He's been leering and whatever for a month. He can't take a hint? Fine, neither can Ben Israel or Susie Pepper. We deal with it. He's getting aggressive? Fine, we know how to throw a punch. We deal with it. He's convincing the football team to not defend us? Fine, we know how to take a hit. We deal with it. But he wants you dead, because he's that much of a bitch about being found out? Well, now everyone knows." Puck turned back to Karofsky and got nose to nose. "Time for you to fucking deal with it."

Finn scrubbed his face with the heels of his hands. "Puck, let go of him."

Kurt would have sworn Puck wouldn't move an inch, that they'd be stuck in this holding pattern forever. But Puck actually backed off, proving yet again that while there was a triad dynamic, each pair had their own as well, and Finn was very good at bro-wrangling. The minute he did, Karofsky shoved Puck hard enough to land him on his ass and took off down the hall.

His dad looked from the retreating figure, to Puck on the floor, to the masses already beginning to return to their routines, and finally back to Kurt. "So what happens now? Is Figgins going to call his mom? Because it would be a good idea for Carole and I to show up for that."

Puck snorted. "The authorities aren't going to find out shit."

"It's true," Finn added. "That's a big part of the problem. Nothing ever gets reported."

"Coach Sylvester is the principal right now anyway, and I don't think she'd like finding out about what the bastard wants to do with her Porcelain."

Kurt wheeled on him. "Speaking of 'the bastard', Puck - what you did to David was not okay!"

He sighed. "I'm sorry you're upset."

"That's the worst apology ever."

"Well, I'm not sorry for doing it. I haven't changed my mind in the less than two minutes since I said what I said."

Kurt glared at him. "You do realise that the fact that you did it to avenge me doesn't change the fact that you've potentially ruined his life?"

"If he honestly believes being gay is going to ruin his life," Puck retorted, "he's got a fuckload more problems than me letting the secret out!"
Kurt ground his teeth. He'd made a promise. Coerced or not, with a bully or not, it was still his promise that Puck had forced him to break. "I'm very angry with you." He turned to include his dad in the purview of his glare. "Both of you, because I can see on your faces that you don't even get why that little scene would be such a huge problem. I'm going to channel my angst into other details for the wedding. Puck, teach Finn how to dance, correct my dad if he needs it."

His drive to the vintage clothing store was oppressively quiet. It wasn't really, he had the radio on, and there were horns and other traffic noises. The problem was Kurt had gotten used to driving with at least one other person in his Nav. Without any conversation the car felt lonely.

Joshua was behind the counter, of course. Kurt knew his schedule as intimately as he knew Finn and Puck's football schedule.

"How are the dresses coming?"

"They're not ready," Joshua said absently, adding into the phone tucked against his ear, "Just a moment." He eyed Kurt. 'You said I had until Friday. I would have called if I'd finished early, and you are not my only obligation. So if you're here to 'Tim Gunn me into a rush job, it's not going to work. I'll be bringing them to your house Friday evening for the last check fittings, and not a minute before that."

Kurt sighed. "I'm going to be honest and admit that I've had a very long day, and checking on the status gives me an excuse for some intense retail therapy."

"Well, that is a completely different scenario, darling boy. Go on, go through all the shoes."

"The shoes?" Kurt hardly ever bought secondhand shoes. They couldn't be washed the way clothing could, and even lining a pair with Scholls didn't do enough to make them feel clean.

"From what I can tell, Lady Gaga's hoarder cousin got into an accident and had their feet amputated."

Kurt recoiled a bit. "What?"

"Seriously, go to the shoe section. When I got here today, something like sixty pairs had been dropped off. If you don't leave with at least three pairs, I'll be heartbroken."

"Four, possibly. That way I'll have a disposable pair if, or when, I decide to actually put my foot up my boyfriend's-"

"Ah."

Joshua's expression softened. "That kind of long day. Why don't you let me pour you a cup of tea, and you can tell me all about it."

It had been three miserable days since what Finn was calling Dance-gate. It maybe wasn't the most accurate title, but every disastrous event with a ton of fallout was a -gate of some kind, and Closet-gate had been taken last year when the Changs had found out about Mike 'dating' Artie and Tina, and Dave-gate was last month when Puck had found Kurt shaking after an unwanted kiss. Outing Karofsky had happened because of dancing, so Dance-gate made a sort of sense. He wasn't going to use the term out loud anyway, so it didn't really matter.

Finn had known Kurt was upset when he didn't want to finish his and Burt's dance lesson. The dancing had been Kurt's idea in the first place. He'd gone so far as measuring the width and length of the aisle so Mike would have an accurate mental image once Kurt outsourced that part of the wedding to him. Finn had watched his boyfriend flounce off, then got to experience the fantastic
awkwardness of Puck teaching him how to slow dance in front of Burt. It hadn't felt gentlemanly at all, only possessive, which had made it hot, which had made it super incredibly awkward.

But after they were done, Puck hadn't followed him and Burt home. Finn didn't think it was a good idea for them to be fooling around in their bedroom when Kurt arrived with what was sure to be an armload of packages. Puck had suggested it might be best for him to stay away, giving Kurt time to calm down.

It had seemed like a crap theory to Finn three days ago, and time had only confirmed his opinion. Life sucked when Kurt and Puck were mad at each other. The day started with suck because, without Puck to make delicious but heart-healthy breakfasts, they were back to shredded wheat and other things that tasted like dust and cardboard had a baby who then crapped in Finn's mouth. The day continued with suck because, instead of walking around with the both of them between classes, filthy and sarcastic and hilarious in turns, Kurt walked with Tina and Puck walked with Brittany, which somehow left him with Rachel out of all possible acquaintances. The evening started with suck when Puck wasn't there to help Kurt with math as Kurt helped Finn with Spanish (because Kurt could do French and Spanish and Italian, something about romance languages being easy, and Finn didn't even know what that meant) as Finn helped Puck with civics. The evening ended with suck because, after being awake for approximately sixteen hours, he hadn't had a single orgasm. Life. Freakin. Sucked.

The worst of it was how everyone had to take sides. Glee was practically being torn in half between those on Kurt's and those on Puck's. Santana sided with Kurt, which seemed weird until Finn remembered the conversations they'd had last year. Even as she'd cruelly nagged him to come out, she'd never actually said anything to anyone. Mercedes, on the other hand, was on Puck's side; she thought the revenge had been just. It was easy to forget that she had a temper.

And Finn was caught between them. It was impossible to say that Puck had made the wrong decision. Karofsky's harassment of their boyfriend had intensified over the past month, and if the reason for it was that Kurt was the only safe place to land a hidden crush, well, airing it made sense. But Finn shared a room with Kurt, and in the last seventy-two hours he'd heard at least five rants about the ethics of outing someone. He'd made some good points, if he thought about it in a broader sense, but Finn couldn't be okay with Karofsky using a locker shove as an excuse to grope Kurt.

What it came down to was Kurt wouldn't accept anything less than remorse, and Puck would never apologise for what he'd done. It was an impossible situation - one that Finn had to figure out how to fix. There was no way he was going to let his mom's wedding be tainted by their son, other son, and almost-son not getting along.

"What do I do?" Finn groaned. It wasn't very loud. The various clangs of the lockers and equipment in the weight room echoed far more than he did.

Artie shrugged before doing another rep. "I dunno. Talk to one of the girls? They're better at advice."

"I talked to Rachel. She's the only one not nagging at me to pick a side."

"That's because she lives with the eternal hope you'll go back to vag," Artie said bluntly. "Like it's not abundantly obvious you've chosen cock for life."

Finn blushed. "Yeah, well." He trailed off. They'd talked about allowing one-night stands for girls, if he or Puck decided they ever really needed another experience with boobs, but it hadn't come up yet. Might not ever, if he couldn't get their relationship back in order.
"So what did Rachel suggest?" Sam asked, trading the 30-lb dumbbell for a 25.

"That Puck should express his love through song, and if it was moving enough Kurt would forget about all the 'petty issues'."

Sam shook his head. "There's no way that's gonna work. Quinn didn't fall for that, and they're both just as committed to their opinions."

Finn wanted to say yes, but Kurt's opinions aren't cruel and occasionally insane, but he stopped himself. Sam was happy dating her, and he hadn't taken on her opinions, so whatever, not his business.

"Yeah, but you weren't here last year," Artie said. "Puck outed himself and his relationship with Kurt through song. It was just the two of them then. Maybe the nostalgia factor would help."

"What you really need is to clone Puck. If you could, you could train fake-Puck to apologise to Kurt without real-Puck ever knowing you put words in his mouth."

Finn usually liked how enthusiastic Sam was about sci-fi stuff. Right now, though, it was kind of pissing him off. He wanted advice, and how was that relevant at all? What was next, Sam suggesting he figure out how to channel his spirit into Puck and possess him for as long as it took to track down Kurt?

Cameron sauntered up, the towel around his neck not doing much to soak up the sweat that had turned his grey shirt charcoal. "No, Hudson. What you need to do is get Puck and Dave to fight it out. Settle it like men. Puck won't end up being the bitch crying I'm sorry, no more than he already is 'cause of you two, and Dave'll stop having a whiny hissy fit. Problem solved."

Finn waited until he'd walked off to ask in an undertone, "What the hell was that?"

Artie dropped the dumbbells on his lap so he could steeple his fingers. "I don't know if you realise this, and I'm not saying that it's the main reason he's not apologising, but Puck has a lot of power right now. Whether he meant to or not, he dethroned Karofsky. Most of the jocks are joiners. It's a pack mentality. They want to figure out where to ally their loyalties."

Sam added, "Azimio's trying to take over, but he's best in a duo. His one-liners need a buddy to bounce off."

"So Cameron's obviously on Karofsky's side, trying to weaken Puck by getting him beat up. But he won't do it firsthand, because if Puck wins..."

Finn covered his face with his hands. "How did I not notice this?"

Sam snorted. "Your boyfriend and your other boyfriend are fighting. If Quinn and, I dunno, Meaghan were fighting I wouldn't notice anything else around me. Besides maybe the apocalypse."

"You sly dog. I knew you liked Meaghan!" Artie chortled. "Trying to tell me you don't every time I ask."

"If Quinn ever broke up with me then, yeah, I'd ask her out. But Quinn needs prom queen like she needs air, so she's not going to."

As Artie ridiculously suggested polygamy, like Quinn of all people would consider it, Finn sort of tuned them out. Cameron's idea wasn't that bad, for all that he was doing it from a nasty angle.
Finn stood up. "Guys, I gotta go."

Artie grinned at him. "Inspiration, huh? Well, go to it."

But Finn had already left. He went straight to Karofsky's house. It wasn't where Finn expected him to normally be. Usually he'd be in the weight room with the rest of the guys, but that obviously wasn't where he was today. Barring that, the football team had a permanent table at Fat Jack's where they got practice hitting on waitresses and being skeevy. But if Artie and Sam were right, and Dance-gate had had more fallout than just Kurt and Puck being the irresistible force and the immovable object, then chances were Karofsky wasn't hanging with his buddies.

He almost gave up when the front door was locked, and no one answered the bell. But he could see Karofsky's truck in the driveway, and there was a deck around the back. Finn trudged through the leaves to find him sitting by himself on the deck reading a book. He was clearly startled to see Finn, but he covered it with a glare. "What the fuck do you want?"

Finn figured blunt was the only way this was going to work. "Do you wanna fuck up Puck?"

Karofsky sneered. "Fuck you, Hudson. I might be a fag, but at least I'm not a freak that chases every gay guy I know. I liked Kurt; that's it."

Finn didn't bother to ask if he could sit down. He dragged over a chair to face Karofsky. "Okay, first of all, I said 'fuck up', not fuck. Second of all, being poly doesn't make me a freak, not that I give a crap what you think about it. Third, saying fag is for ignorant straight people, or proud gay men that are reclaiming. Since you're not either, don't."

With each point, Karofsky deflated a little more. He set down his book. "What the fuck is there to be proud of?"

Finn sighed. He could only hope he hadn't been this awful last year. Even before he did the Gaga apology dress, there was no way he'd been like this. But Karofsky apparently hadn't meant it as a rhetorical question.

"No, seriously, tell me what there's to be proud about. Taking it up the ass? Being banned from church? Having to delete my Facebook account?"

"I'm not here to be your therapist," Finn said, feeling tired. "You've bullied my friends for over a year, you said to the left guard and the centre 'wouldn't it be a shame if the queer got a C-4 injury,' and you apparently threatened to kill my boyfriend. Look up the It Gets Better project or something, because it does and there's no reason to hate yourself, but don't ask me and Puck and Kurt to be your allies."

Karofsky watched him warily. "So if you hate me, why are you telling me to fuck up your slightly-less prancy boyfriend?"

"Because he outed you and that's shitty, and Kurt will not shut up about how shitty it is. If you beat Puck up you'll feel better, and then you guys can be less overtly hostile with each other, and I can convince Kurt it's as good as an apology and he'll stop -"

Now he was staring at Finn in disbelief. "So basically you want me to fix your relationship? Your freaky, so-ultra-gay-it-takes-three-gays-to-have-one relationship?"

Finn refrained from punching Karofsky in the face, because that wouldn't accomplish anything. It might make him feel better temporarily, but then it would leave him once again without a solution. "Just focus on the part where you get to beat up Puck."
Karofsky threw his hands into the air. "Fine. Sure. I agree. I'll meet him in the parking lot after school tomorrow."

Finn wasn't going to stick around any longer than it took to get Karofsky to agree. His next stop was the Puckerman house.

Sarah intercepted Finn before he could get to Puck's room. "Are you fighting? Because he's sad and mad and I don't think you should be here if you're fighting. I won't let you make him sadder and madder."

"I'm not fighting. He and Kurt are fighting, I'm trying to make it better. I think I have it figured out, but I have to talk to him."

She made her little hands into fists. "Okay. But if he's crying after you're done I'm going to do something awful to you. And I won't even tell you what it is, so you just have to worry about it until it's done."

Finn would laugh, if it wasn't for the fierce look on her face. Sarah Puckerman was definitely Puck's sister.

"Hey, what's up?" Puck asked, looking hopeful as Finn walked in and closed the door behind him. "I thought you weren't picking sides?"

"I'm not. I'm like, the bridge between two sides. Or the fold in the middle of the page that makes the two side images come together, like in Mad magazine."

Even as Puck rolled his eyes, he already had his hands on Finn's rib cage, touching him lightly. "You're a dork."

The contact was such a relief, Finn felt lightheaded, but he tried not to let Puck's touch derail him. "I've got like half the problem figured out already. You just gotta listen."

Puck's hands had moved to his lower back and were definitely aiming for his ass. "So Kurt's ready to agree that sometimes you have to fight back, and you wanna make sure I'm not gonna get gloaty. I won't."

Finn shook his head. "He's not gonna. Puck, he's never gonna. He's not that kind of guy. Come on."

"So he's not the kinda guy that would fight for his boyfriends with whatever ammunition he happens to have?" Puck's hands clenched on his hips. "That's just great, Finn. What the hell am I supposed to do with that? Is that supposed to make me feel better?"

"That's not fair. He's got different morals than we do. You know he does. We're the guys that pick up the live grenade and throw it back to the enemy's side. He's the guy that dives on top of it."

Puck dropped his hands to his own sides, and he sighed, taking a few steps back. "Dating a martyr fucking sucks."

"The other option is not dating him." Finn put out one hand. "So if you're ready to listen to me now? And not be an interrupting asshole for a few minutes?"

Reluctantly, Puck took it. "What's your idea? Because I am not-"

"You don't have to apologise. Even if you tried, it would be useless because everyone would be able to tell you didn't mean it. That's not gonna help."
He nodded. "Okay, then what?"

Finn took a few seconds to appreciate the way Puck was actually listening to his ideas before going on. "Karofsky wants to brawl. You can get a few punches in, but Karofsky will fuck off for good if he gets to hammer on you for a few minutes. And then he'll be cool, he promised. And if he's fine with you, then Kurt can't be mad at you on his behalf, he'll see how stupid that is."

Puck dropped his hand again and stared at him, eyebrows raised. "You want me to let Karofsky beat me up like I'm some bitch?"

Finn crossed his arms. "You'd rather beg for forgiveness?"

"Fuck. Shit. Fucking shitty goddamn shit." He paced to the other side of the room, then returned, his face resolute. "When?"

Finn sent a silent prayer up to the God he wasn't sure about. Thank fuck for Puck agreeing. He didn't know what he would have done if he hadn't.

Kurt answered the phone after the first ring. He'd always imagined himself as the high maintenance type, enjoying a devastated lover calling back time and time again, before finally showing up with roses, begging on his knees. Actually, it was still possible he was that type. What was certain was that Puck wasn't the grovelling type. He'd just ignored Kurt completely for four days, but pleasantly, like there wasn't a problem. If Puck was finally getting in touch, Kurt wanted to hear it.

But he had principles, damn it! So after the perfunctory hello, he continued loftily, "Unless you're genuinely sorry about outing someone without their consent, I don't want to hear it."

"Because his bullying was super consensual?"

"Two wrongs don't make a right -"

"No, but three lefts do."

That didn't even make sense. Kurt frowned at the comment, like Puck was in the room to see him. "I'll see you tomorrow. More well structured silence, I'm assuming. You do realise that I'm not that much of a sub that being denied you will break me down, right?"

It was only partially a lie. There was a shakiness inside him that he was smart enough to recognise for what it was. Kurt wanted - needed - to be tied up, to be cuffed, to be held down. Whatever method Finn or Puck wanted, he could think of a dozen, and they were just as creative as he was. He just didn't want it enough to compromise his morals. So here he was, living without it, at a time when he needed it most.

Puck's voice was smoky. "I was hoping to see you tonight, actually."

Kurt tucked his phone between his shoulder and angled his head so he could cross his arms tightly. If there was no other way to create that pressure, maybe he'd have to go back to the closet rod. "Do you really expect me to -"

"I need someone to show me how to put on concealer, and everyone knows you're the best at McKinley at looking perfect."

Despite himself, Kurt was intrigued. "For what?"
"Davey and I have reached an understanding."

Whatever that meant, Kurt was sure he wasn't going to like it. "Puck..."

"It's not what I'm sure you're thinking. He got to kick the shit out of me, humiliate me in front of as many people as I did to him. Everyone at McKinley will know, the same way everyone knows about him. He's happy; I'm happy."

Kurt rubbed his face. He would have shaken Puck, had he been in the room. How was a fistfight showing remorse? "That wasn't what I intended at all!" he snapped.

"Trust me when I say he wanted retribution more than an apology. We're cool now. Text him if you don't believe me. So, are we cool?"

Kurt was finding this hard to process. "So, what, you and David are friends now?"

Puck snorted. "Fuck, no. We've never been friends. Not this year when he was plotting on how to take you away from us, not last year when he was throwing slushies at my fellow Gleeks every ten minutes. Not even freshman year, when I was exactly like him. But we'll be civil from now on. Unless he starts that threatening bullshit up again, then all bets are off. So, again. We cool?"

"If you promise to never out someone again, then... yes." Maybe he should be putting up a bit more of a fight, but he was stressed from planning everything with only Mike and Joshua and Carole's friend Barbara as sounding boards, and he wanted to be hit and held down and comforted. He wanted his routines back, everything he did with Finn and Puck from dawn til dusk. Kurt missed his boyfriends. If Puck wasn't all that sorry for what he'd done, he was still sorry enough to let Karofsky get the better of him, in public, in front of everyone that would think the loss was a good enough reason to throw slushies at him. It was penance enough, as long as Puck promised.

"I'll remove that weapon from my arsenal," Puck said.

"You can come over tonight," Kurt said immediately.

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Any fear Puck had had about accidentally ruining Burt and Carole's wedding dissipated as he and the other members of Glee danced down the aisle to their own rendition of Marry You with a mastery rivaling their Sectionals performances. Everyone else was taking this as seriously as he was. Everyone else wanted this to be perfect for Kurt's dad and Finn's mom, even those who'd barely met them. Everyone wanted it because it was so important to Kurt, and Finn, and himself, and as they split into two groups to stand on either side of the platform, Puck couldn't help but feel it thrumming in his chest, alongside the beat of his heart: **family family family.**

They all looked great, not a hair out of place, excellently choreographed, but they weren't anything compared to Burt's wacky dancing, to Carole's huge smile. Puck wanted to dart forward and pull them into a hug as they stepped up the platform, but that would be a perfect example of accidentally ruining things, so he just stood where he'd been assigned, in between Mercedes and Santana for a boy-girl-boy pattern.

Burt's vows started off sadly. It didn't surprise Puck at all when Kurt's hand reached around Merce's back to grab his. It was more of a surprise that Finn didn't reach across the aisle to grab Kurt's other. But of course Finn didn't want to accidentally ruin anything either, and standing half in front of the nearly married couple would fall into that category.

Puck swallowed hard at Burt's repeating *you're everything*. And then it was Carole's turn.
"I'm lucky. Most women when they get married, they get one man. I get two. One of you saved me from my wardrobe, the other one just saved me. Kurt, you are an amazing person. I'm not only getting a son, I'm getting a friend. Finn, I know you were resistant at first, but I am so proud of you. I've watched you grow into a man. But I think I'm most proud of what you've created with the men you love."

And wasn't that a kick right in the heart. Puck squeezed Kurt's hand, and let his eyes scream I love you at Finn.

"We are four people becoming a family. We are five people deeply in love. And I am so happy about that."

Puck wasn't going to tear up. This wasn't about him, and his love for Finn and Kurt. This was for Carole and Burt, and if he wasn't crying for them, he wouldn't cry at all.

Except then they wanted each other so much they rushed the 'I do's,' both of them, and they were kissing and Finn was grinning and Kurt was bright pink with emotion and Puck just couldn't fucking help it. He let the tears fall down his face and applauded hard enough to make his palms sore as the rest of the chapel clapped along.

Puck had expected Kurt to arrange a limo for his dad and Finn's mom, so it was a little surprising to climb into Mercedes' mom's van with half the Glee club as Mike drove Carole and Burt in Kurt's Navigator as a silent chauffeur, but it did make sense. It was a luxury car as much as a Hummer or a Lincoln was, and it wasn't three hundred bucks an hour like a limo was. The heart attack and coma had taken a lot of money out of the Hummel bank account, and Kurt had done a great job creating opulence on a budget.

Case in point: the look of the reception venue. Puck knew for a fact that the tablecloths were sewn from a bolt of upholstery fabric because that was cheaper than renting linens for a day. The suited band setting up on the stage were just Glee's normal backup, bribed with promises to listen to what they wanted to play for assignments, rather than what Glee wanted to sign. The meal was being catered by culinary school students who were willing to work for beans and a reference on a resume. And yet, everything was perfect, and beautiful.

Puck herded them to the left side of the only rectangular table in the venue. Puck was pretty sure that that wasn't how it was supposed to be, that the head table was for the couple and their children and parents, and everyone else got seated elsewhere. Kurt was insistent though, even pulling out a chair and putting pressure on his shoulder. The rest of the guests began to file in, filling up tables according to names written on silk leaves left at each seat. Puck wondered if Kurt would later get shit from Great-Grandpa Whoever for seating relatives further away as Glee got the two circular tables nearest the head table. Puck almost hoped he did; it would be worth it to see Santana smack the hypothetical liver spotted old man down. Kurt knew who deserved the honour.

Carole and Burt didn't come to sit down until they finished their first dance. Puck was pretty proud of himself, making sure that Burt knew how to do that while Kurt was busy with his Karofsky-based temper tantrum. Mr Schuester wasn't stepping down though, obviously not done. For a second Puck didn't give it a second thought. For the most part Glee had decided to work the reception on a on the fly basis. Six hours was too much to schedule to the minute. They'd take turns, do duets and groups when they could convince others to join them, get the band to do some instrumentals, do some karaoke and get the friends and family involved. If Mr Schue wanted to do ten songs in a row, he could, as long as he didn't fight for the mic when Sam wanted a turn.

"And now, I'd like to introduce one of the best men, Finn Hudson."
Puck frowned with confusion. Finn hadn't said anything about this to him, and Puck knew the speeches he, Kurt, and Finn had written weren't supposed to be said for another hour, after the meal had been eaten. Then he saw Finn's face and had to smile encouragingly. He looked like he was on the verge of freaking out, and since Puck couldn't smack him a few times on the ass, a smile was the best he could do.

One of the culinary students met Finn with a glass of champagne in the middle of the dance floor. Finn took it and clutched it like it was a lifeline.

"Hi. Uh. Best man. Right. Well, I want to propose a toast to my mom, who is so awesome. I mean, somehow, even without one in the house, you taught me what it means to be a man."

Everyone took a sip of the glass that had been left beside their name-leaf. Puck wrinkled his nose. Champagne was not his alcohol of choice.

Finn wasn't done. "As some of you know, my mom hasn't been the only one to show me how to be a better man. Maybe it's more like Mom tells me, but Puck and Kurt force me to follow through. In Glee club, whenever one of us got together we got a nickname. Rachel and I were Finnchel, Sam and Quinn are Quam. I'm part of Furtuck. When my mom and Burt told me they were going to get married I was so scared of what that might mean for us. I probably would have been a big jerk about it, because I'm like that sometimes. But Kurt and Puck made me see that other people's love couldn't hurt mine."

Puck didn't care how many acquaintances of Burt and Carole were frowning, because Kurt was wrinkling his suit by leaning against him, and that was Carole's hand patting his thigh. Besides, it had to work the other way, didn't it? Puck refused to let other people's hate hurt his love.

"This night is for my mom, and for Burt. They deserve it. But just for five minutes, I want to thank Puck and Kurt. I hope one day we can be the ones trading vows. Until then, this says a lot, I think."

The band started up and Puck felt Kurt stiffen beside him. It was only a few seconds before Finn began to sing, and Puck recognised the lyrics the way he hadn't the music. Of course Finn would sing Gaga.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWDmGrfDYzc

"If I fell in love with you
would you understand me dear
love is weird
I colored you a valentine
struggled just to stay inside the lines
I lose my mind

I really can't believe
I lost myself again
looking for something crazy
beautiful nothing
now I'm talking in circles again
let me know baby are you hungry
for wonderful, cause I am
wonderful cause I am."

Finn stepped forward. He reached over the table and took Kurt's face in his hand.
"I wrote a song about your eyes
ate a slice of cherry pie
I cried all night."

Finn took Puck's hand with his free hand, lacing them together.

"On a bench inside the park
I'll kiss you slowly in the dark
I'll never stop."

Puck's hand was tugged as Kurt's face was stroked, and they both followed Finn onto the dance floor as he kept singing. By the end of the repetition of the chorus, all of Glee were on the floor with them. By the third verse they were singing along, Quinn's voice sweet, Mercedes' powerful, Artie's cool.

"Baby take me for a ride
maybe get a little high
in a place we've never been
time is nothing but a line
we'd leave everything behind
it'd be so wonderful
looking for something crazy
beautiful nothing
now I'm talking in circles again
let me know baby are you hungry
for wonderful cause I am
wonderful cause I am."

Puck was impressed at the way they split up perfectly for the last stanza, half the club repeating the chorus as the other half riffed on the wonderful i am phrase, exactly the way it happened in the song. He wondered if everyone except for he and Kurt had practiced this, or if the natural harmony had just come from months and months of singing together.

"Wonderful I am, I am, I am,
I'm saying it for you.
I am, I am you know how wonderful I am
wonderful I am
wonderful I... am."

After a second or two of silence everyone still in their seats started to applaud. Normally the accolade from an audience was a high like no other, and a distant part of Puck could still appreciate it. But Finn's arms around him and Kurt kissing both their necks meant a lot more.

"And the dance floor is now open!" Mr Schuester called as he moved from his place on the side of the stage back into the forefront. A minute later he was bursting into an uptempo eighties song. Puck didn't recognise it, but it had to be from the eighties, considering the synth keyboard. It didn't matter what it was, just that Mr Schue sounded good singing it, and that they could dance to it, surrounded by friends.

Hours later, Rachel and Quinn were taking their turn to duet on stage. Three ballads in a row gave each subset of them a chance to slow dance. Puck wondered if Rachel was doing that on purpose, because there was no way Quinn was. As the band started the opening notes to their fourth, Kurt complained about sore feet and they retreated off the dance floor. They had their official seats at
the head table, but Tina, Mike, Santana, Brittany and Artie were all at one of the round tables. It was an easy choice.

"Hey, guys," Finn said as the three of them slipped into free seats.

"Good wedding, Kurt," Artie said.

"Whatever. You should all be thanking me, not him," Santana replied.

"That's true," Mike nodded, smile covering his face.

She'd obviously found an older relative to buy drinks for them, they were all a bit gigglier than the situation warranted. Puck could hardly blame them, considering he'd slipped a tenner to Finn's Uncle Roy earlier to get him two Long Islands.

Tina had a bit of a dreamy smirk on her face. "So their honeymoon is sort of your honeymoon too, huh?"

Puck looked at her. "What do you mean?"

"No one's going to be home in the Hudmel house for like a week! All the things you could do in that time... I would skip class, if it was me."

Santana snorted. "You're totally imagining 'all the things they could do,' aren't you? You're exactly like Mike."

"Some people just know what their kinks are," Artie said. He didn't sound bitter, just matter-of-fact, probably thanks to the unknown amount of alcohol in his system. For the billionth time Puck wondered what had gone down between them over summer vacation. He'd asked before, but hadn't gotten an answer. As tipsy as they were now, at least one of them would be willing to tell him, but Puck wouldn't ask in case it caused them to get emotional. Until Carole and Burt were in their bedroom having post-wedding adult time, it was still possible to ruin their wedding.

Mike grinned even more widely. "I've got a hot girlfriend that likes watching porn with me, and I've had six rum and cokes. Life is awesome."

Puck buddy-slapped Mike's arm a few times. "I don't disagree, man."

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About five years later

It was hot for May, but nobody seemed to mind. The shade by the pond provided a comfortable place to relax out of the sun. Sarah, however, appeared to be ready to do a flying cannonball from the lawn into the water.

"You have to have a grownup with you," Ruth called, shading her eyes as they unloaded the coolers from the Navigator.

"Ma," she protested. Burt thought she sounded more and more like a teenager all the time, even though she still had six months before she actually would be one.

"I'm sorry, but there's no lifeguard. You could... I don't know, get sucked down by the undertow or something."

"It's a pond, Ma," said Puck mildly. He was still wearing his tux shirt, but Burt guessed that wouldn't last long, not in this heat.
"I don't care. It's either you wear a life vest or you have an adult with you; your choice."

"Some choice," Sarah muttered, slumping on the picnic bench. Kurt and Finn had repainted it a couple of years ago; it was just about time to do it again. Kurt had made some noise about replacing the old piece of furniture with a fancy teak patio set using some of their wedding gift money, but Burt guessed the guys would be able to talk him out of it. His son wasn't particularly practical, but he usually saw reason, given the opportunity. They would need every dollar of that money; the cost of living in New York City wasn't getting any cheaper.

"I'll go in with you," Burt offered. He wasn't really interested in swimming, but the only Puckerman daughter was his kryptonite, and the way she beamed at him in thanks was pretty much all he needed to make it worth it. Carole gave him a tolerant grin as she passed him the bag containing their swimsuits.

"That's really not necessary, Burt," Ruth said, frowning at her daughter. "Sarah can wait until the rest of the guests arrive."

Burt still wouldn't say he and Ruth were friends, but he thought he understood her well enough to feel comfortable waving off this protestation. "Hey, it's fine. I'll cool me down. I've been sitting in that municipal hall watching my son get married all morning. Is it okay if I go in the house and get changed?"

"Of course." She walked down to the dock, presumably to caution Sarah against putting more than a toe in the water without supervision, while Burt climbed the steps of the deck to the back door. Finn and Puck had done a nice job on the deck. We got some help from Dave, Finn had mentioned. That didn't bother Burt, not like it would have even three years ago. Karofsky had more than made up for his past with his support of the three boys at school their junior year. That first summer had been rough, after Puck had outed him, but he'd gradually recovered his social standing. Dating that boy from Dalton had been a lucky break. Since graduation, Finn had traded in the anger he'd had with Dave for friendship, employing the kind of forgiveness that is often borne from a little time, distance and maturity.

He slid open the glass doors into the family room, glancing around at the freshly painted walls. Burt knew Carole had offered their house as a backup location for the reception, but he'd been relieved when the construction on Ruth and Ryan's house had been completed on time to host it there instead. Their own postage-stamp lawn and yard wouldn't have been nearly as pleasant a reception site as the three acre parcel they'd reclaimed. Mr. Puckerman had abandoned the land along with his two families, but it hadn't taken long at the county courthouse for Puck and Kurt to discover he had no legal claim on the parcel. It hadn't been until his Ma had gotten remarried herself that she agreed to move forward on building their new house.

When he came out of the bathroom in his swimsuit, Kurt was there, hanging up his tuxedo jacket. Burt didn't see a whole lot of difference between this one and the one he'd designed for his junior prom, but Kurt had insisted there were worlds of difference between peak lapel and 2-button notch designs. It all looked fine to Burt, but if it mattered to Kurt, that made it worth the time and expense.

"You're swimming?" Kurt said, raising both eyebrows. Burt shrugged.

"Sarah needed an adult, and I wasn't sure how long it might be before Finn arrived. He was the only one I could imagine wanting to go in with her."

"She's twelve. And this is her house, now. Ruth's going to have to get used to letting her be in the water on her own, especially with the baby coming."
Burt shook his head. "First thing you'll learn about being a parent, Kurt: you don't tell other parents how to do their job. It's hard enough as it is without anybody second-guessing you."

"Does that mean you won't do that to us when we have kids?"

"I swear." Burt thought with satisfaction. *When, not if.*

That had been a hard-won fight among the three of them, with Puck holding on as the neutral party. Finn had insisted he wasn't going to give up having children just because he was in an alternative relationship; Kurt had countered that he wasn't going to be around enough to participate, and that even in New York, it was still unusual for *two* dads to raise a kid, much less *three*. But Finn had stuck to his guns, and even though he had never made an ultimatum, Kurt had eventually realized this wasn't a battle over which he was willing to jeopardize his relationship. Burt suspected Puck had done some finessing behind the scenes, but he knew better than to ask questions about how their relationship worked.

"I'm going to hold you to that, you know." Kurt's smile was far more relaxed than Burt would have expected on the afternoon of his own wedding reception - but then, this was round two, the laid-back Ohio wedding. Round one had taken place in Manhattan earlier that month, with all the pomp and circumstance that Kurt had wished for. He hadn't exactly compromised on the ceremony part here, but Noah had asked if they could have the reception at his Ma's new house, and Kurt had only grumbled a little before agreeing.

He hugged Kurt once again; the total for the entire weekend had probably exceeded the number of guests attending their wedding that morning. With three guys involved, the list wasn't short, and although there was some overlap between their invitation lists, you couldn't exactly pick and choose your family. Surprisingly few of the Puckerman, Hudson or Hummel relatives had said they wouldn't come because of the nature of the boys' relationship.

"I'm so proud of you," he whispered. "You're probably going to get sick of me saying that."

"I think I'll manage," Kurt whispered back.

The water in the pond was still freezing, but Sarah didn't even flinch. Burt lowered himself off the dock a few feet at a time, warding her off every time she came within splashing distance.

"Was that Kurt?" she asked, craning her neck to see up the slope of the lawn.

"He came back early to meet the caterers," Burt said. "I don't think he was going to let anybody deliver the cake without a little support."

Sarah made a face, doing a back somersault, then a front somersault. "Who has *two* wedding cakes?"

"Maybe the number of cakes equals the number of wedding participants minus one?" he suggested.

"Maybe when you've got somebody who eats as much cake as Finn," she countered, and they both snorted with laughter.

They looked up at the shout of greeting, seeing the first guests arrive: Jake and Marley, bearing an enormous wrapped box. Ryder was only a few steps behind them with his dog on a leash. Carole had pointed out the dynamic between Ryder and Puck's younger brother long ago; Burt figured it was only a matter of time before the three of them publicly acknowledged their own triad, but he didn't know Jake well enough yet to ask, himself. He supposed Puck would be there to take care of whatever his half-brother needed.
Burt floated on his back, gazing up at the clouds above. "What do you think: do you guess you'll ever get married?"

"I still haven't got past the idea of marrying a boy," she said, frowning. "And I don't think I like girls the way Noah likes Kurt and Finn."

"You don't have to ever get married, if you don't want to." He lowered his voice to a stage whisper. "No matter what your Ma says."

She giggled. "I think the pressure's off me a little now that she's got Ryan and baby Victor. I get to play with my brother and not have to deal with having my own kids."

"God, you're twelve. I hope you won't be having your own kids for a while."

Burt spotted Puck coming around the side of the house; sure enough, he'd shed his shirt and traded his tux pants for cutoffs. He appeared to be having an intimate conversation with six-month-old Victor, carried snug against his chest, but he paused long enough to greet the next round of arriving reception guests, pointing out the table of refreshments. Kurt was already there, directing traffic, and stopped for a moment to confer with his shirtless husband.

"Are you and Carole gonna have kids together?"

He didn't think she'd notice his hesitation before answering. "Probably not, kiddo," he said. "Radiation treatment does weird things to human eggs. I'm thinking we'll be ready to be grandparents soon enough, anyway."

She nodded placidly. "I overheard Noah and Kurt talking about it at Christmanukkah. He was worried about having kids together for a while, but I think he's over that."

"Yeah." And there was their third at last, smiling widely as he approached from the driveway. Finn still had on his tux shirt, but he'd taken off the tie, and Puck was already reaching to unbutton the rest of his buttons as he kissed him. Their dynamic was as easy as breathing, but Burt still marveled to see it. "I think you're right."

"They totally don't need to worry," Sarah said. "Nobody's going to give them any crap. They've got all of us to back them up."

He didn't reprimand her on her language. It was her brother's second wedding day, and she'd been a trooper through the whole planning process; Burt figured she deserved a break from adults giving her grief. "Whatever they decide to do is up to them," he said. "They've got their eyes wide open."

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