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**A Change of Heart**

by GleekMom, StarGleekBelle

**Summary**

Badboy!Blaine AU: Blaine Anderson and his crew rule the school while Kurt and his friends just try to stay out of the line of fire. That all changes when Kurt and Blaine form an unlikely friendship. Will they break down each others' walls and learn to trust one another, or are old habits too hard to break?

**Notes**

Kurt and Blaine's histories are similar to canon, but their escapes were different. Instead of a refuge at Dalton, they both found themselves, at different times, in a suburb of Cleveland which we've lovingly renamed Shaker Hills. Blaine left his parents to move in with his brother, Dr. Cooper Anderson shortly after the Sadie Hawkins dance. Kurt moved with Burt, Carole and Finn to take over a garage left to Burt by his deceased brother when things with Karofsky went too far. We will leave the rest of their stories to be revealed in time. This story contains characters from all seasons.
Chapter 1

Kurt hurried down the hall and into the boy's bathroom. He knew he shouldn't have said anything. He knew that talking back to the oversized jocks would bite him in the ass. But when it came to Johnson and Miller, he couldn't help it. They got under his skin and drove him crazy to the point of snapping. It wasn't his fault that the two meatheads had the combined IQ of a peanut. What else was he supposed to do when they acted like morons in class? What else was he supposed to do when they disrespected his favorite teacher? Mrs. Sanderson was the sweetest woman he'd ever met, aside from his mother and stepmother. He couldn't just sit there and allow them to disrupt her lesson. He just couldn't.

Kurt rested his hands on the sink and took a deep breath, immediately smelling the disgusting aroma of cigarette smoke. He figured it was someone from Anderson's Crew hiding his nasty habit in one of the stalls. They were the only ones brazen enough to smoke on school property. He didn't say anything though. The last thing he needed was to get on their bad side too. The football team wanting to torture him was enough.

"You know, I'm getting real sick of you disrespecting me, Hummel," Kyle Johnson snarled as he and Lance Miller stormed into the bathroom.

"Looks like we're going to have to teach you another lesson," Lance said, cracking his knuckles.

Kurt swallowed his fear and turned to face the overbearing jocks. "The only thing the two of you could teach me is...well, there's nothing you can teach me since you've both clearly taken one too many footballs to the head."

Kyle grabbed Kurt by the collar and slammed him into the sink. "Do you think anyone gives two shits about you? Do you think anyone cares about what you think or say? They don't, so why don't you just shut the hell up!" he said as he slammed Kurt two more times. Kurt cried out in pain despite his attempts not to. He really needed to learn how to keep his mouth shut.

The bathroom door suddenly flew open and Mr. Peters, the teacher known best for his blatant homophobia, came in. "What's going on here?" he asked, though his concern for Kurt was obviously fake.

"Nothing, Mr. Peters," Lance lied smoothly as Kyle straightened Kurt's jacket. "Kurtie here was feeling a little ill and we were just making sure he was ok."

Mr. Peters eyed Kurt, the disgust evident in his eyes. "Is this true, Mr. Hummel?"

"Y-yes," Kurt lied. "I wasn't feeling well and they were helping me out. That's all."

Mr. Peters gave them a curt nod and gestured to the door. "I suggest all of you get to class." "See you later, Kurtie," Kyle said in a sickeningly sweet voice before exiting the bathroom.

Kurt followed them out but instead of going back to class, he ran to his car. School was almost over for the day anyway. Why bother going back when Kyle and Lance would inevitably be waiting for him afterwards to beat the crap out of him? He sat in his Navigator for a little while as he fought back the tears that wanted to spill. Even in Cleveland's premiere school district, Shaker Hills High School was no better than McKinley. The curriculum was only slightly better, he still only had a few friends, and he was still bullied for being gay. The only kids not bullied for being out were in Anderson's Crew. The three that were gay, Blaine, Santana, and Brittany, were completely open
about it, but they never received any crap for it. Blaine Anderson and his crew were Shaker's resident badasses and no one, not even the jocks, messed with them.

Kurt, however, with his crazy clothing choices, his high-pitched voice, and his snarky attitude, was apparently too much for the students to handle. Since the jocks wouldn't dare say anything to Anderson's Crew, they took their hatred out on Kurt instead. And since Kurt was too much of a smartass to keep his comments to himself, he became the football team's number one target.

"Just one more year," Kurt muttered to himself as he started his car. If he could get through his final year of school then he would be on his way to New York and away from the hatred in his life. The only thing that was currently keeping him afloat was his family and his dreams. The football team could torture him all they wanted. He would never let them win.

By fifth period, Blaine had had enough. Mr. Peters was trying to tell him his essay on the Civil War was narrow-minded even though Blaine knew it was perfect, his lab experiment in chemistry blew up through absolutely no fault of his own, and his gym teacher sitting him out for spiking the ball too hard at Landers was bullshit.

He needed a cigarette.

The damn doors were locked thanks to recent increases in security, which meant that instead of reveling in the peace and quiet under the bleachers in between classes, he needed to sneak away to the cesspool that was the high school boys' room just to take a smoke. He wrinkled his nose as he entered the, thank god, empty restroom and quickly pulled out his lighter and a cigarette, catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror before hiding away in the handicap stall. With his hair slicked with gel, black leather coat, and a butt hanging out of his mouth, he was the spitting image of the 1950's. He pulled out his phone, locked the stall door, and rested his back against the wall. Closing his eyes as he took a long drag, he let it fill his lungs for a minute before blowing it out with a slow sigh. Blaine finally began to relax.

His peace was rudely interrupted when the door opened and the scent of vanilla wafted into the room where it didn't belong. He couldn't help but peek through the crack in the door to see if one of the girls had decided to invade enemy lines, but instead he saw that dweeb Kurt Hummel, his perfectly coiffed hair and alabaster skin reflected in the mirror. The kid rested his hands on the sink, closed his eyes and took a deep breath before the Neanderthals Blaine liked to call Jackass and Moron, known to everyone else as Johnson and Miller, barreled in behind Kurt and immediately assaulted him.

Blaine was certain that the football stars had no idea there was anyone else in the bathroom, though he knew that Hummel would have keen enough senses to realize they weren't alone. The nerd turned courageously to face them, something Blaine would never in his life forget, and then he heard one, two, three hard shoves into the hard porcelain of the sinks. Kurt's breath left him and he cried out in pain when Mr. Peters flung open the bathroom door.

"Principal's office. Now," was the only thing the teacher said. Blaine rolled his eyes and marched out the door. This was the third time in two weeks and he'd been promised suspension if he was
found breaking the rules again. That meant a call to Cooper, which meant he was in big trouble.

"Get in the damn car, Blaine," Cooper snapped, as they reached the school parking lot. Blaine pulled up the collar of his leather jacket insolently but grabbed the handle of the passenger side door and climbed inside the black BMW. He settled into the leather seat and pulled the seatbelt across his lap. Cooper turned the key in the ignition and opened the sunroof. "You smell like an ashtray," he complained.

"Well yes, that usually happens when one gets forced into smoking in a tiny bathroom stall instead of outside in the fresh air," Blaine responded cheekily, staring out the window.

"Don't get smart with me Squirt," Cooper fumed. "First of all, you shouldn't be smoking at all and second, you're lucky your principal called when he did. An hour later and I'd have been in the middle of surgery. As it is, you've delayed it by an hour, and I'm sure 'my brother got caught smoking in the boys' room' is going to offer absolutely no comfort to my patient or his family."

"You didn't have to come get me Coop, I could have walked home," Blaine answered, annoyance in his voice covering the shred of guilt he felt. "Just drop me off and you can get back."

"Not a chance," Cooper told him. "Now you're coming to the hospital with me. If I drop you home you'll be out with Puck and Santana before I even pull out of the gate and let me tell you something little brother, those days are done. I've had enough of your crap. It's one thing when you're getting detentions half the week for mouthing off to teachers or getting involved in fights you have no place in-

"I don't fight unless I have to," Blaine interrupted but Cooper didn't stop to listen.

"But when I have to come to the school because the Principal is so fed up with you he kicks you out for five days, then things have got to change," he finished firmly.

"What are you gonna do Coop, take me over your knee?" Blaine asked mockingly.

"Don't tempt me Squirt," Cooper retorted. He took a deep breath and tempered himself as he pulled off the highway and onto the city streets near the hospital. "But you are grounded indefinitely. I won't have you hanging around with your crew and wreaking havoc. In fact, you need to find something else to do entirely."

"What the hell does that mean?" Blaine asked suspiciously. They pulled into the Cleveland Clinic parking lot and Cooper pulled into his reserved spot. He shifted into park and turned to Blaine.

"It means you need to get a job. Fill your day with something respectable. Learn some responsibility. Stop being a menace to society and start contributing a little bit," Cooper answered.

"You sound like Dad," Blaine grumbled angrily as he took off his seat belt.

"Well, you live with me for a reason," Cooper said. "We all thought I could teach you things better than Mom and Dad could because I respect you and who you are. But you need to respect yourself too, and you won't do that if all you ever do is screw around."

"Well if I am such a screw up, maybe I should just go back to living with them!" Blaine snapped fleeing out of the car.

Cooper sighed and quickly exited the car. "Blaine, that's not what I meant," he called apologetically as his brother stormed away. He chased him through the hospital campus, grabbing
his arm. Blaine turned with a glare, but there were unshed tears in his eyes. Cooper took him in his
arms, holding him close. "You are not a screw up, Blaine. You are one of the most amazing people
in the entire world. I just wish you knew that."

Blaine didn't want to hear it though. Of course his brother thought that. He knew Cooper loved
him. He'd taken him away from a crappy situation with his parents and brought him to Cleveland
where he'd been given everything he could ever possibly want. Blaine hated himself for giving him
such a hard time after everything Cooper had done for him. But there was something inside him,
something he didn't understand, that refused to give up the hard shell he'd work so hard to build.
There was something that told him that he wasn't amazing, and no one else would ever truly love
him. After all, his own parents hadn't, so why should anyone else?

"Go save some lives, Coop," Blaine whispered, pushing his brother away affectionately. At least
one Anderson could make a difference in the world. "I'm going to go for a walk."

"Don't get lost, okay?" Cooper said worried. "And don't you dare call your friends either. Make
sure you're back here by 6."

"Yeah, whatever," Blaine called behind him as he waved dismissively and headed out into the city.

Cooper shook his head and turned to go back to work. It had been easier when Blaine was younger.
Now he wondered if he was in way over his head.

"Hey, kiddo." Burt called out from underneath the hood of the car he was working on.

"Hey, Dad," Kurt replied as he set his things down in his dad's office. He grabbed his overalls, put
them on over his clothes, and walked over to his dad. "What do you need today?"

"The Mustang needs an oil change," Burt said. Kurt nodded and headed towards the car, only to
stop when Burt grabbed his arm. "Is everything ok?"

"Yeah," Kurt answered, though he wouldn't look at his dad.

Burt stood up straighter and took a good look at his son, sensing that something was wrong. "Are
you sure? You seem a little down."

"That's one way to put it, Kurt thought to himself. "Yeah, I'm fine. I just didn't get the grade I
wanted on an assignment but it's ok."

"What did you get, a B?" Burt teased.

"Yeah and I deserved an A," Kurt argued.

"Son, B's are good too ya know. You don't have to get an A on everything," Burt tried to reason.

Kurt sighed and rolled his eyes. "If I want to get into Parsons, I need for my senior year to be
perfect, Dad."

"If you're meant to get into Parsons then you will. Don't overwork yourself, kiddo. It's your senior
year. You should be enjoying yourself, not stressing out over every tiny grade." Burt replied. "And
besides, you will get into Parsons because you're a Hummel and Hummel men are known to
exceed all expectations."

"Yes, Dad. I know," Kurt sighed. "Can I go change this oil now?"
"Yes, go." Burt waved him off.

Kurt hurried over to the car, glad that his father believed his lie about his grade. He hated lying to his dad, but he couldn't tell him how he was being bullied at school. He couldn't tell him how his son was used as a daily punching bag. He wouldn't tell him. After everything that happened with Dave before they moved, he was sure his father's health wouldn't be able to handle anymore. He would deal with the bullying as it came. He didn't need his dad to have another heart attack because he was too physically weak to defend himself. He was a Hummel after all. He could take care of himself.
Revving the Engines

Blaine headed out of the hospital circle and toward the coffee shop he frequented whenever Cooper forced him to hang out. It was a small place, nestled amongst the banks, the Subway Sandwiches, and the garage where the doctors all took their cars to be fixed, but the shop made good strong coffee and scones that were to die for. As he walked his phone buzzed in his pocket and he pressed answer after glancing at the name. "Puckerman!" Blaine called.

"What the hell, man?" Puck yelled in his ear. "Word is you got suspended for a week!"

"Yeah well, guess they just couldn't stand to have my pretty face at that school anymore," Blaine laughed. "Bad news is, I'm quote unquote, grounded indefinitely." Blaine reached the shop and leaned against the brick wall, lighting up a cigarette, while he finished his conversation. He hated people who talked on their cell phones in line so he was damn well not going to be one of them.

"Grounded? Who the hell does Cooper think he is exactly?" Puck sneered on the phone.

"Hey now," Blaine barked defensively. "That's my brother you're talking about, and he thinks he's my Guardian, which he is. So back off." Blaine could say whatever he wanted about his brother, but he'd never let anyone else disparage him.

"Fine, fine," Puck acquiesced. "So does this mean we won't be seeing you until you get back to school? I'll miss you man."

"Fine, fine," Puck acquiesced. "So does this mean we won't be seeing you until you get back to school? I'll miss you man."

"Yeah," Blaine answered, running his fingers through his hair, loosening his curls slightly. He'd miss all of them; both Puckerman brothers, Quinn, Santana, Britt, and the doofus duo, Nick and Jeff. "Look out for things for me, and give the girls my love."

"Oh you bet I will!" Puckerman teased, and Blaine could hear the wink in his voice. Blaine shook his head and hung up with a chuckle.

He put out his cigarette before going into the shop, and grabbed a scone, a medium drip and a job application to go, though the girl behind the counter said they weren't hiring. Exiting the shop, he considered walking back home. He could get there, sneak in some time with his crew and be back at the hospital before Cooper even noticed. That sounded much better than hanging around a boring ass hospital for the next four hours. With a smug grin, he started on his way.

As he passed the garage though, he noticed the Help Wanted sign in the window and took a few steps backwards. He knew nothing about cars, except what his father had taught him that one summer they tried to rebuild a transmission, but he could pump gas. He could run a credit card machine and make change. Plus, there was something cool about working at a garage. He finished his scone, drained his coffee and tossed them into the garbage can before opening the door and heading inside.

He walked into the repair bay to find the finest piece of ass ever to grace coveralls chest deep in the hood of a Mustang. Maybe working there wouldn't be too bad, especially if he could get that ass out of those coveralls.

"Um…hello," Blaine crooned, seduction in his voice.

Kurt froze at the sound of Blaine's voice. Could his day possibly get any worse? Cautiously, Kurt came out from underneath the hood and looked over at Blaine.
"Hummel?" Blaine said in surprise.

"Anderson," Kurt replied with a raised brow.

"What the hell are you doing here," Blaine asked, clearly not expecting to see the dweeb. Or have the dweeb's ass be so fine.

"Well, let's see, it's a garage, so obviously I'm here to bake cookies," Kurt said sarcastically as he crossed his arms across his chest. He knew that talking back to the badboy would inevitably end with him getting his ass kicked but really, how could he resist being a smartass when such a stupid question was asked?

Blaine slipped his hands into his pocket as he stepped closer to Kurt, an amused smile playing at his lips. "You know how to work on cars?"

Kurt gasped dramatically, placing his hand over his heart. "Is that what I'm doing? Working on cars? Because I could've sworn I was ordering a new McQueen scarf."

Blaine couldn't help but chuckle at that. He had to give the dweeb props. Not very many people were brave enough to talk back to him and Kurt seemed to simply not care. "Do you ever turn off the snarky attitude?"

Kurt narrowed his eyes and jutted his hip out. "If I ever find the off button, I'll let you know," he said with a condescending smile. "Is there a reason you're here?"

"Actually, yeah. I saw the help wanted sign and I need a job," Blaine replied in a bored tone.

"You want to work here?" Kurt asked in disbelief.

"Mm, want to? No. Need to? Yes. Is there someone I can talk to or are you just going to stand there and admire my pretty face?" Blaine asked with a smug grin.

Kurt scoffed and rolled his eyes. "You're not that pretty, Anderson," he said, though they both knew he was lying. Blaine was unfairly gorgeous, even with his plastered hair and horrible habits. "As far as the help wanted sign, we need someone who's going to take this job seriously, someone who's responsible. So if you think you can just waltz in here, get hired, and then not actually work, you better take your over-gelled hair and ashtray smelling ass and walk right back out."

Blaine strutted straight over to Kurt, stopping directly in front of him, and eyed him up and down. "You've got quite the mouth on you, Hummel. I'd watch it if I were you."

Kurt stood his ground, despite the sudden fear that he'd pushed it too far and was about to get punched. He was not about to let Blaine freaking Anderson intimidate him. "And you're in my garage, Anderson. I'd back the hell off if I were you."

Blaine smirked, unable to hide his amusement. Kurt may be a dweeb but he was an impressive one and certainly made things interesting. Blaine stuffed his hands in his pockets and shrugged in mock defeat before taking two steps back. "Is that better, your highness?" Blaine asked with a slight patronizing bow.

Kurt simply rolled his eyes and scoffed. "Dad, there's someone here for that job," he called out before walking back to the car he was working on.

"Wait, what? Dad?" Blaine did a double take turning back to Kurt who smirked to himself as he walked away.
"Yes, Dad," a strong voice said behind Blaine. Blaine slowly turned to find an imposing figure staring him down. "But you can call me Mr. Hummel. And you are…?"

"Oh, um, Anderson," Blaine stammered and then recovered enough to stick his hand out to Mr. Hummel. "Blaine Anderson."

Burt shook his hand firmly, testing the boy's grip. It was firm, but nervous, a small but important thing that contradicted the kids tough exterior. That was a good sign. He wasn't just a straight up delinquent even if he looked that way with his slicked back hair and leather jacket. "Why don't you follow me Mr. Anderson." Kurt turned to look over his shoulder as his father led Blaine into the office for an interview. He hoped his Dad would eat him alive.

Just as Burt walked into his office, Kurt heard the chime indicating there was a new customer. He grabbed a towel to wipe his hands clean and made his way outside, only to stop dead in his tracks when he saw it was Kyle in his Escalade EXT. Apparently, his day could actually get worse. Kurt couldn't even appreciate the beauty of the car because its driver was such an asshole. In fact, Kurt wanted nothing more than to key the hell out of the high class vehicle, no matter how utterly gorgeous it was. Kurt stood his ground as Kyle parked his car and walked over, a wicked smile plastered on his face. One of Kyle's favorite things to do was torture Kurt and if he could do it both in and out of school then he was having one hell of a good day.

"Hey there Kurtie," Kyle greeted in that sickeningly sweet voice Kurt hated so much. "Miss me?"

Kurt gulped, took a deep breath, and stayed as professional as he could. "Hello, Kyle. What can I help you with?" he asked, his tone strained.

"My Escalade is in need of a tune-up and what do you know, your daddy is the best mechanic in town, so here I am," Kyle answered condescendingly.

Kurt gritted his teeth at Kyle's tone and held back the defensive comment that was on the tip of his tongue. "Follow me, please," he replied, quickly darting back inside.

Kyle followed him in, glancing around the shop, and noticed Burt talking with someone in his office. He could only see the back of the person's head but he knew that gelled head of hair anywhere. Anderson. Not that he was afraid of dumbass Anderson or his stupid goons, but he was smart enough not to get in their way unless he needed to. He hated Anderson nearly as much as he hated Hummel but unlike Kurt, Anderson would beat the shit out of him. He'd even go so far as breaking Kyle's throwing arm if given the chance. Kyle needed to hurry up and get out of there before Anderson came out and saw him there.

"What's the name on the account?" Kurt asked, desperately wanting his dad to finish with Blaine and come out.

"Bill Johnson. Dr. Bill Johnson. I'm sure it's under some special category. You know, the one that says, 'Richest and best customer,'" Kyle replied smugly.

Kurt rolled his eyes and searched the name, biting the inside of his cheek to prevent from commenting on how there was no such category and if Kyle and his father were in a category, it would be the one that said Dr. Douche and douchebag son. Not that he knew Kyle's father, but any man that raised such a foul person had to be just as foul.

"I think it's time we had ourselves a little chat, Kurtie," Kyle said as he leaned against the counter. "You see, I can't have you disrespecting me anymore. The other queers and losers are going to start thinking that it's ok and I can't have that. So here's what's going to happen. You're going to stop
opening up that faggy mouth of yours or I'm going to-

"You're going to do what?" Kurt snapped, unable to control himself. "Beat me up? Go right ahead. It's not going to change who I am nor is it going to change the fact that you are nothing but a glorified athlete with a receding hairline!"

Anger instantly crossed Kyle's face but quickly shifted over into something much more menacing. "Are you sure about that, Kurtie? You wouldn't want dear old dad to have another heart attack because you're lying unconscious in a ditch, do you?" Kurt's own heart jumped as fear and shock raced through him. Kyle sneered smugly. "You see, my father just so happens to be your daddy's Cardiologist and I read in his file that his heart's not doing so well. I'm sure finding out that his precious little boy has been brutally beaten up for being a disgusting homo would not be good for his weak little heart. Don't you agree?" Kurt said nothing. He could only stare at Kyle with a mix of hatred and absolute fear. Kyle smiled triumphantly. "That's what I thought."

Burt opened the door of his small glass windowed office and held a hand out, offering Blaine the leather swivel chair across from his desk. Blaine flipped up the collar of his jacket, preening like a peacock with his feathers spread, displaying an air of confidence that truly evaded him. Burt merely chuckled to himself while keeping his poker face on. He had two teenagers. He knew all the tricks.

"So tell me why you're here Mr. Anderson," Burt said, leaning back comfortably as he crossed his leg over one knee and folded his hands in front of him.

"Well, I saw the help wanted sign in the window and I need a job," Blaine said, his brow furrowed with a bit of confusion. Why the hell else would he be here?

"You have any experience with cars?" Burt asked.

"I rebuilt a transmission with my father when I was 13, does that count?" he asked dryly, not mentioning the part where his father thought it would turn him straight after the Sadie Hawkins dance. That had gone so well it had been the beginning of Cooper whisking him away.

"I'm looking for someone to be a second hand around here," Burt explained. "Pumping gas, cleaning up the shop, maybe helping Kurt with some repairs, teach you how to change oil. You think you can handle that?"

"I can handle whatever, I just need a job." He stared out the window, rolling his eyes. This was bullshit. He didn't need a job, he needed to be on his motorcycle, flying through the wind, and gettin' fast with his crew. He didn't need to be hanging around dweebs like Hummel all day, even if they did look oh so very fine all greased up and bent over.

"Blaine," Burt called for the second time a little annoyed, and Blaine snapped his attention back to his potential employer. "You go to school?"

"Yeah," Blaine offered. "I'm a senior at Shaker Hills." Blaine wondered if he was going to ask if he and Kurt knew each other. He'd deny it completely.

"So you'd only be able to work after school and on weekends I assume," Burt asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Yeah," Blaine said, shifting a bit uncomfortably in his seat. "I mean, I'm kind of on vacation next week, so I could work during the day then, but yeah, typically." Why was he so flustered? Blaine Anderson did not get flustered.
"I wasn't aware that Shaker Hills was on vacation next week." Burt eyed Blaine closely, trying to decipher this kid's deal. He pretended to be tough, but he wasn't. He wanted to know why the pretense. And would he do the job? "Honesty will get you everywhere with me, Mr. Anderson."

Blaine watched Mr. Hummel closely. He wasn't sure what he expected. Judgment? Dismissal? He clearly wasn't one to be pushed around, not like his son, but he did seem to have a certain willingness to hear Blaine out, which he'd never really experienced from any adult other than Cooper. Well fine, the guy wanted the truth, he would tell the truth. He could always go look somewhere else for a job. "I was suspended. For smoking."

Burt nodded and picked up a pen, writing something down on a notebook on the desk. Blaine got ready to book it out the door, but then Burt threw the pen down. "Well if I hire you Mr. Anderson, there is no smoking anywhere on the property. Way too much flammable material."

Blaine shrugged nonchalantly. "That's fine," he said, hiding his amazement that there was even still a chance that he'd be hired.

"So I'm going to ask one more time. Why are you here? You say you need a job, but you really don't sound all that interested," Burt prodded. "Seems a kid like you would want his afternoons and weekends free, not bogged down working."

"Honesty?" Blaine asked.

"Always," Burt nodded.

"Ok. Honestly, my pain in the ass brother told me I better get a job or I'm going to be grounded for the rest of my life. So frankly, working seems a hell of a lot better than staring at the walls of my room all day until I'm 20," Blaine admitted.

Burt looked him up and down, sizing him up a final time. "Good. I can use a worker with motivation to stay. You start now," he said.

"What?" Blaine asked, surprise completely evident in his voice.

Burt laughed as he got up. Blaine stood tentatively with him, wiping his sweating hands on his jeans. "I said you start now kid. I don't know why, but I like you." Burt clapped a hand on his shoulder and led him out of the room. "Kurt!" he called.

Kyle looked towards the office to see Burt and Blaine walking over to them. "I'll catch you later, Kurtie. Take care of my baby," Kyle said, dropping his keys onto the counter and swiftly walking off.

Kurt cleared his head and then turned to see Blaine and his father walking his way. He thanked god, though he didn't believe there was such a thing, that their presence made Kyle leave. Now he just had to deal with Anderson, who his father had obviously hired. His day just seemed to get worse and worse.

Blaine watched Kyle walk back outside and scowled. If that asshole was going to make regular appearances at the shop than Blaine was going to get himself in trouble. Despite his reputation, Blaine didn't seek people out to fight. Kyle, however, was one of the few exceptions. Truth be told, Blaine would take any opportunity to show the football star exactly who was in charge.

"Kurt, this is Blaine Anderson," Burt introduced them with a broad and roguish smile as he reached the front counter. "Blaine, this is my son Kurt Hummel. You two go to school together. Kurt's going to be showing you around."
Kurt gave his father a forced smile, barely sparing Blaine a glance. "Great. An Escalade EXT just came in for a tune up," he said, handing his father the keys.

Burt oohed in excitement as he took the keys from Kurt. He glanced at the two boys, noticing the awkward tension. "You be nice," he warned his son playfully, wagging his finger at Kurt before walking over to where the Escalade was parked.

Kurt waited until his father was out of view before turning a glare at Blaine. Blaine gave Kurt an innocent smile, although his beautiful, eyes sparkled with mischievousness. Kurt huffed in aggravation and defeat and turned to walk away.

"Follow me, Anderson and do try to keep up. I'm not repeating myself so you sure as hell better pay attention," Kurt said in irritation, not even checking to see if Blaine was behind him.

Blaine did follow, his eyes scanning Kurt's backside. It was a shame that such a fine piece of ass was attached to someone as annoying as Kurt Hummel. They walked into the back which Blaine assumed was the employee break room.

"This is the break room," Kurt said. *No shit Sherlock*, Blaine thought. "You can bring food from home and put it in the fridge. Be sure to mark it yours. If not, it will get eaten or thrown away. You are responsible for your own mess. There are no maids here. You make a mess, you clean it up, simple as that," Blaine couldn't help but smirk because really, this kid was entirely too entertaining. "The employee lockers are right over here. You are to use them for personal, legal, belongings. Don't you dare hide any alcohol or drugs in here. I will check and I will tell my father and you will be fired. Is that clear?"

"Crystal," Blaine replied with an eye roll. Puck, Santana, Quinn, and Jeff were the only ones that ever tried drugs and it was only marijuana. The crew's reputation had everyone believing that they were much worse than they truly were, and that's exactly the way Blaine wanted it. Sure, they partied and got into some trouble, but they weren't as bad as people assumed. Usually.

Kurt walked over to the front counter to grab a couple of books and a DVD and walked back into the employee room. "Read these when you get home," he said as he slammed the books down on the table next to them. He then walked over to the employee computer and popped the DVD in. "Watch the employee video and take the tests at the end. I don't give a shit how boring they are. You want to work here? Pay attention to what the DVD says and ace the tests. You won't be allowed to do anything else until you do and you won't get paid for wasting our time so don't think you can take forever to watch this. I have an oil change to finish. Call me when you're done. Any questions?"

"Yeah, just one," Blaine said as he leaned on the table, his arms crossed at his chest. "Does Johnson come in here often? Because that's going to be a problem for me."

*Join the club*, Kurt thought as his heart jumped slightly just at the mention of the name and the idea that Blaine had a problem with him too. He wouldn't let it show though. "He's been in a couple of times and any problems you have with him, take it somewhere else," Kurt replied. "Don't bring your crap here and that includes your dumbass crew too. Just because you're working here doesn't mean that your stupid little friends can come in and out like they own the place. I will not hesitate to call the cops if they're loitering."

"Christ, Hummel give it rest," Blaine said in aggravation. "Take the stick out of your ass and chill the fuck out. You're way too uptight. You know, a good fuck could fix that right up," he said with a crude smile.
Kurt's eyes widened at the comment, a deep blush creeping up his cheeks. "Just...watch the damn DVD and quit worrying about my ass, Anderson," he snapped before storming off.

Blaine had to take the test twice, but he aced it the second time. He sent a text to Cooper bragging that he'd already gotten a job and telling him to pick him up at the garage when his shift at the hospital was done at 6. Then he sauntered out of the break room to find Kurt at the front counter typing something on the computer.

"Done," Blaine said, leaning against the wall as he crossed his arms, a smug smile on his lips.

Kurt looked away from the computer screen with a raised brow. "Do you want a cookie?"

"As a matter of fact, yes. I love cookies," Blaine replied with an amused grin.

Kurt snorted a laugh and shook his head as he turned his attention back on the computer. "Let me finish inputting this in and then I'll be with you."

Blaine tilted his head curiously and walked over to Kurt. "What are you inputting?" he asked, leaning against the counter space next to Kurt.

Kurt sideways glanced at Blaine, seeing genuine curiosity. "Kyle's Escalade info. It's a shame that beautiful car belongs to someone so obnoxious."

Blaine chuckled and nodded. He preferred his motorcycle but he could appreciate the Escalade was a thing of beauty. "We could always make a few adjustments to it so it matches Kyle's obnoxiousness," he suggested with a mischievous glint in his eye.

Kurt looked over to him. He knew that whatever Blaine was suggesting would be a bad idea, but there was something about the badboy Kurt just couldn't quite resist. It wouldn't hurt to get a little idea of how his brain worked. "And how would we do that?" Kurt questioned.

"I don't know," Blaine shrugged. "Adjust the stereo so it's really damn loud and make it so he can't lower it? Or maybe we could attach one of those stupid bull balls ornament things to the back?"

"No, Blaine," Kurt said shaking his head, though a small smile threatened to appear. "We can't do that."

"Ok," Blaine said slowly, rubbing his chin in contemplation. "OH! What if we programmed his car to only ever play *Barbie Girl*, no matter what the station? Now *that*, would be funny as shit."

Kurt didn't want to laugh. Really, he didn't. He didn't want to acknowledge the fact that Blaine was actually kind of funny. But the thought of Kyle driving around with that song blaring and singing along was enough to make him double over with laughter. Blaine was surprisingly satisfied with himself for being able to make Kurt laugh. There was something about it that captivated him, though he wasn't sure what.

"Oh my God!" Kurt exclaimed as his laughter died away. "Can you imagine him driving into school with that playing? That would be hilarious."

"Well then, let's do it," Blaine replied, completely unaware of the bright smile he was wearing.

"No, we can't," Kurt shook his head. "One, it's impossible to program his radio to do that. Two, no matter how obnoxious he is, he is a customer so we have to be nice to him."
"But he's a total douche!" Blaine all but shouted. "He's a spoiled little rich kid who thinks the
fucking world revolves around him. What goes around comes around."

Kurt sighed as he finished what he was doing on the computer and turned to face Blaine. "That
may be, but this is a business and he's a customer, so if he comes in one day and you have to help
him, you better do it with the best fake smile you've got," the tone of Kurt's voice reminded Blaine
of Burt. He was suddenly able to see the likeness between the two.

With an annoyed sigh, Blaine rolled his eyes and nodded. "Fine, but when I see him again in school
I'm letting him know that this is my territory now so he better think twice before coming in here."

The possessive tone in Blaine's voice when he said 'my territory' was enough to make Kurt's head
spin. Kurt suddenly became aware of how close they were standing. The aroma of Blaine's musky
cologne, mixed with the smell of cigarettes and leather was far more intoxicating than it should be.
Blaine really was entirely too attractive for his own good. Kurt had always known that but he'd
refused to acknowledge it. Standing right in front of him though, it was impossible not to notice
how truly gorgeous Blaine was. With a nervous laugh, Kurt took a few steps back and looked
away. "Yeah well, have fun with that."

Blaine raised a brow at Kurt's sudden change in demeanor but shrugged it off. "So Boss Jr., what's
next?"

"Boss Jr.?
"Your dad's the boss so that pretty much makes you Boss Jr.," Blaine said with a shrug.

"I prefer Kurt," Kurt answered with a small smile. "Or, your highness. You know, whichever suits
your fancy."

It was Blaine's turn to laugh and Kurt hated how it made Blaine a thousand times more attractive.
"Ok then, your highness," Blaine said in a haughty tone. "I am but a mere peasant in need of work.
Please, show me the way," he said with a flourish.

"Oh wow," Kurt said, swallowing the giggle that was trying to escape. Who knew Blaine Anderson
was such a dork. "Just...follow me." Kurt walked over to the inside of the shop and led Blaine over
to the cash register. "You don't have an employee ID number yet so we'll use mine," Kurt said as he
signed into the register. "It's pretty basic stuff. The customer will come in, they'll buy something or
bring you their invoice from service, you scan it or type it in, they pay, you hand them their change,
tell them to have a good day-"

"With my best fake smile," Blaine cut in, grinning awkwardly.

Kurt snorted a laugh and nodded. "Yes, with your best fake smile and that's it. Now, most of the
customers pump their own gas but the elders usually call for someone. That light will flash when a
customer needs your assistant outside. You'll go out there, ask them what they need, and then do it.
If they pay with cash, you'll have to come back in to start the pump. If they pay with card, you can
do it at the pump itself. With me so far?" Kurt expected Blaine to make some sort of sarcastic
remark but was pleasantly surprised when Blaine merely nodded.

"Good. Not that you'll personally need them yet, but all the tools are stored over here," he said as
he walked to a small room in the back, Blaine close behind. "Be sure to read those books
thoroughly. They explain what these tools are and what they do. You may not know how to use
them yet but someone may need you to fetch something while they're underneath a car and you'll
have to know which one is which."
"When will I be able to actually work on cars?" Blaine asked with genuine interest.

"That depends on how quickly you pick things up," Kurt shrugged. "Handling the inside will be your main job but we'll teach you how to do simple things like oil changes and how to change a tire."

"Kurt!" Blaine and Kurt heard Burt call out. At the same time, a customer pulled up to one of the pumps and the light flashed. Kurt hesitated, torn in two directions.

"Go ahead. I got this," Blaine waved him off as the light on the counter flashed.

"Are you sure?" Kurt asked, clearly unconvinced.

"Give me some credit, Hummel," Blaine replied, feigning offense.

"Alright," Kurt said slowly as he started walking away.

"Oh hey," Blaine called out. "What do I do when I'm done with them?"

"Clean something. The supply closet is right there," Kurt answered before disappearing into the garage.

Blaine looked over at the customer, an elderly woman who was patiently waiting for him, took a deep breath, and walked out to her with his most charming smile in place.

"Last step of the day is to clean up the break room in the back," Kurt was telling Blaine about an hour later. "Come on,"

Kurt put the DVD and the equipment away while Blaine wiped the table clean. It didn't take long before Blaine got a text from Cooper saying he was on his way. It gave Blaine an idea.

"Hummel, give me your phone," he said, pulling his leather jacket out of the locker.

"Um, no," Kurt answered with a scoff.

Blaine rolled his eyes, slipped his jacket on, and walked over to Kurt, holding out his hand. "Seriously, give me your phone."

"Why?" Kurt questioned.

"Just give me your damn phone Kurt," Blaine snapped. No longer willing to wait, he grabbed Kurt by the waist and pulled him close in an attempt to grab the phone from Kurt's back pocket. Kurt let out a surprised high-pitched squeal which Blaine found entirely too funny.

"Let me go!" Kurt shrieked as he tried to step away from Blaine's firm grasp. Blaine kept his hold on Kurt until he successfully pulled Kurt's phone out of his pocket. Blaine gave Kurt a cocky grin before letting him go. "Give that back, Anderson!" Kurt reached for his phone but Blaine swiftly evaded him. "Damn it, Blaine! Give me my phone!"

"In a minute," Blaine said as he typed his number into Kurt's cell.

"No, now," Kurt said, practically growling in frustration.

Blaine ignored him, keeping his back towards Kurt to prevent him from trying to grab the cell. As soon as Blaine felt his own phone vibrate, he ended the call and tossed it back to Kurt. "Here ya
"What did you do to it?" Kurt demanded, inspecting his phone for any foul play.

"Will you relax? I was just adding my number. You seriously need to lighten up," Blaine said as he saved Kurt's number into his phone.

Kurt narrowed his eyes before checking his contact list. He felt an odd sense of excitement when he saw Blaine's name on his screen but he brushed the feeling off and scowled. "You could've just asked for it."

Blaine smirked and shrugged. "This way was more fun."

"Why the hell do you want my number anyway?" Kurt asked suspiciously.

"For work stuff, jeez. Don't get your panties in a twist," Blaine replied, rolling his eyes.

"You better not prank call me," Kurt said firmly, waving his finger at Blaine just like Burt had waved his finger at Kurt earlier.

Blaine chuckled at the similarities between the two men. It was only his first day but Blaine could already tell that working at the garage would be fun. Even if Kurt was dweeb, he was at least a funny one and Blaine knew working with him would be entertaining.

"I would never do such a thing, Kurtie," Blaine teased. The smile on his face instantly faltered, however, when he noticed the pure rage in Kurt's eyes.

"Do not, call me that," Kurt replied through gritted teeth.

"Why not? Don't you like being Kurtie?" Blaine asked in a baby voice, but as soon as it came out he realized his heart wasn't in it anymore.

Kurt clenched his fists and took a deep breath to calm himself. Hearing Kyle call him that was bad enough, but hearing Blaine call him that stung in a way he didn't understand. "That's what Kyle and Lance call me," he said, his voice much smaller than he intended. He closed his eyes as he spoke, missing the way Blaine's face turned into angry disgust. Kurt expected Blaine to laugh at him or make some sort of sarcastic comment. He was again surprised by Blaine's reaction.


Burt smiled at the boys as they disappeared into the back. He'd already seen the tension in Kurt's shoulders lessen this afternoon with Blaine here, and that alone would have been enough to keep him around. But Blaine actually seemed like a good worker, which pleased Burt even more. He had a good feeling about this.

The bell rang on the door and Burt called out, "Sorry we're closed." He smiled though when he saw the tall, handsome man walk in. "Ah, Dr. Anderson," Burt said familiarly. "What can I do for you? That pretty black BMW didn't break down on you did it?"

Cooper shook his head with a smile. "No, but you'd be the first I'd come to if it had. I'm here to pick up my little brother. He said he got a job here today?"
Burt put two and two together and grinned. "Ah, so you're the pain in the ass older brother." Burt shared Blaine's earlier words with a sparkle in his eye.

Cooper chuckled. "Yes, that would be me. And that definitely sounds like Blaine," Cooper smirked. "I hope you know what you're getting yourself into," he said fondly.

"Well, he's related to you so he can't be all bad," Burt said. "Any reason I shouldn't hire him?"

Cooper threw his hands up. "You won't get any complaints from me, that kid needs a job and I'm glad he's so close."

Burt mulled the situation, wondering more than he probably should, but decided to try and satisfy his curiosity. "Don't feel like you have to answer but, Blaine lives with you?"

"No it's fine," Cooper assured him. "Yeah, he does. Has for five years now. It works out pretty well most of the time, though I'm not around nearly as much as I wish I could be."

"You're around more than enough," Blaine interjected as he and Kurt came out from the back. "Now let's get out of here. Talk to you later Kurt," he added with a flirtatious wink. Kurt turned away before Blaine could see him blush.

Burt noticed though and snickered to himself. "Don't forget your Driver's License, social security card and working papers tomorrow," he reminded the boy.

"Sure thing, Mr. Hummel," Blaine called as he waved.

Blaine and Cooper headed out to Cooper's car and they both climbed in. "You like him," Cooper stated nonchalantly.

"Who?" Blaine feigned ignorance.

"That kid Kurt. You like him," Cooper repeated teasingly this time.

"What makes you think so?" Blaine asked defensively.

"I ain't never seen you wink at Puck like that," Cooper grinned pointedly.

Blaine blushed and strapped his seatbelt on. "Just shut up and drive Coop!"
"What do you want to do tonight?" Cooper asked genially as they cleared the dinner dishes and brought them into the kitchen to load the dishwasher.

"Go out with my friends," Blaine mumbled under his breath.

Cooper had the hearing though of a man who'd both been a teenager and raised a teenager. "Sadly, you are still grounded," he reminded his brother.

Blaine turned on his heel and leaned against the counter, his arms crossed. "I don't really see how that's fair," he argued. "You told me to get a job, and I got one in like, an instant. Don't I deserve a reward for that?"

Cooper raised an eyebrow. "I'm pretty sure that's what they call a paycheck," he said cheekily, then turned serious. "Though I am really proud of you Blaine. You did a good job today."

Blaine just shrugged modestly, not too used to compliments these days, even from Cooper. "It's no heart surgery, but…"

"But nothing Blaine," Cooper said placing a hand on his brother's shoulder. "It's great. And lots of the other surgeons call Burt the car doctor anyway, so in a way, it kind of is like heart surgery. Car heart surgery," he said with a playful grin. Blaine rolled his eyes and shook his head, walking out into the living room.

Cooper followed. "So what do you want to do tonight Squirt? Come on," he said, grabbing Blaine's hand and pulling him down on the couch when his brother gave him another look. "I don't get to spend a lot of time with you."

Blaine knew he should argue. He was way too old for this. But there was something about lying with his head on his brother's lap, Cooper's fingers brushing through his curls, that was soothing tonight, even if he felt like he was 8 years old again. So instead of fighting it, he closed his eyes and listened to the hum of the air conditioner.

"So tell me about Kurt," Cooper asked with a soft tease.

"Not much to tell," Blaine started. "He's some dweeb from school who is now my boss' son."

"And you like him," Cooper teased harder now, but there was a real question in it.

Blaine's eyes shot open as he stared up at his brother incredulously. "I don't like him Cooper, like I said, he's a dweeb! I am totally out of his league." Blaine closed his eyes again, ignoring the beautifully lithe body, alabaster skin and perfectly coifed hair that hid just behind his lids. He sighed unknowingly. "Besides, I'm pretty sure he's dating Chandler, a theater geek at our school."

"Oh, so he is gay," Cooper remarked with a sly grin.

"Yes, Coop, he's gay. So freakin' what?" Blaine snapped, with perhaps a little more anger than the situation truly deserved. It's not like he liked him at all. It's not like it mattered who Kurt Hummel was dating.

Cooper smiled down at his brother, watching his cheeks flush pink as thoughts of Kurt played inside his mind. Getting a job was exactly what Blaine had needed, though not for all the reasons
Cooper had intended at the time. Learning responsibility, earning a paycheck, keeping busy away from the terrible influences in his life were all well and good. But falling in love? That was the kind of thing that really changed someone. That was what life was all about.

Burt watched Kurt with growing curiosity as they sat across from one another at the dinner table that night. Since Carol was working the late shift and Finn was at OSU, it was just the two of them, but Burt didn't mind. Kurt had been unusually quiet though ever since Blaine left the shop and Burt couldn't help but wonder what was going on.

"So Kurt," Burt started. "How well do you know Blaine?"

Kurt shrugged as he took a bite of food. "I don't know him. Not really. I just know of him. Today was the first time we've ever spoken."

"What exactly do you know of him?" Burt asked curiously. Burt could tell that the Blaine Anderson the boy presented to the world was different than who he truly was inside, and Kurt was generally a good judge of character. Not to mention that he'd been the one primarily working with Blaine and Burt had seen the multitude of looks that had passed between the two in only a couple of hours. It had been like watching a rollercoaster ride.

"Um, nothing really," Kurt replied, shifting uncomfortably in his seat, because there was actually a lot he knew about Blaine. But he also knew his father was fishing and he really didn't want to get Blaine fired. Partially because he didn't want to get on Blaine's bad side but mostly because he was undeniably curious about whom Blaine really was and working together would give him the chance to get to know the boy. "I typically try to stay out of his way as much as possible. I've heard some stuff about him though."

Burt leaned closer, interested in hearing more. "What kind of stuff have you heard?"

"I don't know, Dad," Kurt shrugged. "He tends to get into some fights and disagreements with teachers, but that's pretty much it." Kurt decided not to tell his father exactly how bad the fights had been, one that he had been witness to, or about the drugs and partying.

"Well he seems to not have too much trouble with my authority so far, so that's a good sign. Nothing else you think I should know about?" Burt pressed on.

"Um, no. That's pretty much it. He has a pretty bad reputation at school, but I don't know," Kurt shrugged, replying truthfully. He'd been prepared for the worse but Blaine had really surprised him today. Of course, tomorrow was another day. It's not like he was going to start trusting the kid or anything.

"Well, he is Dr. Anderson's brother so I'm sure he can't be all that bad," Burt concluded with a nod. "He's a pretty good worker. Quick learner."

"Mhm," Kurt nodded. He'd noticed that as well, but the real test would be to see if Blaine studied those books at all tonight or not.

"I want you to be his mentor at the shop," Burt said, stilling Kurt's movements. "Show him the ropes, take him under your wing so to speak." Burt watched his son's reaction to the request and the flash behind Kurt's eyes was evident but hard to define. He raised a brow. "Is that going to be a problem?"

Kurt gulped and shook his head. "No, no. That's fine."
"Good," Burt said with a curious nod and continued with his meal.

Kurt finished his skin routine, which was even more important on the nights where he had worked at the garage than on the nights when he hadn't, and settled into bed. He plugged his phone in and lied down, waiting for his usual goodnight text from Chandler before attempting to fall asleep. He knew if he missed the text that Chandler would be upset and he hated dealing with a mopey Chandler. It was insanely annoying. They were just friends, though Kurt knew that Chandler wanted to be more. But Kurt wasn't into relationships.

He didn't trust and he didn't let people in, but even if he did, Chandler wouldn't be Kurt's first choice. He was a nice guy but he was predictable and much too similar to Kurt for his personal liking. He wanted someone who would surprise him, someone with passion. Someone who could make him laugh, really laugh, and Chandler was not that guy. He was sure he wouldn't find anyone until he moved to New York and had no intention of experimenting with his friend.

When his phone buzzed, he reached over in the dark, expecting it to be Chandler. But instead, Kurt was astonished to see that it was from Blaine. He immediately grew angry, convinced that Blaine was calling out of work already. Maybe he'd decided that spending hours in the garage with Kurt wasn't worth his time and he was quitting. He let the possibility that Blaine was just texting to say goodnight slip into his mind for less than a second before he banished it. That's ridiculous, he thought as he tried to settle his quickening heartbeat, and tapped the screen to finally just read the message.

From: Blaine A.

Are you fucking kidding me with this shit? This is the most ridiculous crap I've ever read!

Accompanying the text was a picture of Blaine making an annoyed face and holding one of the textbooks Kurt had given him to read. He raised an amused eyebrow at the message, stifling a laugh. So Blaine was actually doing the homework that Kurt had given him. Well, that was a decent sign.

To: Blaine A.

What's the matter Blaine? Are the words too big for you to comprehend?

That means to understand by the way.

Kurt regretted sending the messages almost instantly. Just because Blaine didn't give him crap at the shop didn't mean that he would be ok with Kurt insulting his intelligence. Kurt knew from their afternoon together that Blaine was much smarter than Kurt's tormentors, but he had yet to determine if that would be helpful or harmful in the end. When his phone buzzed again, Kurt almost ignored it. Almost.

From: Blaine A

Haha, very funny. You think you're so smart don't you? One of these days your snark is going to run out and you're going to be a dumbass just like the rest of us.

Kurt snorted a laugh at the text before responding.

To: Blaine A.

That is where you're wrong. I have an infinite amount of snark. It's a part of my undeniable charm.
Was the hell was he doing? Was he flirting? No. That couldn't be right. Kurt wasn't flirting. He was just being a smartass. That's all.

_from: Blaine A._
*Charm my ass. You're annoying as shit and you know it.*

_Speaking of asses, yours looks hot in overalls._

_Just sayin._

_don't let that get to your head your highness._

Kurt rolled his eyes, ignoring the way his cheeks flushed and his heart raced. Blaine was a player. Everyone knew that. Just because he _kind of_ complimented Kurt didn't mean anything.

_to: Blaine A._
*What did I say about my ass Anderson?*

Blaine's text was instant, almost as if he'd been waiting for Kurt to reply. But that couldn't be right. Blaine's phone was probably just next to him.

_from: Blaine A._
*That I could touch it?*

Kurt's eyes widened. The room suddenly got hot. He needed to end this conversation with Blaine before he did something stupid, like start talking about how amazing Blaine's ass had looked in those skin tight jeans, or how he smelled with that sultry mix of leather and musk.

_to: Blaine A._
*bzzz. Wrong answer. I said you needed to stop worrying about my ass. Try to keep up Blaine. I know it's hard, but I thought you were smarter than the jocks._

About a minute later, Kurt's cell phone rang. He froze when he saw that it was Blaine, fearing that he'd finally gone too far, but he closed his eyes and picked up anyway.

"Yes?"

"I'm hurt that you think I'm not smarter than the jackasses! Truly, I'm offended!" Kurt could practically hear Blaine's pout over the phone. "I thought we were friends but now I don't know if I want to be your friend anymore. You're mean."

Kurt's breath hitched and he prayed that Blaine didn't hear. Blaine wanted to be his friend? That had to be joke. It just had to be. "You want to be my friend?" Kurt asked skeptically.

"I did but now I'm not so sure. You hurt my feelings," Blaine replied in a baby voice.

Kurt didn't want to laugh. Really. He didn't. But that didn't stop the small giggle that escaped his lips. "Oh my God, Blaine! You're a complete dork. You know that right? This whole badboy thing is a total farce, isn't it?"

"Maybe. Maybe not. I guess you'll just have to stick around to find out," Blaine replied coyly, all trace of the pout and baby voice gone. Kurt felt like the room was spinning. He couldn't tell which way was up and which way was down with Blaine.
"Whatever. I'm going to go to bed. Read the books, Blaine. I'm quizzing you on it tomorrow," Kurt said sternly.

"Ugh, fine! You are seriously no fun!" Blaine complained.

*I'm lots of fun,* he thought about saying, but he thankfully held his tongue. "Nope. No fun here," he said instead. "Goodnight, Blaine."

"Yeah, yeah. Goodnight, your highness."

Kurt rolled his eyes, hung up, and laid down for the night. When Chandler texted a short while later, Kurt had already fallen asleep, a small smile on his lips.

Blaine arrived at the shop Saturday morning, a mixture of eagerness and nervousness coursing through him. After his flirty, *not flirty,* conversation with Kurt the night before, he stayed up late, determined to finish studying the books. He was confident that he knew most of the tools and he couldn't wait to impress Kurt with his knowledge. *Not impress. Show him up,* Blaine thought. Why the hell would he want to impress that dweeb? It wasn't like he cared what Kurt thought about him or anything. Blaine just wanted to prove him wrong. That was all.

"Morning, Mr. Hummel," Blaine said when he reached Burt's office.

Burt looked up from his paperwork, smiling at the fact that Blaine was early. "Good morning, Blaine. Did you bring those papers?"

"Yes, sir," Blaine replied, fully stepping into the office and handing them to Burt.

"Alright. Why don't you put your things away in the break room and then come back in here so we can get this paperwork done," Burt suggested.

"Sure," Blaine said with a nod and walked out.

Walking towards the break room, Blaine glanced around the shop for Kurt. He didn't care about the boy or anything, he just thought it would be fun to mess with him. When he walked in though, he saw Kurt bending over, his head in the fridge. Blaine bit his lower lip mischievously. Just because Kurt was a total dweeb didn't mean he couldn't appreciate his undeniably fine ass. Blaine knew he should probably look away and continue on his way, but instead he lingered by the door and waited for Kurt to notice his presence.

When Kurt had woken up that morning, he'd found several annoying texts from Chandler. He hadn't meant to fall asleep before saying goodnight to his friend, but after his talk with Blaine he'd completely forgotten about Chandler's nightly text. Kurt wrote Chandler back, apologizing and assuring him that he wasn't ignoring him, which inevitably led to planning an impromptu sleepover with Marley and Harmony for tonight. Kurt loved his girls, but he wasn't thrilled at the idea of another sleepover with Chandler. In the past his friend had always gotten overly-touchy. Yet somehow Kurt couldn't say no. And now, he was in a foul mood, which inevitably led to him organizing.

Kurt finished straightening the bottom shelf of the fridge and stood back up, completely unaware of Blaine's presence in the doorway. The sound of a throat clearing made him freeze in his spot. He knew that voice, but even more he knew that scent. Despite only knowing each other for a day, that mix of musk, cigarettes and leather was somehow already fried into Kurt's brain. He hoped Blaine wouldn't get on his already impatient nerves today. Better yet, Kurt hoped he *would.* It would give him an excuse to put the badboy in his place. Kurt exhaled sharply and turned around to see Blaine
Blaine snapped his feet together, moved his hand with a flourish and bowed. "Good morning, your highness," he said with a wink, his voice teasing.

Kurt rolled his eyes as he fought the smile that wanted to appear. "Good morning, Blaine. You're early," Kurt pointed out.

Blaine shrugged nonchalantly as he walked to the lockers. "Coop had to get to work. Besides, the early bird catches the worm," he winked.

Kurt rolled his eyes but said nothing, eyeing Blaine curiously. Blaine sideways glanced at Kurt as he put his leather jacket into his locker. He then grabbed a black sharpie from the counter, wrote his name on his brown paper lunch bag, and put it in the fridge.

"So Boss Jr., what's the plan for today?" Blaine asked, crossing his arms.

Kurt ignored the way Blaine's muscles looked in his simple white tee. "I'll quiz you in a little while and you'll be manning the front desk. It's your first full day and it's our busiest so I won't be able to teach you much of anything."

"As if you could actually teach me anything," Blaine teased with a hint of flirtatiousness.

Kurt scoffed and began walking away. "There's a lot I could teach you, believe me."

Blaine reacted instantly. He quickly darted across the room, stopping directly in front of Kurt. "That sounds like a challenge, Hummel," he said, his voice low and seductive.

Kurt ignored the way his cheeks flushed and pushed past Blaine, only to stop in the doorway and glance behind him, "That's because it is," he replied with a cheeky grin and darted out of the room before Blaine could see his reddening face. Kurt had no idea where that had come from, but decided his bad mood must be the only logical explanation.

Blaine chuckled in surprise, not expecting Kurt to flirt back. Working with Kurt was definitely going to be an interesting experience, he thought with a sigh as he headed back over to Burt's office to complete his paperwork.

The day went by steadily. Kurt hadn't been kidding about it being their busiest day which meant that Blaine was in and out all morning and afternoon by himself dealing with customers while Kurt and Burt worked in the garage. With the exception of a few small mishaps, Blaine worked the register perfectly, a charming smile in place. Kurt watched silently, admittedly impressed by the boy. Not once was he rude to the customers. Not once did he slack off. He was polite and charming, and even one of their regulars complimented Burt on their new employee. It was refreshing to see Blaine so at ease as opposed to the hard exterior he wore at school. Kurt was starting to understand that Blaine Anderson was not at all what he seemed. What he didn't understand was how he felt about that fact.

Blaine had just finished up with another customer, an elderly woman that was making goo-goo eyes at him, when Burt told him to take a lunch break. Blaine was certain that he'd never been happier to sit down and eat. When he walked into the break room, he saw Jared, one of the mechanics, cleaning his cup in the sink and Kurt sitting at one of the tables eating.

"Hey kid, good job out there today," Jared said as Blaine grabbed his lunch from the fridge. "You got a few compliments about how well you work."
Kurt glanced up at Blaine, expecting a cocky remark but was again surprised when Blaine beamed and thanked Jared. Was he ever going to figure Blaine out or would the boy continuously surprise him? Something told him it would be the latter. Blaine took a seat across from Kurt, a more familiar smirk playing at his lips.

He waited until Jared left the room, pulling his sandwich out of his bag, to talk to Kurt. When the door closed, Blaine met Kurt's blue eyes, as gorgeous, he hated to admit, as Kurt's ass. "So, Kurt, tell me about yourself," Blaine said taking a bite of his sandwich.

Kurt raised an eyebrow at Blaine, annoyance evident. "First of all, don't demand things from me. You want to know something? You ask like any decent human being. Second, no."

"You know, I'm really starting to think that you don't want to be my friend," Blaine replied with a pout.

Kurt bit back the laugh that threatened to escape. Blaine seriously needed to stop being adorable. "Friends ask things, not demand them," he responded, keeping his composure. Blaine may have control over his supposed Crew, but there was no way he was going to let Blaine take control of him.

Blaine rolled his eyes, a smile on his lips. "You just like to make things difficult, don't you?" Kurt merely shrugged in response, a small smirk gracing his features. "Alright, Kurt. What do you like to do for fun?"

Kurt glared at the condescending tone in Blaine's voice, ready to snap sarcastically, but he couldn't get past the thought that Blaine was asking for a reason. "Why do you want to know anyway," he asked instead.

"I'm just trying to be nice here," Blaine said, ignoring all the reasons that were swimming in his head, chalking it up to simple curiosity.

Kurt sighed and sat back in his seat, wondering why the hell Blaine Anderson was trying to be nice. "I like reading Vogue, I like fashion, and I like music. Any other questions?" he asked flatly.

"Yeah, which part of that is actually fun? Cause it all sounds pretty boring to me," Blaine replied, ignoring the voice in the back of his mind that reminded him he liked all those things too.

"What would you rather have me do? Cruise the town on my motorcycle and pick up guys with my irresistible charm?" Kurt asked, his brow raised.

"Ok first, we've already discussed that you aren't charming, you're annoying. And second, it's better than sitting at home like a total lame ass," Blaine retorted.

"If I'm so annoying then why do you want to be my friend," Kurt quipped. "And I happen to like being a lame ass, thank you very much."

Blaine rolled his eyes and scoffed. "No one likes being a lame ass."

"I do," Kurt said angrily as he stood up and picked up his empty food container. "My break is over. Come get me when you're done. It's time for your quiz."

Blaine watched Kurt walk away with a curious smirk. The more he got to know Kurt, the more he wanted to know. He wasn't sure what that meant but decided that maybe actually being friends with the dweeb would be a good thing. If anything, it would be constant entertainment.
Roughly fifteen minutes later, Blaine met Kurt in the garage, watching for a moment as he happily worked together with Burt on a car. Visions of days in the driveway with his own father flashed before his eyes, and he couldn't help the jealousy that arose, but he quickly shook it away. "Excuse me, your highness. I'm ready for my quiz," he said a smug smile on his lips. He didn't miss the questioning look on Burt's face. He suddenly worried that calling Kurt your highness in front of Burt was a bad move.

Burt glanced at his son, expecting to see anger. Instead he saw annoyance hiding a smile. Well, that's certainly interesting, Burt thought to himself.

Kurt wiped his hands on a towel and tossed it at his dad, who caught it deftly. "Let's go, peasant. It's time to see how smart you really are," he said before walking off.

"Oh so I'm a peasant now?" Blaine asked as he followed Kurt.

"You've always been a peasant," Kurt said. "Or did you forget, I am but a mere peasant in need of work. Please, show me the way'," he mocked.

Blaine shook his head and laughed the first genuine laugh Kurt ever heard from him. Kurt hated how it thrilled him. "Oh sure, use my own words against me," Blaine replied, feigning annoyance.

Burt watched the boys walk away, a crooked smile on his lips. Things were most certainly going to be more entertaining around the shop.

Kurt walked into the back room where all the tools were kept and wasted no time. He grabbed a screwdriver, like a smartass, and turned to Blaine. "Alright, Anderson. What's this and what does it do?"

Blaine raised an eyebrow and crossed his arms. "It's a hammer and it's to break the window. You know, to make stealing the car easier."

"If you ask me a stupid question, I'm going to give you a stupid answer," Blaine replied smugly.

"Alright, fine," Kurt said, putting the screwdriver away and grabbing another tool. "What's this?"

"Torque wrench," Blaine answered easily.

Kurt nodded, put the wrench away, and grabbed another tool. "And this?"

"Groove joint pliers," Blaine replied with a smile.

"Ok," Kurt said with a nod, doing his best to hide his amazement that Blaine actually studied the books. "And this one?" he asked, showing Blaine another tool.

Blaine narrowed his eyes on the tool as he tried to remember. "Uh…half inch teardrop ratchet?"

"Quarter inch actually," Kurt corrected with a smile, entirely too satisfied at Blaine being wrong.

"Damn," Blaine said with a snap, making Kurt laugh. Blaine couldn't help but smile. He quite enjoyed Kurt's laugh. It was kind of adorable.

They spent the next twenty minutes reviewing the tools until Burt called out to them. Kurt returned to the garage while Blaine went back to the front desk, Kurt surprisingly in a better mood and Blaine oddly satisfied at how often he was able to make Kurt laugh. It was a good day, but by the
end of Blaine's shift, he was more than ready to head home. When he walked out to the BMW, he found Cooper standing against it and talking with Kurt.

"You ready Squirt," Cooper asked when he saw Blaine.

"Squirt?" Kurt said with a smirk.

"Don't even think about calling me that," Blaine warned him, though he was smiling.

Kurt shrugged and crossed his arms. "I like peasant better anyway."

Blaine laughed that genuine laugh Kurt was starting to really enjoy, surprising Cooper. Cooper couldn't remember the last time Blaine laughed like that and it wasn't even from anything that funny. His brother was crushing bad, even if he wouldn't admit it yet.

"Of course, your highness," Blaine replied with a mock bow.

Kurt rolled his eyes and shook his head. "I'll see you tomorrow, Blaine. It was nice talking with you Dr. Anderson."

"You too, Kurt. Tell your dad I said hi," Cooper replied with a wink and charming smile. Blaine didn't miss the way Kurt's cheeks flushed and for reasons he didn't understand, it bothered him.

As soon as Kurt was out of earshot, Cooper turned to Blaine. "Your highness?"

Blaine glared at his brother. "Not. A. Word," he said before walking over to the passenger seat and getting into the car. Cooper simply smiled. He could get used to this side Blaine.

Later that night, Marley, Harmony, and Chandler came over to the Hudmel home for their sleepover. They were Kurt's only real friends in school. Chandler and Harmony were seniors like him. Marley was only a sophomore but was incredibly sweet. They all were in drama class together and worked on the shows after school. Out of the three, he was closest to Marley. She was the only one he truly trusted. He adored Harmony and all her crazy, and Chandler had been his first friend when they'd moved to Cleveland, but neither connected with Kurt the way Marley had.

The second they were all in Kurt's room, Chandler made himself comfortable on Kurt's bed, laying down and resting his head on Kurt's pillow, much to Kurt's dismay. Harmony and Marley sat crossed leg at the bottom of Kurt's bed, leaving the open spot next to Chandler for Kurt. Kurt bit back his annoyance and sat on his bed as far away from Chandler as possible without it seeming weird. Maybe it was because of how Chandler chewed him out that morning, but he couldn't help but feel aggravated just being in Chandler's presence. Kurt ignored the little voice in his head that told him he'd rather be hanging out with Blaine. Because they didn't hang out. They worked together. Nothing more.

"So why didn't you text me back today," Chandler asked with a pout.

"Because I was working," Kurt answered like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

"Yeah but you always text me back," Chandler complained.

Kurt glanced at Marley, irritation written all over his face. "We hired someone new and I'm his mentor. I was busy showing him around."

"Oh! Is he cute?" Harmony asked instantly. "Is he gay?"
"Why is that always the first thing you ask," Marley said with a small laugh.

"Because, if he is then Kurt could totally have hot kinky garage sex," Harmony replied with a giggle.

"Harm!" Kurt squealed, his cheeks turning a bright pink. "That is my father's business! Do you really think that I would do something like that?"

"Why not?! It would give you good experience for the stage!" Harmony exclaimed.

Chandler sat up and huffed in annoyance, clearly upset by the topic. "Exactly how would that be good stage experience?" he questioned.

"Because it's like, a forbidden romance cause he's Mr. Hummel's employee, and forbidden romances are all about passion and the stage is all about passion," Harmony replied.

"Trust me, it's much more forbidden than just him working for my dad," Kurt replied under his breath.

"Oh, so he is gay!" Harmony squealed.

"What do you mean?" Marley asked curiously. "Is he older? Married?"

"Yeah, what do you mean?" Chandler asked, his voice laced with suspicion, wondering why in the hell were they even talking about this?

Kurt shifted uncomfortably, unsure of how his friends would take the news. "Um, well, you see, the guy my dad hired actually goes to our school."

"Oh! Intrigue!" Harmony exclaimed. "This just got so much better!"

"It isn't one of the football jocks, is it?" Marley asked worried.

"None of the football jocks are gay, silly," Harmony giggled as she hit Marley with a pillow.


"Well, who is it?" Chandler asked, needing to know.

"It's um…it's Blaine Anderson," Kurt stammered.

The girls' eyes widened, their jaws going slack. Chandler just stared at Kurt dumbfounded. "Blaine Anderson as in, the Blaine Anderson? Leader of Anderson's Crew?" Marley asked quietly.

Kurt sighed and nodded. "That's the one."

"Well…he is cute, and he is gay," Harmony pointed out with an approving nod. "What's he like?"

"Yeah," Marley cut in. "Is he as scary outside of school as he is in school?"

"Does he hit on you? I heard he flirts with all the guys, no matter their sexual orientation," Harmony added matter-of-factly.

"Did anyone in his crew come in there?" Marley wondered, blushing slightly at the thought of Jake.
Before Kurt could answer any of their questions, Chandler snapped. "Are you seriously saying the reason you didn't text me back today is because you were hanging out with that delinquent?"

"I wasn't hanging out with him," Kurt snapped. "I was working and teaching him what to do. My dad asked me to mentor him so I am. What would you have me do, Chandler? Tell the school's biggest badass, 'Oh no, sorry. I can't answer your question or teach you how to use the register even though my father specifically told me to because texting my friend is more important'?"

When Chandler didn't respond, Kurt continued. "That's what I thought. And to answer your questions," he said turning back to the girls. "No, none of his crew showed up, no, he didn't hit on me, and yes, he's just as scary outside of school as he is in school." Kurt lied through his teeth on the last two. He didn't need them knowing that he thought Blaine was actually not a bad guy once you got past the cockiness, especially Chandler. He'd probably tell Marley later. "The good thing is that he's a pretty good worker and he hates Kyle as much as I do. That counts for something, right? In fact, I think he hates Kyle even more than me," Kurt laughed.

"Well, yay for you," Chandler said in annoyance. "We're not really going to talk about Anderson all night are we?"

"No, we are not," Kurt assured him, placing a hand on Chandler's arm in attempts to calm the boy. The scowl on Chandler's face instantly vanished and was replaced with a dreamy look directed at Kurt. Kurt quickly pulled his hand away. "Let's watch a movie instead."

The three settled themselves on Kurt's bed while he got up to put a movie in. As his friends laid down together, all of them propped up by their elbows, Kurt leaned against his headboard, tucking his legs underneath him. The last thing he needed was to take his usual spot between Marley and Chandler and have the boy not so stealthily attempt to intertwine their legs. Chandler gave him a disgruntled glare, but said nothing as Kurt started the movie.

Kurt had the morning off at the shop as he did every Sunday. He spent it sleeping in with his friends, then making crepes while they argued over what were the best stuffings and toppings, an argument that soon turned into massive giggling about sex. Kurt had to roll his eyes at that. None of them had very much experience as far as Kurt knew. Kurt thought that sadly he may have been the most experienced of them all, though nothing that had happened with Dave had been really wanted. No, what he wanted was romance, the touch of fingertips, a flutter in his belly that made his heart skip a beat. A flash of slicked back curls and hazel eyes flashed in his mind and he shook it away. Blaine Anderson was most definitely not what he wanted.

Blaine wanted to sleep in Sunday morning, but instead he rolled his sorry ass out of bed and quickly jumped into a cold shower to wake him up and help banish the results of the last thoughts in his mind before he'd awoken. They couldn't have been of Kurt. That would be ridiculous. Still, as he rode to shop, the wind whipping through his leather jacket, he couldn't help the excitement he felt that he would be seeing Kurt soon.

"Morning, Blaine," Burt called as the boy walked into the break room with his helmet under his arm and punched his time card.

"Morning, Mr. Hummel," Blaine answered with a smile. He put his coat and his helmet away in his locker then noticed that someone was missing. "Where's Kurt?"

Burt hid his smirk turning toward the door. "I give Kurt Sunday mornings off to catch up on homework or hang out with his friends, but he'll be in later," he explained. Then he turned to Blaine suddenly. "It's not a problem, is it? I didn't even ask if you and your brother tend to go to church
Sunday mornings.

Blaine chuckled and shook his head. "No. I used to go with my Mom sometimes when I was younger, but Coop and I don't go. It's totally fine for me to work Sunday mornings."

"Good," Burt said with a nod. "Come on." Blaine followed Burt out of the break room and into the garage. There was only one other mechanic there who was just showing up. They both smiled at him. The garage was technically closed on Sundays. They used the time to play catch up, finish the cars that needed to be picked up Monday morning, and of course, man the gas pumps. Burt grabbed a clipboard off the shelf and handed it to Blaine. "I like to do inventory in the store Sunday mornings while it's quiet. Think you can handle that while you watch the pumps?"

"Of course," Blaine said with a confident grin. He took the clipboard and headed off to the front.

The morning went quickly and Kurt showed up at lunchtime to take over for Blaine at the pumps while he took his lunch break. Then he finished up some of the easier tasks in the garage. Blaine had finished inventory a while ago, and Kurt could see him, entertaining himself at the register, dancing to music that Kurt couldn't hear over the roar of garage noises. Blaine stopped immediately any time a customer drove up, but as soon as they were gone he would start again. Finishing up in the garage, curiosity got the best of Kurt and he headed toward the front office. As he nonchalantly slinked closer, Blaine's muffled singing began to fill his ears. Kurt didn't even know the boy could sing, but his breathtakingly beautiful voice shocked him. Kurt stood frozen by the door, fixated on Blaine's smooth vocals. How one guy could have so many attractive qualities was beyond him.

_or will you stay
   Even if it hurts
Even if I try to push you out
Will you return?
And remind me who I really am
Please remind me who I really am

Blaine held a bottle of water like a microphone and started jumping up and down as he sang, completely lost in his own world. Kurt held his breath not wanting Blaine to hear or see him and stop. The boy was absolutely mesmerizing as he performed for himself.

_Everybody's got a dark side
Do you love me?
Can you love mine?
Nobody's a picture perfect
But we're worth it
You know that we're worth it
Will you love me?
Even with my dark side?

There was something almost haunting about Blaine's voice. Kurt couldn't pinpoint the emotion behind the lyrics but he was certain there was some sort of meaning behind them. He took a step closer to Blaine, unable to look away from the badboy. He needed to hear more. He needed to know more.
It was like Blaine was singing to him, which was ridiculous, but the lyrics cut deep into Kurt's soul. Kurt inhaled sharply at the thought, just as the motors in the garage went silent, grabbing Blaine's attention. Blaine quickly looked behind him to see Kurt staring at him.

"What?" Blaine snapped, glaring accusingly at Kurt, unable to control the anger that burst inside him. He hadn't realized he'd been singing loud enough to be heard over the constant hum of the garage, but like so many times in the shower at home, once he started singing he'd completely forgotten the world around him. Blaine hated when people heard him singing though and he was completely mortified that Kurt had seen him.

Kurt recoiled, suddenly anxious in front of Blaine. "Um, I'm done in the garage so I can take over in here if you wanted to go home," Kurt stuttered nervously. "You um, you have a nice voice," he breathed out, willing his racing heart to slow down.

Blaine narrowed his eyes, his posture going stiff. "I guess," he shrugged.

"I mean it," Kurt said, sensing Blaine's disbelief. "Like, really nice," he stopped himself from saying that Blaine actually had an amazing voice, incredible even. He wasn't about to gush over Blaine Anderson.

Blaine's posture eased up a bit, his face softening slightly. "Yeah?" he questioned. Not that he cared or anything.

"Yeah," Kurt assured him as he took a few steps closer. "I wouldn't lie to you."

Blaine nodded slowly, a small but genuine smile gracing his face. "Thanks," he said awkwardly.

"Yeah, sure," Kurt shrugged, looking away from Blaine's intense gaze. "Anyway, Dad said when I was done you were free to go. He said to be here at the same time tomorrow."

"Alright," Blaine said with a nod. "I'll uh, talk to you later," he said as he made his way to the door.

"Right. Yeah. Later," Kurt replied flustered. "Bye, Blaine," Blaine sent him a nod and walked out of the room. Kurt placed his hand over his chest and took deep, calming breaths. What the hell was wrong with him and why did Blaine singing affect him so much? With a shuddery breath, Kurt composed himself and went out to help the car that just rolled up.
Brittany and Santana were the first to arrive in the courtyard with their lunches on Monday. Since the increased lockdown of the school, the girls and the rest of Anderson's Crew had completely taken over the inner courtyard, a small outdoor area with 2 picnic tables, benches and a few small gardens surrounded by the four quarters of the school. Puck and Jake joined them soon, carrying matching trays from the cafeteria piled with food, followed by Nick, Jeff and Quinn who packed their own healthy lunches daily.

"Alright guys," Puck started in immediately, his mouth full of mashed potatoes. "We need to teach a few people a lesson about suspending our boy Blaine. Who's in?" Puck looked around the table pointedly.

"Blaine said no," Nick said without hesitation. "Said he did the crime, he'd do the time."

"And how the hell do you know that?" Puck sneered.

"Because he left me a message on Facebook telling me very clearly not to let you do anything stupid. He knows you too well Puckerman and he knew what you'd get up to. He's our leader for a reason," Nick said matter-of-factly as he turned back to his salad.

"Besides," Brittany chimed in, one arm linked with Santana's. "He shouldn't be smoking anyway. It's really bad for you. Turns your teeth all yellow and your lungs all black."

"Tell that to your girlfriend and her toke partner," Quinn said lowly, an eye to Puck. The two had history and though they had both moved on since then, they still knew the best way to get under each other's skin. Puck was slow to respond though, taking a giant bite out of his hamburger, and it was Brittany that shot back first. She could handle Quinn and Puck's back and forth jabs at one another, but she hated when Quinn picked on Santana.

"You're just mad that you lost your smoking buddy Blaine for a week," Brittany said with a frown.

"At least I've never hooked up with him," Quinn said haughtily as she wrapped her arm around Jeff's waist, pulling him in for a kiss on the lips that was far dirtier than it needed to be.

Puck choked on a chug of his soda as he started snickering at Quinn's words, then choked on the laugh as Santana hit him across the chest. "Ow!" he pouted but no one paid him any attention because Santana's eyes were starting to blaze and everyone knew that the claws were coming out when Santana rose slowly out of her seat.

"Listen to me, punk rocker. Kissing Blaine one time on a dare is a far cry from hooking up with him," she snapped glaring at Quinn. Brittany's hand on hers was the only thing that kept her from reaching across the table to strangle the girl.

But this was all part of who the Unholy Trinity was and Santana didn't scare Quinn, she only egged her on. "Oh, I don't know, if I remember correctly, it was quite a kiss," she mocked.

"Alright everyone, settle down," Jake yelled, and everyone at the table stopped and stared at him. Jake was the youngest, rarely the one to make waves in the Crew, but then again, the Crew was rarely together without Blaine to control them. "Though I'm starting to learn an awful lot about things before my time, and I'm really curious about this kiss between Santana and Blaine, I seriously don't think this is how he expects his girls to be acting in his absence." The girls shrank back slightly and went back to their lunch, letting the argument blow over as so many others had.
By the afternoon they'd all be best friends again.

"I still think we can't leave this suspension unanswered," Puck muttered to his brother. "Anderson's Crew can't just sit back and do nothing while our leader is thrown out of school for no reason. We gotta make this right."

"I agree," Santana admitted. "No one messes with Blaine, not even Mr. Peters or the Principal. You know they just have it out for him."

"I'm in," Jeff decided and gave Quinn a sloppy kiss on the cheek. "Come on baby, do it for Blaine."

"Totally." Quinn agreed and she eyed Brittany, Nick and Jake narrowly. "So what's it gonna be goody-two-shoes. Are you guys in? Or are you out?"

After his lunch period, Kurt quickly dodged through the parking lot full of cars, desperately trying to make it to his Navigator without incident. Just as he reached it, however, a strong hand grabbed him by the arm roughly.

"It's time we have another chat Kurtie," Kyle said as he forcibly guided Kurt to a secluded area behind the school.

Kurt cringed at the even tone in Kyle's voice. He was in trouble and he knew it. He hadn't meant to snap at the football star in front of the entire cafeteria. In fact, he had actually gone the entire morning without snapping a single remark towards Kyle. He allowed Kyle to humiliate him in class and in the halls, biting his tongue in order to stop himself from talking back. But his mouth tended to move on its own accord and before he knew it, he was in Kyle's face telling him off during lunch. Now he would have to pay the price.

As soon as they were hidden away, Kyle shoved Kurt into the fence and punched him in the gut. "I tried being nice," Kyle said with another punch. "I tried to warn you, but you just don't seem to understand." Kurt groaned out in pain but instead of doing the smart thing, which was shut up and take it, he just had to open his mouth and say something. "Oh, I understand plenty. The only way you can feel good about yourself is by beating up those who are better than you!" Kurt spat out.

Kyle responded with another punch to Kurt's side. Kurt howled out in pain. "What did I fucking say about talking back to me," Kyle grabbed Kurt by the collar and tossed him on the ground before delivering a particularly hard kick to the stomach.

Neither of them saw Anderson's Crew walking by toward the parking lot, but Brittany was the first to notice what was happening. She recognized Kyle's victim as Kurt Hummel and it physically hurt her heart that Kyle was beating up someone as magical as him.

"We have to help him," Brittany said desperately.

"Who?" Santana asked, glancing in the direction where Brittany was staring. "Hummel? Let him go, Britt. After what he said to Johnson at lunch-"

"I don't care what he said!" Brittany snapped, surprising the entire crew. "Kurt's a unicorn! We have to help him!" Santana and Puck looked at Britt and then exchanged a glance before nodding in agreement and walking towards Kyle and Kurt. The others followed.

Kyle picked Kurt up by the collar and shook him. "You listen here you disgusting little queer-"
"What the fuck's going on here?" Puck yelled out.

Kyle looked away from Kurt to see Anderson's Crew walking his way. "None of your damn business, Puckerman."

"Oh, but it is my business," Puck said as he and Santana stepped closer to him. "You see, my girl Britt here doesn't like how you're treating the dweeb and my girl Tana over here doesn't like it when Britt's upset. So the way I see it, you can either walk away or Tana will crack one of your nuts. You can choose which one."

Kyle scoffed but backed away from Kurt anyway. "You think you're so damn tough, don't you? Having a girl fight for you? How pathetic."

Santana took an angry step at Kyle but stopped when Puck grabbed her arm. "That's where you're wrong, Johnson. First of all, these girls are tougher than you and your dipshit friends combined. Second, if I fight you then you're never going to be able to play another football game for the rest of your life. The way I see it, I'm being nice."

"I suggest you walk away before Noah loses his temper," Quinn said in a bored tone from behind Puck and Santana. "He's been itchin for a fight. I'd hate for that pretty face of yours to get ruined," she said with a condescending smile.

Kyle sideways glanced at Kurt, who was now sitting up against the fence, surprise and fear written all over his face, and decided to back off. Anderson may be out of school for the week but his crew would certainly beat him just as badly if he didn't back down.

"This isn't over Kurtie," Kyle said menacingly before walking off.

As Kyle walked away, Brittany hurried over to Kurt's side and kneeled beside him. She remembered him from a long time ago, before she'd moved to this part of Ohio, when she'd lived in Lima. They'd been classmates in kindergarten, friends even. She didn't think he remembered, but even then she knew he was special. She hated seeing him constantly picked on by the football team.

"Are you ok," Brittany asked softly as she helped Kurt up.

"I'm fine," Kurt replied quietly, unable to look at the blond in the eyes. He wondered if Blaine had told his crew of their growing friendship, but something told him they didn't know and he wasn't about to tell them. "Thanks for helping me," he said to Santana who was watching him and Brittany closely. Puck and the others had already walked off, leaving Kurt alone with the Unholy Trinity.

"Don't thank us. Britt's the one who insisted we save your scrawny ass," Santana replied with an eye roll.

Kurt turned to Brittany and smiled softly. "Thank you."

"It's no problem. I don't like him anyway and you're a special unicorn. I couldn't let him beat you up," Brittany replied with a small shrug.

"Britt, let's go. The boys are waiting," Quinn said.

"Bye, Kurt. Don't let them steal your magic," Brittany said before walking off with Santana and Quinn.
Kurt stood there in a bit of a daze for a moment before walking back to his Navigator. He had no idea what just happened but he was unbelievably grateful for the presence of Blaine's crew. He couldn't make heads or tails about what Brittany had said but he decided to let it go. The one thing he knew for sure was that Blaine's crew, like Blaine, were not what they seemed.

Blaine fell back into his bed after taking a long shower. He had no idea when he signed up for the gig that working all day at the shop would be so incredibly exhausting, but despite how tired he was, he really couldn't complain. He hated to admit it, but he really liked his job. After the terrible initiation to mechanics that his father had given him years ago, he never thought he'd be interested in the actual repair work. But working with Burt was nothing like working with his father. He didn't treat Blaine like a delinquent or like some dumb kid. He didn't try to change who he was or think that building a car together would "turn him into a man." Burt treated him with respect and kindness. He joked around with Blaine when there were customers present and he talked to Blaine, not at him like most adults did. Burt was stern yet compassionate, and Blaine was starting to admire the man.

Of course the other reason he liked working at the shop so much was because of Kurt. The dweeb was not at all what he had expected. Kurt was funny and smart, and he didn't take Blaine's crap which should have made him angry, but instead was the thing that impressed Blaine the most. There were times where Blaine couldn't help but mess with Kurt because of how snarky he was. Kurt was witty and quick on his feet, and Blaine found himself craving his attention. Blaine would purposely annoy Kurt, just to see Kurt get flustered. The way his cheeks reddened when he was aggravated and the way his voice went slightly higher whenever he yelled wasn't just entertaining, it was kind of adorable, sexy even. There was something about Kurt that Blaine couldn't pinpoint, something that stood out, and Blaine wanted nothing more than to discover what it was.

A loud banging at the front door interrupted his thoughts and he rolled off his bed with a groan.

"Anderson, open up!" Blaine heard Puck shout.

Blaine pushed his thoughts of Kurt aside and hurried to the front door to let in his crew. He hadn't seen them all weekend thanks to Cooper being a hardass, but Cooper was working the night shift at the hospital and what his brother didn't know wouldn't hurt him. There was no way he was going to pass up seeing the guys and his girls.

"Puckerman!" Blaine yelled out as he opened the front door to let them all in. He gave Puck and Jake fist bumps and high-fived Jeff and Nick before turning to his girls.

"Sup, Blainers," Santana said as she walked in, kissing Blaine on the cheek.

"Hey, Tana. Miss me?" Blaine teased as Quinn and Brittany kissed his cheek as well.

"I only missed seeing that fine ass, Anderson," Santana teased, smacking it as she walked by.

"Don't get cocky now."

"My ass is pretty fine, huh?" Blaine asked smugly as they walked towards the basement where they always hung out.

"You know it!" Puck exclaimed. "It kinda makes me wish I liked cock."

Blaine and the crew laughed as they walked down the stairs. "One night with me and you'll never want to look at another vagina again," Blaine replied seductively.

"Oh baby, don't tease," Puck said with a flourish.
The crew settled down in their usual spots. Puck pulled up a stool at the wet bar. Jeff and Nick sat in the loveseat, Quinn snuggled on Jeff's lap. Jake raided the mini fridge and grabbed himself a soda before twirling on a barstool next to his brother. Santana relaxed in the recliner, and Blaine took a seat on the couch, propping his feet up on the coffee table. Brittany, who usually sat on Santana's lap, laid down on the couch instead and rested her head on Blaine's lap.

"What's the matter, sweetie?" Blaine asked as he pushed her hair away from her face. The only time Brittany laid her head on Blaine's lap was when she was upset. When she didn't answer and instead nuzzled her head closer to Blaine, Blaine glanced up at Santana.

"She's upset because we caught Johnson beating up that dweeb Hummel," Santana answered, filing her nails.

"WHAT?!" Blaine shouted, anger suddenly boiling in him before he could bury it.

"Yeah, man. We were walking out to the cars and he was pounding on the kid behind the school," Nick explained sadly. Nick wasn't one for violence, despite the fact that he was one hell of a fighter. He loved his friends but unlike them, he always preferred words to fists.

"After what happened at lunch I'm not surprised," Jeff said with a snicker.

"What the fuck happened at lunch?" Blaine demanded, his fingers intertwined with Brittany's hair.

"Jackass Johnson was harassing that Hummel kid in the cafeteria and the dweeb flipped out at him in front of everybody," Quinn answered. "We were just heading back inside from the courtyard when we saw the dweeb getting his ass beat."

"I gotta admit, he may be a dweeb but he's sarcastic as shit. I'd love to have a snark off with him," Santana added, a seductive tone in her voice.

"I'm gonna fucking beat Johnson until he can't fucking breathe," Blaine said through gritted teeth.

The room became silent, all pairs of eyes except Brittany's suddenly turned to their leader. The Crew knew just how much Blaine hated Kyle, but the malice in his eyes and the tone of pure determination in his voice surprised them. It was as if this was personal.

"Why?" Puck finally asked. "I mean I hate the fucker too but you were just suspended dude, and it was just some dweeb. Why are you getting so worked up over this?"

Blaine stared at Puck, his hand freezing in Brittany's hair. He knew exactly why he was getting so worked up though he didn't want to admit it to them. Hell, he didn't even want to admit it to himself, though it was becoming clearer and clearer every day. He liked Kurt. He liked his sarcasm and he liked his passion for cars, and he liked the relationship he had with his father. But most of all he liked that Kurt sometimes seemed to let down his guard and trust Blaine with a tentative friendship. Because they were starting to form some sort of friendship, and to Blaine, friendship meant protection. Kurt was under his protection now and it was time Kyle learned a lesson about not touching what was Blaine's.

He couldn't share any of that with his crew though. Not now. Maybe not ever. Instead, he blamed it on the job. "Because Kurt's my damn boss," Blaine told them.

"He's your boss?" Jake asked confused. "How is he your boss?"

"His dad owns the garage. He's the one that's been teaching me how to do shit. I mean yeah he's a total dweeb but he and his dad gave me a shot, so as far as I'm concerned, Kurt's under my
protection. I can't let my boss' kid get his ass beat by Kyle fucking Johnson," Blaine replied angrily.

"So what are you suggesting?" Santana asked, watching Blaine curiously. Something told her there was more to Blaine's sudden protection of Kurt Hummel but she wouldn't say anything yet. She'd wait to see how it all played out first.

"We're going to teach Johnson a fucking lesson, that's what I'm suggesting," Blaine all but growled.

Brittany perked up and looked at Blaine with wide, innocent, pleading eyes. "You won't let him hurt Kurt anymore, will you? Kurt's a special unicorn like you. You can't let Kyle take away his magic. Unicorns have to stick together or all the magic in the world will disappear."

"Don't worry, Britt. I'm not going to let anyone hurt Kurt again," Blaine assured her, ignoring the way his heart thumped at Britt calling Kurt a magical unicorn like him. He'd always loved how Brittany called him special and magical. Hearing her say the same thing about Kurt made him shiver and he didn't understand it. Or maybe he just refused to. "You girls stay here. We're going to pay Johnson a little visit at football practice."

The boys made their way upstairs, all of them except Nick eager at the opportunity to fight. Nick, as always, would make sure it didn't go too far. As soon as they left, Santana and Quinn moved to the couch to sit with Brittany. As Quinn grabbed the TV remote to turn it on, Brittany settled her head on Santana's lap.

"Blaine's pretty eager to fight Kyle for this kid," Santana commented.

"Blaine's pretty eager to fight Kyle period, this just gives him an excuse," Quinn said with a laugh. Santana nodded but said nothing as she stroked Brittany's hair.

"I hope Blaine beats the crap out of him. He deserves it for hurting Kurt," Brittany said, her tone both angry and sad. She didn't like it when her friends got into fights but she hated when the jocks picked on the dweebs, especially ones as special as Kurt.

"Don't worry, baby. Blaine's got this," Santana assured her. Brittany sighed and nodded. She knew Blaine would protect Kurt. Maybe if she got lucky, Blaine and Kurt would become friends and then she'd have two magical unicorns by her side. She decided to pray to the unicorn god to bring them together. Having one unicorn around was uncommon, but having two was especially rare and she didn't want the opportunity to pass her by.

Kyle was the last person to leave the locker rooms after football practice. Walking to the now empty parking lot, he thought of all the ways he was going to make Kurt Hummel pay for his constant disrespect. He stopped dead in his tracks though when he saw Blaine leaning up against his Escalade, the Puckerman brothers straddling their motorcycles, and Jeff and Nick resting against Nick's car. With the exception of Blaine, they were all wearing the same menacing glares. Blaine on the other hand, had an almost amused expression on his face. Kyle internally cursed. He was in deep shit.

"Get the hell off my car Anderson," Kyle said through gritted teeth, though he made no move to force him.

Blaine let out a chuckle, uncrossed his arms, and placed his key on Kyle's Escalade door. "It's such a nice car. It would sure be a shame to scratch it up. Don't you agree?"

"Don't you fucking dare!" Kyle snapped, taking a few steps closer to Blaine, only to stop when
Blaine made a move to actually scratch it. "Get away from my car, Anderson!"

"Make me," Blaine challenged.

Kyle momentarily forgot that the others were there and charged at Blaine. The guys didn't move a muscle though. They were only there for backup. As soon as Kyle was within reach, Blaine grabbed him by the arm, twisted it behind his back, and slammed him against his car.

"I think it's time we had ourselves a little chat," Blaine growled in his ear.

"What the hell do you want, Anderson? I didn't do shit to you," Kyle argued, groaning in pain when Blaine twisted his arm a little more.

"Oh, but you did. You see, I don't think you're aware of this but I work at Burt's Complete Auto Care now. Which means that Kurt Hummel is now under my protection," Blaine said, reveling in the shocked look on Kyle's face.

"This is about that stupid dweeb? Are you kidding me?" Kyle asked in exasperation, instantly regretting it when Blaine pulled his body back and slammed him against the car once more.

"That dweeb is my boss' kid and I can't have you beating him up. It'd be bad for business to be down a mechanic," Blaine said as he tightened his grip on Kyle's arm. "I'm only going to say this once. Stay. Away. From Kurt. If I find out you're harassing him again, I won't just break your arm, I'll break every fucking bone in your body. And before you get any bright ideas, that goes for your stupid friends too. Kurt Hummel is off limits now. Fuck with him again and I won't be so nice. Are we clear?" Blaine asked as he twisted Kyle's arm one more time.

"Yes, yes! We're clear!" Kyle hollered out in pain.

"Good," Blaine said before finally letting go. Blaine walked over to his bike as the others got ready to leave. Before putting on his helmet, he turned back to Kyle. "By the way, my boys and I felt your car needed something special to represent the kind of guy you are. Enjoy your new ornament," he said as he glanced at the back of Kyle's Escalade. Blaine winked at Kyle, put his helmet on, and drove out of the school parking lot, his boys close behind.

Kyle walked to the back of his car to see that Blaine and his boys had attached a pair of hot pink bull balls normally seen on trucks. Anger boiled in him at the gesture, his hatred for Blaine growing tenfold. He was sick and tired of Andersons' Crew running around like they were in charge. He would heed Blaine's warning about harassing Kurt for now, but he had every intention of finally putting Anderson and his goons in place. It was just a matter of time.

Blaine returned home to hang with his crew for a bit then cleared them out in case Cooper got home early. Part of him knew he should just head up to bed. Threatening Kyle was enough, Kurt didn't need to know how quickly he'd come to his defense. Kurt was a strong, fiercely independent and no doubt prideful sort of kid. Blaine was sure Kurt would take his protection as Blaine thinking he was weak and Blaine most certainly didn't think that.

But he couldn't stop thinking about how injured Kurt might be. All that pride and strength and independence would have him hiding his injuries from everyone, and from what the girls had said, the attack had been vicious. If Kurt was seriously hurt, someone needed to know.

He turned back around the moment he hit the top of the stairs and raced back down again and out the door, mounting his motorcycle and riding over to the shop. It was just about closing time, but he knew that Kurt would still be there and he needed to see him face to face. He needed to know
that Kurt was okay. Just like he would with any other member of his crew. At least that's what he told himself.

Burt heard the roar of the engine just as he was closing shop. He looked over at the rider, ready to tell him that he was closing up, but stopped when he saw it was Blaine.

"Hey kid, nice bike," Burt complimented as he walked over to Blaine. "Didn't I kick you out of here four hours ago?"

"Guess I just couldn't stay away," Blaine replied with a smile, glancing behind Burt to see if Kurt was around. "Thanks. About the bike I mean."

"I remember my bike back in high school. I had a 1980 Harley Davidson and man was it a beaut," Burt said with a fond smile as he reminisced. "That's how I got Kurt's mom, ya know."

Blaine smiled brightly at that. The more time he spent with Burt, the more he liked him. "You want to take her for a ride," Blaine asked, gesturing to the bike.

"Oh, no. I couldn't," Burt said regretfully, wishing that he could. "Kurt and Carole would kill me. Finn would too but only because he'd be jealous," Burt chuckled.

"Well, if you ever do want to take her out, your secret will be safe with me," Blaine whispered conspiringly.

Burt eyed the bike for a moment imagining the ride before shaking his head. "You're a bad influence on me. I'm going to get in trouble and it's going to be entirely your fault, Blaine," he said, waving an accusing finger at Blaine.

Blaine laughed and shrugged. "I'd say I'm sorry, but I'm not," he said with a wink. "I was actually thinking about taking Kurt for a ride. I needed to talk to him about school. Is he around?"

"Yeah but good luck trying to get him on the bike," Burt said with a laugh. "He's in the break room."

Blaine nodded his thanks and walked to the break room to find Kurt reaching for a plastic cup on the highest shelf, a slither of bruised skin visible just between Kurt's waistline and his shirt. His blood boiled just at the sight and his hatred for Kyle suddenly returned even stronger.

"We need to talk," Blaine said.

Kurt whipped around, startled, and suddenly dropped the cup as he winced, pain shooting through his side. "What are you doing here?" he hissed, bending down to pick up the cup and to perfectly mask the pain he felt.

Instead of answering, Blaine glanced outside. Burt was sitting on Blaine's bike pretending to ride it. Blaine closed the door, swiftly crossed the room, and swept Kurt out of his father's view. Before Kurt could protest, Blaine lifted his shirt to further inspect the bruise. Kurt though yanked himself away before he could get a good enough view.

"What the hell are you doing Blaine?" Kurt yelled, fighting to keep his shirt down.

"You know exactly what I'm doing," Blaine snapped.

"It's nothing. I'm fine," Kurt said quietly, refusing to look at Blaine.
"That's bullshit and you know it," Blaine said angrily reaching for Kurt's hand. "You're getting on my damn bike and coming with me right now, and you're going to tell me what the fuck happened."

"I'm not one of your goons, Blaine!" Kurt snapped, pulling free and stepping further away from Blaine. "You can't just demand things from me!"

Blaine took a calming breath until his fury cooled. He stepped towards Kurt, who was now watching him carefully, and gingerly cupped his face. "You're right. You're not in my crew and I can't demand anything of you. You are my friend though and I would really like it if you told me what happened."

Kurt blinked, the gentleness of Blaine's voice shocking him. Every time he thought he had Blaine figured out, the kid would go and surprise him. He found himself being drawn into intense but caring hazel eyes, and it scared the hell out of him. He looked down and backed away from Blaine, folding his hands over his chest protectively.

"Fine," Kurt agreed before walking out of the room. Blaine ran his fingers through his hair, ignoring the way his heart raced when he'd looked into Kurt's stormy eyes, and followed after Kurt.

"You actually got him to say yes?" Burt asked in absolute shock.

Blaine gave him a smug grin and shrugged. "I'm a bad influence. You said so yourself."

Burt chuckled and nodded. "Sure you are. Don't be home late," he said to Kurt who was reluctantly putting the spare helmet on.

"I won't, as long as I make it home alive," Kurt assured him nervously. Blaine swung his leg over his bike, put his helmet on, and nodded at Kurt to get on. Kurt huffed and took the seat behind Blaine. "Try not to take too sharp of turns, ok?" Kurt said in annoyance, just loudly enough for only Blaine to hear as he tentatively wrapped his arms around Blaine's waist. Blaine nodded in understanding, kicked off the stand, started the bike, and rode off. Burt watched Blaine and Kurt ride away with growing curiosity. He was starting to wonder exactly how friendly their friendship was.

Blaine drove Kurt to a park nearby. He was enjoying their current close proximity a little too much and needed to add a little distance sooner rather than later. As soon as he parked, Kurt un-mounted the bike, took the helmet off, and walked towards a picnic table, readjusting his hair. Blaine watched Kurt walk away, noticing his stiff posture. To someone who wasn't paying attention, he'd look totally normal. But Blaine could tell he was in a lot of pain.

"You're good at that," Blaine said in a clipped tone.

"At what?" Kurt turned and questioned before he could sit on the bench.

"Hiding the physical pain you're in," Blaine said, earning him an annoyed sigh. He drew closer. "Show me."

"What did I say about you demanding things from me?" Kurt snapped.

Blaine softened his eyes and his tone. "Kurt," he said gently taking one corner of Kurt's shirt in his fingers. "Please let me see."

Kurt really wanted to argue. But the expectant look on Blaine's face combined with his gentle tone
prevented Kurt from doing so. He placed his hand over Blaine's and slowly raised his shirt so Blaine could see the damage. Blaine sucked in a breath at the already purpling of his torso, not to mention the old bruises that were starting to fade. How long had Kurt been dealing with this? How long had Kyle been harassing him? How long had Blaine stood in the bathroom stall or under the bleachers and ignored what was right in front of him?

"Kurt, I'm sorry," Blaine started but Kurt cut him off angrily.

"What?" Kurt snapped. "All of a sudden you care? It's not like you did anything to stop it that day in the bathroom!"

Blaine looked at Kurt's eyes, expecting anger, but what he saw was hurt. "I didn't think you knew I was there."

"I didn't then." Kurt said, backing away from Blaine and lowering his shirt. "But I know now, that cologne you wear mixed with the cigarettes and leather. I figured it out that first day in the garage that it was you in that stall."

Blaine knew there was no excuse because Kurt was right. He hadn't cared then. But he did now. "He won't be bothering you again. You can be sure of that," Blaine said, looking away from Kurt and stuffing his hands in his pocket.


"Nothing," Blaine lied, with a shrug.


Blaine sighed dramatically and rolled his eyes. "All I did was have a talk with Kyle. I didn't beat him up, though he sure as hell deserves it."

"What kind of talk? What did you say to him?" Kurt asked frantically.

"It doesn't matter what I said. All that matters is that he won't be bothering you anymore," Blaine replied.

"I cannot believe you!" Kurt shrieked. "I didn't ask you to defend me, Blaine! I don't need you and your stupid friends protecting me!"

"Obviously you do!" Blaine yelled back. "What was I supposed to do? Just sit back and let that prick beat the shit out of you?"

"You did before! Blaine, this is none of you damn business!"

"I screwed up before Kurt, but now you're my friend! Ok? I made it my damn business and there's nothing you can do about it! You can't stop me from wanting to protect you and you can't stop from caring about you so you might as well get fucking used to it!" Blaine shouted, not truly realizing what he was saying.

Kurt stood frozen, replaying Blaine's words. Blaine cared about him? What? He collapsed onto the picnic table bench. "What's going to happen the rest of this week when you aren't there to protect me?"

"My crew's got your back," Blaine said sitting next to him. Kurt sighed with exasperation. "Look
it's not just me, alright? It's Britt too. She thinks you're magical or some shit and she asked me to do this, which I fully agreed to do. So don't be surprised when the Unholy Trinity starts hanging around you either. When Britt wants something, Tana makes sure she gets it and Britt wants to be your friend real bad."

"The Unholy Trinity," Kurt mumbled under his breath as he ran his fingers through his hair. "Great. Just great. What the hell does that mean anyway? She called me a unicorn for goodness sake."

"That's Britt," Blaine shrugged. "She lives in a magical world and if you're lucky enough to be included in it than you should be proud."

"You're all crazy, you know that, right?" Kurt glanced up at Blaine for only a moment before shaking his head. "Just take me home please," he said as he stood up and walked over to Blaine's bike.

"Fine," Blaine answered with a sigh and walked over to his bike.

Kurt slid off the motorcycle, took the helmet off, and started walking up the driveway, only to be stopped when Blaine grabbed his arm.

"You never told me what actually happened," Blaine said as he pulled Kurt back over to him. Kurt bit his lower lip, a light blush creeping up his cheeks. "It doesn't matter what happened."

"It matters to me," Blaine said earnestly and Kurt could tell it was genuine. "Tell me. Please."

Kurt looked away, remembering his stupidity, but then realized that if anyone would appreciate his brashness, it would be Blaine. "Um, basically, I told him that after we graduate, I'm going to go to New York and live out my dreams and he's going to be stuck here working at McDonald's as the guy who cleans the lobby because he's too stupid to do anything else," Kurt said with an awkwardly proud grin.

"Awkwardly adorable," Blaine thought, then chased the thought from his mind. "Ouch," Blaine replied instead with a laugh.

"Oh, that's not all. I then proceeded to tell him that he would be bald and fat by the time he turned 30 and that he was going to be that guy that lives alone in a trailer park and creeps on all the teenage girls," Kurt said laughing, recalling the way the student body reacted to his outburst. Blaine threw his head back and laughed. "And this was in the cafeteria?"

"Mhm," Kurt nodded. "In front of everybody. As soon as I stormed away I was thinking, 'Crap. I'm totally going to get my ass beat for that one.' I can't say I was surprised when he found me later."

Blaine shook his head and sighed. Without a conscious thought, Blaine raised his hand to Kurt's face and trailed his finger across Kurt's jaw. "You really need to learn how to shut that pretty mouth of yours."

Kurt's breath hitched, his heartbeat racing, but he didn't back away. "Yes well, where would the fun be in that," he replied breathily.

*I can think of a lot of fun in that,* Blaine thought before realizing what exactly he was doing. He quickly brought his hand back, an embarrassed flush on his face. "Right," he said with a nervous chuckle. "I should go. I'll see ya later, Kurt."
"Yeah, later. Bye Blaine," Kurt said as he stepped away from the bike. Blaine sent Kurt a wink and a smirk before putting on his helmet and riding away.
Kurt walked into the house, a small smile on his lips. He'd never admit it to anyone, but he was actually kind of flattered, not to mention grateful, that Blaine had stood up for him. The thought of Blaine Anderson, Shaker Hills' biggest badass, coming to his rescue blew him away. The fact that the hottest guy in school cared enough about him to want to protect him sent a shiver down his spine.

Blaine wasn't at all what Kurt had expected him to be. Sure he was every bit as arrogant as his reputation suggested, but he was also sweet. There was a soft side of Blaine that Kurt knew very few people, maybe not even his crew, got to see and he couldn't help but feel honored that Blaine shared that soft side with him. Whether it was intentional or not, Kurt didn't know. What he did know was that shockingly, he really liked the sweet, dapper side of Blaine and he hoped he'd be allowed to see it more.

"Hey honey," Carole greeted when Kurt walked into the kitchen. She'd peeked out the window when she heard the motorcycle rumble into the driveway, and decided to keep an eye on things, just in case. Just by Kurt and Blaine's goodbye she could tell that Kurt was smitten, but whether Kurt knew or not was the question. "Did you have fun with your friend?" Burt had told her all about Blaine when he arrived home from the garage that night without Kurt.

"Yeah. We just went to the park for a little while but it was nice," Kurt answered, a shy smile still plastered on his face, unbeknownst to him. "What's for dinner?"

"Oh, we just ordered pizza. I'll warm you up a couple of slices," Carole replied as she grabbed a plate. "I'm glad you had a nice time at the park. Your dad said you and Blaine have been getting along well."

Kurt took a seat at the island, a blush creeping up his cheeks. "It's a work in progress, that's for sure," he said with a laugh. "I don't know. He's not what I expected him to be like, ya know?"

"Oh? How so?" Carole asked as she placed Kurt's plate and a glass of water in front of him.

"I don't know," Kurt shrugged taking a bite of pizza. "He's got a pretty bad rep at school but...he's not as tough as I originally thought. He's...different."

"Different, huh?" Carole questioned curiously with a raised eyebrow.

Kurt sipped on his water and nodded. "Yeah. He's actually pretty cool and he's oddly sweet. I hadn't expected that. I had this image of him in my head, the same one I'm sure the whole school has, but now that we're friends it's fading. I don't just see him as the badass, vulgar guy anymore. He's also sweet and caring. He can be incredibly cocky, but sometimes I think it's just an act because he's so insecure. I don't know. He confuses me." Kurt looked up from his plate to see Carole eyeing him with a knowing smirk. "What?"

"You like him," Carole simply put.

Kurt scoffed and rolled his eyes, ignoring the way his heart was racing. "Don't be ridiculous, Carole. We're just friends."

"Just because you're friends doesn't mean you don't like him. In fact, if that adorable goodbye was any indication than I'm pretty sure he likes you too," Carole teased.
"Oh, no way!" Kurt exclaimed with an embarrassed squeal. "There's no way that Blaine freaking Anderson, the hottest guy in school, likes me. You are clearly overworked if you think that."

Carole smiled from ear to ear, unable to control the small giggle that escaped. "So you admit that you think he's hot?"

"What? I, no!" Kurt denied, shaking his head fervently.

"Uh, huh," Carole nodded, clearly unconvinced.

"You know what, I'm going to go finish eating this in my room," Kurt said as he quickly gathered his food. "Goodnight, Carole."

"Goodnight, Kurt," Carole replied in a teasing tone, making Kurt huff in aggravation. Carole laughed at Kurt's denial. It was about time Kurt started to let somebody in.

Cooper came home exhausted from his night shift, ready to collapse on the couch with a beer before making sure Blaine was up for work so he could head to bed himself. He stumbled down the stairs to grab a drink from the bar and counted. Two cans were missing. Two cans that he knew Blaine didn't drink, but he also knew very well who did. He quickly surveyed the room. Pillows were out of place, the telltale signs of Sterling's gum wrappers were in the trash, and a hair tie no doubt belonging to a member of the Unholy Trinity was discarded haphazardly on the couch.

He stormed upstairs, all thoughts of beer and relaxation thrown aside as he threw open his brother's bedroom door. Blaine was half asleep sitting on the edge of the bed pulling his shirt on over his head. He glanced up at the interruption. "Morning Coop," he yawned tiredly.

"Blaine Devon Anderson do you have something you need to tell me?" Cooper shouted, hands firmly on his hips. He'd give Blaine one opportunity to fess up before he nailed his little brother to the wall.

Blaine frowned and mulled over his choices. There were too many things Cooper could be on about, and confessing the wrong one meant the possibility of getting in trouble for two and he was already in enough trouble. So he just shrugged innocently.

Cooper rolled his eyes. "I specifically told you that you were still grounded, and you were not to see your friends, and yet there is a multitude of evidence down in the basement that they were over last night. Would you care to explain that?"

Blaine resisted the urge to roll his eyes. "It wasn't like I invited them over Coop, they came on their own, what was I supposed to do, turn them away?" He casually went to his bureau, ignoring the fury on his brother's face, hoping it would simmer before he turned around. He squeezed his gel into his hands and worked it through his curls, slicking them down just right. He caught a glimpse of Cooper in the mirror as he did and could see that instead of calming down, Blaine's silence was working Cooper up more. Blaine sighed and turned, wiping his hands on a washcloth. "It's no big deal. They came over, we hung out, they told me what was going on at school and the girls stayed while the boys and I went to take care of something and then we hung out some more. I'm sorry Puck drank your beer, I'll replace it-"

Cooper's eyes widened and he cut Blaine off. "Take care of what?" he asked suspiciously.

Blaine snapped his mouth shut. He shouldn't have said that. He was losing his touch. "Nothing, it was nothing," he said dismissively. He started to head out the door of his room, but Cooper's hand wrapped around his bicep and turned him back around.
"Take. Care. Of. What?" Cooper said slowly and deliberately, forcing Blaine to tell the truth. For the first time, Blaine's heart jumped with nerves, but he wasn't sure if it was because of the confession itself or what it meant.

"Kurt's being bullied by this jackass at school so the guys and I went over to convince him to stop," Blaine shrugged nonchalantly, but held his breath, waiting for the storm. He wasn't stupid enough to tell Cooper that the jackass was Kyle. Cooper knew all too well how heated he tended to get when it came to Dr. Johnson's son. Blaine knew telling Cooper it was him would only make matters worse.

Cooper had dealt with enough of Blaine's fights over the years to guess what had truly happened and it made him furious. He dropped his grip on Blaine's arm and started pacing the floor. "And by 'convince him to stop' you mean you beat him up," he ranted his breath growing quicker. He turned and stared at Blaine who was finally beginning to look like he might be realizing the gravity of the situation. "You mean you went on school grounds and you beat him up. What the hell were you thinking Blaine?"

Blaine moved quickly from anxious to incredulous as his brother's anger intensified. "I was thinking that I was defending my boss' kid!" Blaine shouted back. "I was thinking that I was standing up for a dweeb who can't stand up for himself!"

"That's all bullshit and you know it. You were thinking with your pants Blaine, because you have the hots for this kid and you have absolutely no idea what to do with that!" Cooper retorted, but continued before Blaine could object. "Because if you'd been thinking with the head on your shoulders you would have realized that you were trespassing on school property assaulting another student which means that if he decided to tell someone or even worse press charges, you could be expelled or locked up and we can kiss your future goodbye. That's the last thing I want to see but that's exactly where you're headed if I don't put a stop to this nonsense right now!"

Blaine's fists clenched as he stood firm, frozen to this spot in his bedroom. "So what are you going to do, call Mom and Dad?" Blaine challenged through gritted teeth.

"I don't know Blaine, do you think I should?" Cooper shouted back, but took a breath when he saw Blaine's eyes widen with alarm. He needed to calm down or this was going to go nowhere fast and likely make the situation even worse. "Mom and Dad love you Blaine, they just had no idea what to do with you and frankly I'm not so sure any more either."

Blaine swallowed the lump in his throat and bit back the tears of betrayal forming in his eyes. "So you're just gonna fuckin' sell me out Cooper?" Blaine accused painfully.

Cooper felt his own tears start to form, frustration and anger and fear, fear for Blaine's future and his safety, all rising to the surface. "What the hell else am I supposed to do Blaine? Tell me and I'll do it," he asked desperately.

Blaine dropped his head, shame and guilt filling him. Cooper had done so much for him and all he did was fuck up in return. He didn't know why and he didn't know what anyone could do to help him. He raised pleading eyes to his brother. "Just please don't call them," he begged.

Cooper's heart broke at the look on Blaine's face and he could do nothing but concede. "Alright. I'll give you one more chance." He opened his arms and Blaine fell into them with relief. "I love you Squirt, but I'm just trying to do my best here. We're a team and we've gotta figure this out before you get yourself in trouble you can't get out of."

"I love you too," Blaine whispered against Cooper's chest. "I'm sorry I'm such a fuck up."
Cooper grabbed Blaine's chin and forced their eyes to meet. "You are not a fuck up Blaine. You just let the hurt on the inside come out in some really dangerous ways."

Blaine blinked his tears back. "You should have been a psychiatrist instead of a heart surgeon," he teased weakly.

"Oh now you tell me," Cooper laughed with a playful shove. He hugged Blaine once more tightly than gave him kiss on the head. "Alright, get to work. Burt won't look too kindly on you being late."

Blaine's eyes snapped to the clock and he startled at the time. "Oh crap," he said, grabbing his wallet and his keys from his dresser. "Don't think I can take two lectures in one day," Blaine muttered to himself. "See ya!" he called behind him, bounding down the stairs and out the door.

"Drive safely!" Cooper called after him, chuckling at Blaine's energy. He sighed as he sat on Blaine's bed, the exhaustion from earlier returning tenfold. As he lay down, unable to make his way to his own bed, he worried for Blaine's future if he kept up the way he was going. He'd told his parents he could do a better job with Blaine and he didn't want to fail at this. The last thing he wanted to do was call them, but if he and Blaine couldn't turn this around together, he'd be forced to. Blaine was spiraling out of control and he needed someone to help keep him from falling hard.

Kurt pulled up to the school Tuesday morning a nervous wreck. Not only was he worried that Kyle would come after him, he was also anxious about the Unholy Trinity. Blaine had promised that they were going to start hanging around with Kurt and he wasn't sure how he was supposed to handle it or even if he wanted that. Were they really going to protect him? Were they really going to just welcome him all of a sudden after ignoring him all this time just because Brittany and Blaine wanted it? Kurt couldn't help but wonder what Blaine's boys would think of his sudden intrusion into their crew and it worried him to no end. He got the feeling that he was in for a long, weird day.

As he parked his Navigator, he glanced over at Kyle's Escalade and instantly saw the hot pink bull balls attached to the back.

"Oh my God," Kurt gasped with a choked laugh. Did Blaine seriously attach that to Kyle's car? Was he out of his mind? Unable to control his giggles, Kurt pulled his cell phone out and sent Blaine a text.

To: Blaine A.
Please tell me that Kyle's new ornament is just a coincidence.

Kurt sat in his car for a few minutes as he waited for Blaine's reply, all the while keeping an eye out for any of the jocks. Just as he decided to head inside, his phone buzzed with a new message.

From: Blaine A.
;
Kurt rolled his eyes at the text, an amused smile playing at his lips, and quickly replied.

To: Blaine A.
Lol! I cannot believe you actually did that! You are unbelievable Blaine Anderson.

Blaine texted back instantly.

From: Blaine A.
I know I am. ;)

The girls are waiting for you at your locker btw. You may want to hurry up. Tana doesn't like to be kept waiting.

Kurt shook his head and groaned. So they really were going to hang around him now. That wasn't going to go over well with Chandler at all, he was sure.

To: Blaine A.
Great. Just great.

Kurt grabbed his messenger bag from the passenger seat and reached for the door knob, only to stop when he received another message from Blaine.

From: Blaine A.
Relax Kurt. They don't bite…much. ;)

I gotta get to work before your dad sees me texting. I'll see you after school.

Have a good day. :)

A shy smile graced Kurt's face at Blaine's words. Despite his hard exterior, Blaine was actually a pretty nice guy and the more Kurt talked to him, the more he liked him. The realization both scared and thrilled him.

To: Blaine A.
Thanks. You too. :)

With a deep sigh, Kurt pocketed his phone, exited his car, and headed into the school.

Like he did every morning as he walked towards his locker, Kurt made sure to keep an eye out for any of the jocks. Just because Blaine had talked with Kyle didn't mean that Kyle would heed Blaine's warnings. None of the jocks in the hallway said a word to him though. They all threw him the same disgruntled glares but nothing more. In fact, everyone in the halls was staring at him. Did the entire school know what happened between Kyle and Blaine? Or was there another reason why everyone was watching him? Whatever the reason, Kurt held his head high, ignoring the whispers and looks and continued on his way.

He immediately spotted Brittany, Santana, and Quinn waiting for him as he approached his locker. Kurt had hoped that Blaine was kidding about them hanging around but he hadn't been and now he was really panicking. What did they want from him? Did they expect him to join their crew? Would they take his snark as well as Blaine had or would they attack him like the jocks? Would they convince Blaine that he really was just a dweeb that he shouldn't be wasting his time on? It was the last thought that truly scared him, but Kurt couldn't think too much on it because Brittany caught his eye and immediately made her way towards him.

"Hey Kurt," Brittany said excitedly as she skipped over to him.

Kurt offered her an awkward smile and continued towards his locker. "Hi Brittany."

"You can call me Britt," She said as she looped her arm through his, catching him completely off guard. "This is Quinn and Tana. We're here to protect you."

Kurt shook his head fervently, untangling his arm from Britt's. "You don't need to protect me. I'm
fine," he snapped, making Brittany frown.

"Listen here Porcelain," Santana said as she stepped forward menacingly. "For whatever ungodly reason, Blaine wants us to watch over you. So you better get used to our pretty faces. Who knows, maybe you're some new pet project or maybe he's just worried about losing his job. And while I have to admit that I like your snarky bitch attitude, you will be nice to Britt or I will cut you. I got razors all up in here," she warned, gesturing to her hair.

Kurt's eyes widened at the threat, making Quinn laugh. "Down, girl. No need to scare the dweeb."

"I'm just letting him know how it is," Santana replied, crossing her arms.

"Don't worry about her. She's just overprotective of me," Britt said with a small smile.

"Right," Kurt mumbled as he entered his locker combination. "Look, I'm not trying to be rude or anything but really, I'm fine. I don't need you, or Blaine, to protect me or whatever. You don't have to hang around me just because he asked you to."

"More like demanded us to," Quinn muttered under her breath. Kurt chose to ignore it.

"I don't want to protect you because Blaine told us to," Britt replied with a sad tone. "I want to protect you because you're magical and special and you shouldn't have to deal with the dumb jocks. I'd really like to be your friend, Kurt. Will you be my friend?"

Kurt looked up at Brittany and his hard shell melted at the innocence behind her eyes. There was something strangely familiar about her, though he couldn't pinpoint what. He glanced at Quinn and Santana, both of whom were wearing the same expectant look, and sighed in defeat.

"Sure, Britt. I'll be your friend," Kurt replied with a small smile.

"Yay!" Brittany squealed, bouncing on her heels and clapping excitedly. "You won't regret it. I promise. We're going to be like, best friends," Kurt smiled unsurely and nodded. "Will you sit with us at lunch? Pretty please?"

"Um, yeah, sure," Kurt shrugged unsurely. "Why not."

"Awesome!" Britt exclaimed.

"Can we get out of here now? I can only handle one dweeb at a time," Santana griped, her vision zeroing in on someone down the hall.

Kurt turned to where Santana was staring and saw that Chandler was headed there way. "So, I'll see you ladies at lunch," Kurt asked cautiously.

"Definitely," Brittany nodded with a smile before leaning in and kissing his cheek, surprising Kurt. "Bye Kurt."

"See ya at lunch," Quinn said with a wink before she and Brittany walked off, leaving Kurt alone with Santana.

Santana sent Chandler a glare that stopped him in his tracks before turning her attention to Kurt. "If Kyle or any of his friends say or do anything to you, tell me," Kurt opened his mouth to argue but stopped when Santana covered his mouth with her hand. "Don't argue with me. I'm not just doing this for Blaine, I'm doing it for Britt. I know you're tired of being used as a punching bag. Let us protect you. Alright?" Kurt nodded slowly, prompting Santana to remove her hand. "Alright then.
"I'll see you at lunch," she said with a smirk. To Kurt's utter shock, Santana slapped him on the ass before walking away.

As soon as Santana was gone, Chandler came running up to Kurt. "What was that about? Are they harassing you because Anderson works at your shop?" Chandler asked frantically.

"Did it look like they were harassing me?" Kurt replied sarcastically.

"Well, no, but-"

"But what, Chandler," Kurt interrupted, clearly not in the mood to talk.

"Nothing," Chandler answered quietly, not wanting to get chewed out. "What did they want?"

Kurt sighed deeply as he switched his books out. He really didn't want to discuss this with Chandler but considering they always ate lunch together, he figured it was best to tell him the truth. "Brittany invited me to have lunch with them today," he replied, avoiding eye contact with his friend.

Chandler blanched. "You're joking, right?" Kurt glanced at Chandler, pursed his lips, and shook his head. "What? Why?"

"Because Britt wants to be my friend I guess," Kurt shrugged. "They found Kyle beating the crap out of me yesterday-"

"Oh my God!" Chandler exclaimed, placing what was meant to be a comforting hand on Kurt's shoulder. "Are you ok?"

Kurt moved away from Chandler in annoyance, forcing Chandler's hand to drop from his shoulder. "I'm fine. But anyway, they found us behind the school and got Kyle to back off and now Britt wants to be my friend."

"Oh, well, I'm glad they got Kyle to leave you alone," Chandler replied with a shrug. "But you're not actually going to have lunch with them, are you?"

Kurt had still been questioning the intelligence of that decision, but Chandler's attitude was all he needed to be sure. "Actually, yeah I am," Kurt declared as he closed his locker and took off down the hall.

"You can't be serious," Chandler gasped in disbelief as he followed. Kurt sent him a glare though that said he was serious. "Kurt! They're dangerous! You can't hang out with them! Puck will eat you alive! Plus, that Brittany girl is dumber than a bag of rocks. You can't honestly believe that you could be friends with someone like her. She thinks the capitol of Ohio is O for goodness sake!"

Kurt stopped and turned on him. "You know what, Chandler, you're really judgmental for someone who hates being judged," Kurt snapped. "Britt's a really sweet girl. She's the reason Anderson's Crew stopped Kyle from beating the crap out of me in the first place and if she wants me to have lunch with them, then I owe her that much."

"Kurt-

"And I would be careful about what you say about Britt. Santana Lopez will eat you alive if she hears you badmouthing her girlfriend," Kurt warned him, knowing that it was completely true. "I gotta get to class, ok? Don't wait for me in the cafeteria. I'm having lunch with the Crew. I'll talk to
you later," Kurt turned on his heels and stormed off, leaving a disgruntled Chandler behind.

Kurt's morning had been nothing short of unusual. Not only had Kyle stayed away from him, but the jock hadn't even acknowledged his presence. Kurt couldn't help but wonder what exactly Blaine had said to force the jock to leave him alone. But whatever it was certainly worked and he was admittedly grateful. Not that he would tell Blaine that though. He didn't want Blaine to think he was some damsel in distress. He was a Hummel after all and he could take care of himself. Even so, it was nice not looking over his shoulder in fear.

Not only had the jocks left him alone, but Blaine's crew seemed to always be around. If it wasn't the Unholy Trinity walking him to class, it was Nick, Jeff, or Jake nodding their acknowledgement in the hallways. They weren't all friendly like Britt, some of them still wary of exactly what Kurt's deal was, but the only one in Blaine's crew that had yet to say anything to him was Puck and that admittedly worried him. Even though Blaine was the leader, Puck was clearly the muscle and Kurt was anxious about how he'd be treated come lunch time.

It wasn't until his drama class just before lunch that he saw Marley and Harmony, both of whom bombarded him with questions. They found space in their usual spot on the floor and sat cross-legged for the mirror exercise. Chandler typically partnered with Kurt, but stayed away from them in class that day, clearly still upset at how Kurt had treated him that morning. The exercise didn't work as well for three, but Kurt couldn't mind too much. Chandler had been getting on his last nerve recently and he was grateful for the break.

"I can't believe you're having lunch with Anderson's Crew," Marley said in disbelief as she lifted jazz hands in a circle above her head, which Kurt and Harmony both mirrored. "You're like, crossing enemy lines."

"I think it's awesome," Harmony nodded excitedly. "You're never going to get messed with now. Besides, I don't think they're so bad."


Kurt glanced over at Chandler who was not so subtly glaring at him as he had one leg in the air with his partner. "Why is he so mad? He's been acting really weird lately and I haven't done anything wrong," Kurt said with a disgruntled sigh.

"Oh come on, you can't be that oblivious," Harmony said with a smirk. "He's totally jealous."

Harmony, Marley and Kurt leaned over back and forth in stretches, not even sure who had started the movement.

"What's there to be jealous of?" Kurt replied in annoyance. "It's not like I'm going to stop being his friend just because I've started kinda being friends with Anderson's Crew."

"It's not the crew he's jealous of, it's Blaine," Harmony said matter-of-factly. Kurt froze mid-stretch.

"Yeah, Kurt. You have been acting a little differently ever since Blaine started working at the shop," Marley said cautiously. The bell rang and Kurt and the girls returned to grab their bags from their seats. "Not that it's a bad thing, but I'm pretty sure he thinks you two are dating or something."

Kurt scoffed and rolled his eyes, ignoring the blush that instantly appeared and didn't go unnoticed by either girl. "That's ridiculous. Blaine and I aren't dating. We're just friends. Barely even that!"
Kurt exclaimed.

"Kurt, the entire school knows that Blaine and his boys threatened Kyle yesterday to leave you alone," Harmony pointed out. "Why else would the school's biggest badass, who just so happens to be gay, defend a dweeb like you. No offense, but everyone knows how Blaine hooks up with guys and then leaves them heartbroken."

Kurt sighed and looked away, grabbing his bag off the floor and pulling it over his shoulder. He had been asking himself the same question all day. "I don't know, ok? We're not hooking up though. He's probably just trying to protect me because he works at my dad's shop now. It doesn't mean anything."

"Maybe, maybe not," Marley shrugged as they walked out of the auditorium. "But Chandler thinks it does and that's why he's upset. You know he likes you."

"I know," Kurt groaned. "But becoming friends with Blaine has nothing to do with Chandler. I didn't go out with him before and I wouldn't now. I don't like him that way and he knows it. He needs to get over it."

Marley and Harmony exchanged a glance as they went their separate ways for lunch, knowing that what Kurt said was true. They only hoped that Chandler could deal with Kurt and Blaine's growing friendship. Chandler tended to become impulsive when upset and they worried he'd accidentally ruin his already rocky friendship with Kurt.

Kurt grabbed his lunch bag from his locker and headed out to the quad, his heart racing frantically. He couldn't believe that he was actually going to eat with Blaine's crew. How had that even happened? Before he could dwell on the thought though, Brittany spotted him and skipped his way.

"Hey Kurt," Brittany greeted enthusiastically. "Ready for lunch?"

"Hey Britt," Kurt replied with a smile as she looped her arm with his. "Yeah, I'm ready."

The two walked to the quad together, Brittany rambling away happily and Kurt smiling and nodding. He could sense the students watching them as they walked past but he ignored them and focused on Brittany.

"And I have these awesome gummy bear cookies that you're totally going to love," Brittany said as they reached the crew's table. Santana, Quinn, Jeff, and Nick were already there. Jake and Puck had yet to show up.

Kurt turned to Brittany quickly. "Did you just say gummy bear cookies?" Kurt asked as they sat. He'd only ever known one person to make those and he hadn't thought about her in years.

Brittany smiled brightly and nodded. "Yeah. They're like chocolate chip cookies but instead of chocolate chips, I use gummy bears. They're really yummy. And magical."

Kurt's jaw went slack as he recalled that exact conversation from Kindergarten. "Well, if they're magical then why are you sharing them with me?" Kurt asked, just as he done so many years ago.

Brittany grabbed hold of Kurt's hands and looked deeply into his eyes. "Because you are a magical and you deserve to eat magical cookies," she said just like when they little.

"Oh my God," Kurt gasped. "It's you. You're the girl from Ms. Sally's class, aren't you?"
Brittany giggled and nodded as she sat down at the table. "Yeah, I am. I hoped that if I brought gummy bear cookies today you'd remember me."

Kurt gaped at Brittany in astonishment, sitting slowly across from her. She had been his only friend in Kindergarten and he couldn't believe that she actually remembered him. Before he could say anything though, Santana cut in.

"Someone wanna tell me what the hell you two are talking about," Santana snapped, annoyed by the lack of attention from Brittany.

"Kurt and I used to be best friends in Kindergarten when I still lived in Lima," Brittany explained. "But after we moved I never saw him again. That is until junior year when Kurt transferred here."

"Uh, huh," Santana nodded with a raised brow.

"So Kurt," Nick said politely, not wanting Kurt to feel uncomfortable. "Your dad owns the garage by the hospital, right?"

Kurt took a bite of his sandwich and nodded. "Yeah. It used to belong to my uncle Richard but he passed away last year and left the shop to my dad. That's why we moved here," he explained, leaving out all the other reasons.

"And you actually know how to work on cars?" Jeff asked curiously. "I mean, no offense, but you don't seem like the type of person who knows how to fix anything car related."

Kurt glared at the blond sitting across the table. He hated how much people stereotyped him. "Actually yes, I do know how to work on cars. I've been working on them my whole life. Just because I'm gay and I act a certain way doesn't mean that I can't fix an engine. Just like I'm sure that just because you're blond it doesn't mean you're dumb. Unless you are dumb and that particular stereotype is true for you."

"Rawr," Santana snarled with a grin. "Kitty's got claws."

Jeff sat back, raising his hands in surrender. "Put the claws away kitty cat. I wasn't stereotyping. I was just-"

"You were stereotyping," Nick cut in, giving Jeff a pointed look. "Ignore him, Kurt. He's not as smart as he looks," Nick joked.

"You're mean," Jeff pouted before resting his head on Quinn's shoulder. "He's being mean to me, Quinnie."

"There, there Jeffy. It's ok," Quinn said in mock consolation.

"Where the hell are the Puckermans?" Santana asked suddenly.

"Calm yo tits, Satan. We're right here," Puck said as he and Jake sat down. "Girls, doofuses," he greeted his friends before turning a sneer on Kurt. "Dweeb."

"Delinquent," Kurt said under his breath but Puck still heard it. The others stifled their giggles and waited for the explosion.

"What the fuck you just say to me?" Puck all but growled. He hated that Kurt was sitting with them. Protecting the loser was bad enough, but what the hell was Anderson doing having them hang around him all the time?
"I called you a delinquent. What are you going to do? Beat me up? Go right ahead. I'm used to it," Kurt replied glaring at the older Puckerman brother.

Before Puck could say anything, Santana stepped in. "No one is beating anyone up, ok? Porcelain, ignore Puck. He's on his period. Puckerman, get over yourself. You are a delinquent. Now shut up and eat your damn lunch."

Puck rolled his eyes but complied. Kurt looked down at his food and continued eating, once again questioning his decision to sit with the Crew. The awkwardness in the air was palpable and after a few minutes, Kurt had had enough.

"So, anyone know anything about the hot pink bull balls attached to Kyle's car?" Kurt asked with a smirk, already knowing that it was Blaine and his boys.

Puck choked on his food, Nick rolled his eyes, Jeff and Jake exchanged smirks, and the girls all shook their heads. "We may know something about it," Jeff replied with a wink.

"Dude! Shut the hell up!" Puck snapped. "He's a fucking dweeb! We can't talk about shit around him! He's probably going to tell the principal all the stupid shit we do!"

Kurt huffed in aggravation. "I'm not going to say anything to the principal. And I'll have you know that Blaine already told me that it was you guys who did it."

"Oh well since Blaine already told you, it makes everything all honkey dory," Puck said mockingly. "Are you two fucking? Is that it? Or are you his new little pet?"

Kurt blanched. That was the last straw. He was infuriated that everyone assumed that he and Blaine were sleeping together and he certainly didn't appreciate being called Blaine's new pet. With all the courage he could muster, Kurt stood up and glared at Puck. "Blaine and I are not fucking and get it straight that Kurt Hummel is no one's pet. Blaine and I are friends, so whatever issues you have with me, get the hell over it. Or are you just jealous that he'd rather spend time with me than you and your god awful taste in fashion. I mean, seriously, do you own any other clothes or do you just wear the same jeans and t-shirt every day? And don't even get me started on that squirrel that's growing out of your head!"

Quinn, Jeff, and Santana all snickered at Kurt's outburst while Jake, Nick, and Brittany stared in shock. Puck was absolutely livid. Who the hell did the dweeb think he was? Nobody disrespected the Puckasaurus, not if they wanted to keep their teeth.

Puck slammed his fist into the table before standing up and coming face to face with Kurt. "The only reason you and Blaine are friends is because he wants to get in your pants. Why don't you do us all a favor and just suck his cock already so he can drop you. No one here likes you or wants to be your friend. You're nothing but some loser that Blaine pities."

"Enough!" Brittany yelled, catching everyone's attention. "Kurt's my friend Puck, and if you can't respect him then I'm never going to talk to you again!"

Puck opened his mouth to say that he really didn't care but the glare Santana sent him had him closing it instantaneously. "You know what, screw this," Puck snapped before storming off.

Brittany linked her fingers with Kurt's and he looked at their clasped hands as she sat him back down slowly. He tried to steady his breathing and stop his heart from beating out of his chest. He shouldn't have snapped at Puck like that. It wasn't just that Puck was a thousand times more dangerous than Kyle and Kurt was now officially on his bad side. He was also worried about what
"You know, I think I'm going to like having you around," Santana said with a wink.

"Me too," Jeff nodded with a goofy smile. "You're funny as shit."

"Did you see Puck's face? I thought his head was going to explode," Quinn laughed.

Kurt looked at them all in amazement and gave them an awkward smile but said nothing. The Crew went back to their usual conversation, and Kurt just sat and listened, unable to believe that he was still completely welcome and not being beaten to a pulp on the ground. When the lunch bell rang and the Crew started going their separate ways, Jake pulled Kurt back to talk.

"Listen, don't pay my brother too much attention. He's never been one to share and even though he won't admit it, he probably is jealous of your friendship with Blaine. They've been best friends since Blaine moved here," Jake said with an apologetic smile.

"It's not like I'm trying to steal Blaine away or anything," Kurt argued. "And I didn't mean to freak out on him. My mouth just tends to move on its own accord and once I get started, I kinda can't stop."

Jake chuckled and nodded. "It's fine, really. None of us have filters so really, you'll fit right in." Out of the corner of his eye he caught Marley headed their way. "I gotta jet but I'll talk to you tomorrow. Tell Marley I said hi," Jake said with a wink and quickly walked off.

Marley hurried over to Kurt, her eyes wide with anticipation. "So, how'd it go?"

"It um, it went," Kurt shrugged with a small laugh. "Jake just told me to tell you he says hi," he said with a knowing smirk.

"He did?" Marley squeaked excitedly. "Oh my God, I have class with him next. What do I do?"

"Say hi back," Kurt said like it was the most obvious answer. "I'll talk to you later, Mar. Good luck with Jake," he called over his shoulder as he walked off.
Warning: There is straight smut in this chapter. We know that most of you will not enjoy it, but please hang in there. The relationship between the characters is important to the storyline.

"Anderson!" Puck yelled as he flung the door open, the bell ringing above his head to alert the cashier of a customer. He'd been too angry to attend his last class and raced out to see Blaine before the dweeb Hummel showed up.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Blaine glowered, instinctively looking around as if Cooper was hiding around the corner ready to bust him. Even if he wasn't, Blaine was sure his brother's radar was going off and he'd show up any minute. "You trying to get me in even worse trouble than I'm already in? Coop was ready to send me back to my parents after he found out about Kyle!"

"I'd kick his ass if he did that," Puck mumbled dismissively as he settled into one of the chairs with a magazine. Blaine hid his smile. What he loved most about Puck was that he'd always been there to protect him. "One, I'm getting my oil changed so there ain't nothing your brother can do about a waiting customer. And two, what the fuck are you doing having Kurt 'the dweeb' Hummel sitting with us at lunch?"

"He's not a dweeb," Blaine said quickly turning away from Puck. He fumbled with the cigarettes behind the counter, feigning organizing.

"I knew it," Puck exclaimed triumphantly. "You're totally fucking him."

Blaine snapped back around to Puck, his olive skin reddening from embarrassment and anger. "I am not fucking him," he hissed through his teeth. He glanced through the glass back to where Burt was working on Puck's car. Thank god these walls were fairly sound proof. He was certain that if Burt had heard Puck's comment, he'd kill Blaine in an instant.

"But you want to be," Puck toyed with him. "You want so badly to just rip off his clothes and throw him over the hood of a car so you can fuck his brains out. I'll gladly contribute my old Corolla to the cause. Especially if it means he stops hanging around us."

Blaine's cock twitched at Puck's words and he closed his eyes gripping the counter, willing both his anger and arousal away. The light on the wall flashed, signaling a customer who needed help, and Blaine breathed a sigh of relief. "I want you gone when I get back," Blaine ordered before walking out.

Puck just laughed and crossed his leg, not intending to go anywhere until he got some answers. Blaine smiled his charming smile at the older woman who'd requested his aid. Burt had told him with amusement that the number of customers needing help had gone up since Blaine started working there, a sure sign of the hospital rumor mill flying. Blaine had just shrugged humbly. He couldn't help how people responded to him. Cooper warned him that his overwhelming charm would either save him or destroy him some day. Blaine was a little frightened to learn which one it would be.
Puck was obnoxiously still in the waiting area when Blaine returned from the pumps. "What exactly do you want Puckerman?" Blaine asked with a tired sigh. He slipped the cash into the register and pocketed the tip the woman had given him.

"I want the sanctity of my lunch table back. I want you to call off our secret service protection of your boyfriend. Or if you won't then you need to teach him a thing or two about respect. He'd probably enjoy that, now that I think about it. I know you would," Puck added with a smirk.

"Enough," Blaine ordered and Puck finally shut up. Blaine was the leader of the crew for a reason and he'd take a certain amount of backtalk and insolence for a time, but enough was enough. "You know how you get respect Puckerman? By giving it. So from now on if I hear of you disrespecting Kurt, you're the one I'm going to teach a lesson to, not him. Is that clear?"

Puck stared at Blaine. He couldn't believe that Blaine was choosing some dweeb over him and all because he wanted to get in his pants. Puck threw the magazine aside and stood up. "Crystal," he said with a grumble, but Blaine knew he would comply.

A knock on the glass window came just in time and Burt opened the back door. "Car's ready," he said handing the paperwork to Blaine.

"Thanks," Puck mumbled. He took his wallet out as Blaine rang him up and he threw the cash on the counter.

"He's not that bad," Blaine told him quietly. "Just give him a chance. You might actually like him."

Puck took his change and shoved his wallet back in his pocket. "Just don't start spending all your time with him and forgetting about the rest of us," he answered, and Blaine didn't miss the worry in Puck's eyes.


They were supposed to be studying, but the books had quickly been discarded to the floor as Harmony lay on top of him, Nick's hand under her skirt, softly caressing the skin just beneath the elastic of her bikini panties. Their lips fit together perfectly, and had ever since the summer when they'd slipped away from their assigned roles at Shaker Hills High School to perform at Theatre in the Park. There, away from the peer pressure and the influences of their friends, Nick and Harmony could just be themselves, and fall in love.

"I thought we were supposed to be studying," she whispered breathlessly, his hips pressing into hers causing her body to surge with want.

He cupped her ass and squeezed, pressing her even more firmly against him. His breath hitched and his eyes rolled back in his head before he could answer, his blood rushing from his brain straight to his cock. "The only thing I want to study is you," he managed to stammer before capturing her lips in his again.

She threaded her fingers through his hair, grasping it like he loved before nibbling on his lower lip. She slowly made her way to nip at the tender flesh below his strong jaw line where the stubble from the day tickled at her lips. He moaned at the touch of her tongue to his skin and thrust suddenly against her with a groan. Harmony's breath ghosted over him as she softly laughed before teasing her way up to his ear, suckling eagerly on the soft and tender lobe.

Together they found a rhythm that sent shivers up their spines and sparks through their skin as their thoughts began to cloud over. Nick was nearing the point of no return. "Do you want me to stop?"
he breathed between surges in his belly.

"No," she quickly whispered. "I want you, uh," she whimpered at the overwhelming feeling, "I need you to touch me. Just a little," she added timidly.

Nick's heart nearly beat out of his chest with excitement as he cautiously slid his hand lower beneath her skirt. Her breath caught in her chest at the gentle caress of his fingers and she grasped him tightly, thrusting herself against his throbbing cock. She bit her lip, stifling her moans as her orgasm exploded and she trembled atop him. It flung him over the edge and he followed soon after her, burying his head in her neck and hair, breathing in her lavender scent as he moaned, low and deep, through the tremors. Harmony collapsed on top of him, and he gently tucked her fallen hair behind her ear, kissing her gently, as their breathing gradually slowed to normal.

She blushed and looked at him through thick lashes. "Hi," she said shyly.

Nick chuckled and caressed her cheek. "Hi," he repeated. "Was that okay for you?" he asked a bit nervously.

Her smile was broad, though her cheeks were red. "Yeah," she assured him. "That was great." She slipped off of him, straightening her skirt and sitting back on the bed. She watched him get up and he excused himself to the bathroom for a minute. When he returned he found her with her history homework in her lap and her hair pulled back in a ponytail. He climbed up on the bed and sat beside her.

"You're amazing, you know that?" Nick told her with a content sigh.

"So amazing you have to keep me a secret," she teased, but there was a bite hidden underneath, a bite that broke his heart every time he heard it. And as they became more and more serious about one another, he was hearing it more and more often.

He hated it. He hated the way life was at Shaker Hills where he couldn't even share the joy of his girlfriend because it could ruin his friendships and his reputation. Santana and Quinn had a dictionary full of insults for the theater geeks and Puck would be all over him for going soft. But there was a possible light at the end of the tunnel now, and he hoped it wouldn't go out. "Maybe now with Kurt joining us for lunch, then maybe you could too someday?"

"What is up with those two anyway?" Harmony asked, looking up from her text book. She ignored his speculation.

"Well," Nick said smirking, "Predominant theory is they're fucking."

Harmony laughed and shook her head. "No. No way. I would know if Kurt Hummel was fucking anybody and trust me, he is most definitely not," she said confidently. "Besides, what the heck would someone like Blaine Anderson be doing with Kurt?"

"I don't know," Nick shrugged and arched an eyebrow. "What would someone like me be doing with someone like you?"

"You're not like the rest of them," Harmony said softly, remembering back to those first few days when they'd met over the summer. He was so different from everything she'd always believed him to be. She didn't understand why he hung out with the rest of the Crew.

"Well, Blaine's not that bad, once you know him for real," Nick shared. "Who knows, maybe he can be real with Kurt," he suggested.
"He just better not hurt Kurt, that's all I can say," she said firmly, glaring at Nick. "Or I am holding you personally responsible."

"Oh really?" he teased, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her into his lap. "And then what are you going to do?"

She blushed and looked away, but her words were strong. "I'm sure I can think of something."

"Babe, come on," Quinn muttered against Jeff's skin as she kissed his neck. "I wanna make out before first period," Jeff ignored her though, despite how good his girlfriend's lips felt, and continued to watch for Kurt's car. It was early Thursday morning and Jeff really wanted to talk to the kid before lunch. When Jeff didn't respond to Quinn's attempts at seduction, she untangled herself from him with an annoyed sigh. "Exactly why are you so adamant on Hummel sitting with us during lunch?"

"Because he's a cool kid," Jeff shrugged. "Besides, I want to warn him that shit's going down tomorrow without actually telling him what we're doing."

"But why?" Quinn questioned. "All he'll do is tell Blaine and you know Blaine doesn't want us getting revenge. Kurt's not one of us, Jeff. Just because Blaine wants in his pants doesn't mean he's going to stick around. As soon as Blaine's done playing with him, he's going to go back to his theatre geeks where he belongs. Why are you trying so hard to be all buddy-buddy with him?"

"Fine, whatever. But he still doesn't need to eat lunch with us again and he sure as hell doesn't need to know anything," Quinn called out after him.

"But I want him to," Jeff shouted back, sticking his tongue out playfully before jogging over to Kurt.

Jeff reached the Navigator just as Kurt locked the door. "Morning, Kurtie," Jeff greeted, only to stop dead in his tracks when Kurt sent him a hard glare.

"Do not EVER call me that," Kurt replied, his anger boiling.

Jeff took a few steps back, raising his hands in surrender. "Put the claws away, Kitty-Cat. I was only kidding."

"Relax Kitty-Cat," Jeff said as he draped an arm over Kurt's shoulder. "I didn't know that's what jackass called you. I won't say it again, I swear."

"No can do," Jeff smirked. "You got claws, Hummel, which I love, so Kitty-Cat it is," Kurt rolled his eyes, though a small smile threatened to show. "You eatin with us today, right?"

"Hadn't planned on it," Kurt answered with a scoff.
"What? Why not?" Jeff asked in exasperation.

"Because no one wants me there," Kurt replied just as they reached the double doors where Quinn waited scowling at Kurt. He raised a brow. "Case in point," he said.

"Dude, not true!" Jeff exclaimed. Kurt opened his mouth to argue but Jeff cut him off. "You're sitting with us today. No excuses." Jeff removed his arm from around Kurt and turned his attention back to Quinn. "Right baby?" he said with an expectant glare.

"Right," Quinn smiled but it was fake and Kurt knew it. Jeff though was more easily fooled. "Good. Come on baby, let's go find a janitor's closet," he smiled.

"Finally," Quinn replied with a wicked grin.

"See you at lunch, Hummel," Jeff called out before he and Quinn disappeared down another hallway.

Kurt waved at them dismissively and continued on his way to his locker, only to find Santana and Brittany waiting for him. He rolled his eyes, getting the feeling that there was no way he was going to be able to skip out on lunch with the Crew, but after what happened with Puck last time, he really didn't want to risk another blow out.

"Here he comes," Brittany clapped as Kurt came towards them.

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" Santana asked seriously. "Puck's gonna flip his shit."

"I really don't care," Brittany replied frowning. "Kurt's my friend, ok? I just got him back and there's no way I'm letting him go again. Puck can get over it," she said resolutely. "Besides, he looked miserable yesterday sitting with his friends. That Chandler kid was obviously upsetting him. I just want to let him know he's welcome to sit with us again if he wants to."

Santana nodded but said nothing. She'd watched Kurt and Chandler together the day before, mostly to make sure that Kurt wasn't just playing Blaine while tapping the dweeb. But Kurt was obviously uninterested and she didn't like at all how controlling and possessive Chandler seemed to be. The subtle glares he sent Brittany anytime Kurt talked to her were enough to put him on her shit list.

"Hey, Britt, Tana," Kurt greeted cautiously when he reached his locker.

"Sup, Porcelain," Santana said, eyeing him up and down. "Nice pants. Whaddya do? Paint them on?"

Kurt couldn't help but smirk as he shrugged, putting in his locker combination. "I could say the same thing to you about that dress," he quipped. Santana preened, knowing exactly how sexy she looked in her red and black striped dress. It hugged her body so perfectly that she may as well have painted it on. "Is there something I can help you ladies with?"

"Kurt," Brittany said softly, looking up at him with that innocent look she knew made everyone do what she wanted. "Will you sit with us for lunch today? I know Puck wasn't very nice to you but he won't say anything this time, I promise."

Kurt sighed, glancing at Santana who was wearing an amused expression. No one could say no to Brittany when she gave them that look, but Kurt was going to try. "I don't think that's such a good idea, Britt," he said regretfully.
"Please," Brittany pouted. "I even brought you cookies."

Kurt gave up easily, a deep breath escaping his lips before nodding. "Well how can I say no to cookies?" he asked with a smile.

"Yay!" Brittany exclaimed with an excited clap before leaning forward and kissing his cheek. "You're the best, Kurt."

"I try," Kurt replied with a half shrug.

"See you at lunch," Santana said, grabbing hold of Brittany's pinky before walking off.

Kurt walked into his first period class cautiously Friday morning, unsure of what he'd find. At Brittany and Jeff's insistence, he'd sat with the Crew for lunch the day before despite the pointed glares he received from Puck and Chandler. While most of his attention had been on Brittany, he had heard enough of Quinn and Jeff's whispered conversation to know that the Crew was pulling some prank on Mr. Peters for getting Blaine suspended. He just didn't know what it was. As he entered the mostly empty classroom, though, a disgusting aroma overwhelmed his senses and he immediately wondered what the hell the Crew had done? Quinn and Jeff were cuddled together in one of the desks, only pulling apart slightly to greet Kurt when he slipped into his seat a few rows away.

Kurt glanced over at Jeff who was smirking mischievously at him while Quinn continued her attack on his neck. "What in the hell is that smell," Kurt asked in a frantic whisper.

"You don't wanna know," Jeff mouthed back with a wink.

Kurt shook his head, smirking at the two blonds who'd already gone back to making out. Separating them was nearly impossible. He couldn't deny that they loved one another and somehow they seemed to fit so perfectly together, but as the rest of the students filed in around them, Kurt blushed at their brashness. Images of him and Blaine being that close and that bold suddenly filled his head and he quickly ignored them.

Mr. Peters walked in with the janitor a moment later, his nose wrinkling in disgust. "Mr. Sterling, Ms. Fabray, how many times do I need to tell you only one person per desk?" he snapped as the janitor tried to open his jammed desk.

"At least a dozen more times," Jeff replied cheekily as Quinn slid off his lap.

"Is there something wrong with your desk, Mr. Peters?" Quinn asked innocently. Mr. Peters glared at her but said nothing. He wasn't a stupid man. He knew whatever smell his desk was hiding was the Crew's fault.

"At least a dozen more times," Jeff replied cheekily as Quinn slid off his lap.

"This is an outrage!" Jeff shouted, punching his desk. "How dare you accuse us of such foul play?"
"Oh, cut the crap!" Mr. Peters snarled. "I know you did this. This is you getting revenge for Anderson's suspension and I am not letting you get away with it!"

"Now, now Mr. Peters, that is no way to speak to your students," Jeff chastised, smiling devilishly. "The school board, especially my mother, would not be pleased."

"OUT!" Mr. Peters shouted.

Jeff and Quinn gathered their things, both wearing matching smirks. "Come on baby-doll, let's go find an empty classroom," Jeff said.

"Sounds good," Quinn purred, pulling Jeff into a heated kiss in front of the classroom before finally walking out.

"Read chapters 12 and 13," Mr. Peters barked at the class. "And get me a new desk!" he yelled at the janitor who scurried off.

Since his lecture Tuesday morning, Blaine made sure not to piss his brother off the rest of the week. Cooper's recent threat to send him back to their parents rang loud and clear, and Blaine refused to go back to the place he hated so much. He went to work early, he kept the house clean, and he kept his crew away. He hoped that his good behavior would grant him some brownie points with Cooper. Blaine had plans for Friday night and he really wanted Cooper to say yes.

Cooper waited Blaine out as he lingered at the breakfast table nervously. There was something his little brother wanted to ask and it clearly wasn't trivial or easy, no matter how much Blaine would pretend it was. Cooper knew him better than anyone. So he waited, nonchalantly reading the same pages of his medical journal over and over until Blaine was ready to talk.

"So, um, I was wondering if maybe, after work, um…" Blaine finally spluttered.

Cooper put his journal down and looked at his brother. "Your crew is not coming over Blaine."

"No," Blaine said uneasily, shaking his head. "I was going to ask if maybe Kurt could come over."

Cooper raised a brow and sat back. "Let me get this straight. You are grounded and you want me to let the boy you have a crush on come over? When I'm not home?"

"I do not have a crush on him!" Blaine yelled incredulously and Cooper kept his smirk to himself. "Coop, please," he tempered his tone but it unwillingly turned into a whine. "All I've done since Tuesday is go to work and then come home to do nothing and you aren't going to be home and it's Friday night for goodness sake, I shouldn't even be grounded anymore and I have been so incredibly bored."

"You're being punished Blaine, it's supposed to be boring. And if you hadn't gone out on Monday with your crew, you wouldn't be grounded anymore," Cooper reminded him unsympathetically. He waited for the onslaught but, unexpectedly, instead of flipping out Blaine simply pushed his chair back and stomped off to the kitchen to bring his plate to the sink. He knew Cooper was right. Cooper sighed and followed his brother with the rest of the dishes. "What would you two do anyway? If I let Kurt come over tonight I mean."

Blaine turned hopefully but rested against the counter with an indifferent shrug. "I don't know. We'd probably watch a movie, or read Vogue," he guessed with an eye roll. "Or do whatever else fabulously gay teenagers do for fun."
Cooper reached over and ruffled Blaine's hair before he could duck out of the way. "This fabulously gay teenager gets into fights for fun," Cooper said pointedly.

"I don't fight for fun, Coop, I fight when I have to," Blaine corrected him seriously.

"You never have to fight, Blaine," Cooper told him.

"Says the man who was never jumped by three guys outside his school dance," Blaine mumbled under his breath.

Cooper took a deep breath and exhaled. The emotional and physical pain that Blaine had felt that night and the months after would haunt him forever. The walls he'd built to protect himself would take a miracle to tear down. Cooper had tried so hard over the years, and there were cracks and breaks to be sure, but the wall still stood firmly around him like armor. It was hard to remember the carefree boy that hid somewhere inside. Every once in a while he saw a glimpse, and Cooper reveled in those moments, wishing he could hold onto them forever. But they were fleeting, few and far between. But maybe…

"I get home at ten tonight from the hospital. I want Kurt already on his way home by then."

Blaine's eyes snapped to Cooper's, the gold starting to sparkle. "Do you mean…?"

Cooper nodded. "Kurt can come over but no one else. And you two are not to leave this house. Is that understood?"

Blaine's face beamed. "Totally," he yelled over his shoulder as he took off like a child for the living room.

Cooper grinned and followed, watching as Blaine raced upstairs and toward his room. "What are you doing Blaine?"

"Making sure my room is clean!" Blaine yelled downstairs excitedly.

Cooper scoffed. "Oh no, you don't have a crush on him at all!" he bellowed up the stairs.

"Bite me Cooper," Blaine sang happily before racing down the stairs. He grabbed his jacket and his bag and headed out the door with a beautiful spring in his step. "Love you!" he shouted before slamming it behind him.

Cooper laughed and his heart filled with joy. Yes, those were the moments he loved.

All day long while Blaine minded the register, pumped gas and helped Burt out in the shop, he waited nervously for Kurt to arrive after school, mulling over the words he would use to invite Kurt over after work. He wanted to be casual, calm and collected. He wanted it to be no big deal. He didn't want Kurt to think he was asking him out on a date. And most of all he didn't want Kurt to say no.

Things between them had been a bit awkward ever since Puck's blow up at the lunch table. It didn't help that they barely saw one another. Blaine would be nearly on his way out the door by the time Kurt arrived after school, and though he lingered for as long as possible making small talk and getting caught up on the Crew, it was inevitable that a car would drive up needing Kurt's help and Blaine would mount his bike and take off for home. The truth was, after spending all weekend with Kurt, for reasons he didn't want to admit, he missed the kid. An hour a day was becoming not enough. He couldn't wait for Monday to come, when they'd be on the same schedule again.
"Hey Blaine." Kurt stuck his head in the front office, interrupting his thoughts. Blaine stood up straight and glanced at the clock. Somehow the time had just flown from noon to two. "Let me just put my stuff away and I'll take over for ya in a minute," Kurt told him.

Blaine nodded and straightened up the counter as he always did before Kurt took charge of the register. Kurt liked everything just so and as much as he enjoyed Kurt's snark, he wasn't sure he could take it minutes before asking him out. Over, Blaine quickly corrected himself. He was asking him over. This was not a date.

"How was business today?" Kurt asked as he came back in and took the cash drawer out of the register, switching it out for his own. Kurt started counting and checking it against the register receipts. Blaine leaned back against the counter and watched.

"You tell me," he said, quirking an eyebrow. Kurt though shushed him, counting to himself and not wanting to lose his place. Blaine considered messing him up on purpose, craving Kurt's snappy wit and attitude after missing it all day, but he held his tongue. If he played this right, he could hear it all night.

Finally Kurt finished and stacked the bills together, taking out just enough for change for his own drawer. "Not a bad day at all," he said with a smile. "And it's all here too," he added with a smirk."

"If I'm stealing anything Kurt, it's cigarettes, not money," Blaine assured him.

"Noted," Kurt quipped and finished with the drawer. "I'm all set here, so you can go straighten the tool room then head out."

"Sure thing your highness," Blaine said turning to the door. He turned back quickly though, startling Kurt. He caught Kurt preen at his words and noticed his eyes snap up from Blaine's ass, pretending not to have been staring. Every word Blaine had planned to say all day fled his mind. Instead he simply tilted his head and offered a crooked smile. "Do you wanna hang out tonight?"

Kurt's heart immediately quickened as he froze in place, his eyes widening. "What?" he breathed out.

Blaine chuckled at Kurt's adorableness, and regained his composure. He shifted closer to Kurt as he leaned enticingly on the counter. "Do you wanna hang out tonight," Blaine repeated, his tone soft, his eyes smoky.

"Um…" Kurt swallowed, unable to think straight with Blaine standing so close to him, looking at him like that.

"Unless, you know, your boyfriend has a problem with it," Blaine said in a clipped tone, ignoring the tinge of jealousy that was threatening to rear its ugly head. He was just gathering information, understanding the playing field. The answer itself didn't matter unless it prevented Kurt from coming over, he told himself.

"Boyfriend?" Sudden confusion visibly washed over Kurt. "What boyfriend?" he questioned.

"Chauncey, or whatever the hell the nerds name is," Blaine shrugged, suddenly mesmerized by a crack in the counter top.

Kurt bit back a chuckle and shook his head. "It's Chandler and he's not my boyfriend. We're just friends, trust me."

A small relieved smile slipped from Blaine's lips, and he glanced back up at Kurt through his
eyelashes. Kurt's knees weakened at Blaine's gaze and he hoped with his entire being that his cheeks didn't blush. "Well then, what's the problem?" Blaine asked smoothly.

"There isn't one," Kurt replied quickly, glancing back at his father through the glass windows. "Except it's Friday and my family always has dinner together on Friday night, so…"

"So, ask your dad if you can bail," Blaine encouraged. "Come on, Kurt. Being grounded is so boring and Cooper actually said you could come over. So hang out with me tonight." With a little boy grin and his hands together in prayer, Blaine added with a pout, "Please?"

Kurt couldn't stop the blush that time as he giggled at Blaine's silliness, not to mention the one curl on his forehead that had freed itself after a long day of work. Like Blaine himself, every day after hours in the garage, Blaine's hair started to falter from its perfect state and show its true self, and Kurt loved that. He found himself dreaming at night about what Blaine's hair might look like without the gel and what Blaine might be like without his armor. Absentmindedly, Kurt reached across the counter and twirled the curl around his finger, tugging it gently. "I'll come if I can fix your hair," he said suggestively.

Blaine's smile froze and his eyes locked on Kurt's and for the first time he lost himself in the celestial blue storm that swirled in Kurt's eyes. His heart leaped in his chest and all he could do was breathe, "Okay."

Kurt swiftly pulled his hand back from Blaine's hair, realizing what he'd done and what Blaine had agreed to. He stepped away from Blaine and regained his composure, backing out the door into the garage. "Alright, fine. If my dad says it's ok then I'll hang out."

"Good," Blaine smiled as he watched Kurt walk away, a satisfied grin gracing his features. He would put aside the mix of thrill and dread he felt toward the idea of Kurt spending the night with his fingers running through his curls, because all that mattered was that Kurt was coming over and he'd finally get his chance to know the boy better.

Kurt knocked on the office door, grabbing his father's attention. "Would it be ok if I skipped out on Friday night dinner and hung out with Blaine tonight?" Burt put down the invoice he had been reading and raised a surprised brow. Friday night dinners was a tradition started by his late wife, and Kurt had always loved them. "I won't be home late I promise. I'll even drop you off at home and drive myself so I won't be subjected to that deathtrap motorcycle Blaine insists is transportation."

Burt turned in the swivel chair to look squarely at his son. He was no fool. Even if the kids couldn't see it yet, he knew very well there was something going on between Blaine and Kurt. He could practically see the sparks flying between them. After everything Kurt had gone through with Dave in Lima though, Burt was admittedly more cautious about with whom his son spent time. And there were certainly red flags when it came to Blaine Anderson. But he'd watched Blaine carefully over the last week, and he had every sense that underneath the tough exterior and regardless of the reputation he'd sought, Blaine was truly a good kid with a good heart. And even if he wasn't totally sure, Kurt's hopeful face was enough to sway him. With a long sigh, he nodded. "Sure, Kurt. You can go hang out with Blaine." Kurt grinned from ear to ear, unable to control his enthusiasm. "But be home no later than 10. Got it?"

"Yeah, got it," Kurt said happily. "Thanks, Dad."

Burt smiled and nodded. He liked seeing this side of Kurt. "Sure thing, bud."
Kurt nearly bounced back over to the front counter sliding back into place at the computer. Blaine looked up expectantly. "I cannot wait to get my hands on those curls," Kurt smirked in confirmation.

Blaine groaned, his hands immediately flying to his hair in protection. "You know what? I changed my mind. I don't want to hang out anymore," Blaine teased.

"Well that's just too, too bad," Kurt kidded silkily. "Because now you're stuck with me and I will be styling your hair. Is that understood, peasant?"

"Whatever you say, your highness," Blaine replied with a cheeky grin and a bow, but his eyes lingered on every inch of Kurt's body as he stood back up.

Kurt caught the action and his cheeks bloomed red. God he hated this boy so much sometimes. What in the hell was he getting himself into? "I'll take Dad home after work and pick up some products for your hair and then I'll be over. Just text me the address."

"Will do," Blaine said before heading out the employee lounge to head home. The tools could wait until tomorrow. He had more important things to worry about.

Kurt took a quick shower, fixing his own hair, before packing up a small bag of products to take to Blaine's house. He changed into tight black jeans, and a white button down, topped off with a black and light blue paisley vest. He hated admitting even to himself how excited, and how nervous, he was to be hanging out with Blaine freaking Anderson. So many things could go absolutely wrong, but a nagging voice in the back of his head said that it wouldn't. Yes they argued a lot throughout their shifts but it was usually just petty banter and the disagreements always ended in laughter. This was different then working together though. This was his first chance to get to see the real Blaine in the one place where he was probably the most at ease, and while he was nervous, he was also honored Blaine would allow him the opportunity to even glimpse him in that world.

Kurt closed his bag and started to head out of his room when his cell phone rang. He glanced at the name and frowned. He contemplated not answering but decided it would be easier to just take the call and get it over with.

"Hey Chandler," Kurt greeted cautiously.

"Hey Kurt," Chandler replied just as cautiously. "Listen, I know things have been weird with us lately and I was hoping that maybe I could come over tonight so we could talk?"

Kurt bit back the groan that tried to escape. "Um, I can't tonight. I'm busy," Kurt said vaguely.

"Busy with what?" Chandler questioned. Kurt didn't miss the accusing tone and it instantly reminded him why he had been avoiding his friend. He thought about lying. It would certainly make things easier. But in the end he decided it was better to tell Chandler the truth and deal with the consequences.

"I'm actually just on my way out. I'm hanging out with Blaine tonight." Kurt bit his lip, waiting for the inevitable blow up.

"You're hanging out with him?!" Chandler screeched into the phone. "I cannot believe you're choosing to hang out with him over me!"

"I'm not choosing him over you. He asked me to hang out first and I'm not going to bail," Kurt said through gritted teeth. "He's my friend too now and if he wants to hang out, then we're going to hang
"You know what? Fine! Go hang out with Arrogant Anderson! But when you fall for him and he breaks your heart, don't come crying to me about it!" Chandler shouted before hanging up.

Kurt growled in frustration, shoving his phone in his pocket. He hated how possessive Chandler was getting and if Chandler wasn't careful, Kurt was going to stop talking to him all together. Still, as he drove the short distance to Blaine's house, he couldn't help but play over Chandler's final words in his head. No. He wouldn't let himself fall for a badboy like Blaine. He couldn't.
Blaine opened the front door for Kurt, a wide grin in place. "Hey. What took you so long?" he asked teasingly as he ushered Kurt inside, a little wary of the bag of hair product Kurt held in his hand.

"Gathering all the product I need to style your hair is not an easy task Anderson," Kurt quipped, but it had an unintended bite to it, left over from his phone call with Chandler.

"Hey, I was only teasing," Blaine quickly explained, feeling his enthusiasm deflate.

Kurt sighed, running his fingers through his hair. "I know. I'm sorry. I'm just not in a good mood."

Blaine stiffened. "Did something happen at work? We don't have to hang out if you don't want to."

"No, no. I do." Kurt quickly forced himself to relax and let go of the conversation with Chandler. Taking a breath, he placed a hand on Blaine's shoulder. "I'm really sorry. I was taking my anger at someone else out on you. I have a tendency to do that. But I wasn't trying to snap at you, honestly."

Blaine felt his excitement surge again at Kurt's touch. "Anything you want to talk about?" Kurt shook his head and Blaine forced himself away. "Alright then," he said, walking towards the kitchen and gesturing at Kurt to follow. "I was going to order some Chinese for us since you skipped out on your family dinner. Is that cool?"

"Yeah, that's fine," Kurt said, taking in his surroundings. The living room had a warm contemporary feel to it with a palette of slate, rust and metallic that screamed luxury. Inlaid in a large stone wall on the far side of the room was a gas fireplace. Kurt refused to allow himself images of him and Blaine lounging by the warm fire on a cold winter's eve. "This is a really nice house," he said, catching up to Blaine in the kitchen.

"Thanks," Blaine answered absentmindedly as he grabbed a take-out menu from a folder full. "I'll be sure to pass that along to Coop."

Kurt nodded, leaning against the smooth marble kitchen counter that was twice the size of the Hudmel's whole kitchen. It seemed an awfully big home for just the two of them. "Is it just you and your brother or do your parents live here too?"

Blaine froze and Kurt knew immediately it had been the wrong thing to say. He saw the anger in Blaine's eyes flare. He saw the walls fly up in protection, before the hurt and betrayal could overwhelm him. Kurt looked away, before he could see too much and be hurt by Blaine's pain. "Sorry," he whispered.

Blaine though couldn't take his eyes off of Kurt and it only took a moment to realize that Kurt could read every feeling that flashed across Blaine's face. It scared the hell out of him. He had spent years learning how to keep people out to keep himself safe. After all, loving people had only ever led to being hurt. A voice in his head screamed at him to make Kurt leave and never come back. Who the hell gave him the right to read him like an open book? But he knew that it wasn't Kurt's fault. He'd allowed his walls to drop for the boy. And another voice told him not to regret it. "Sorry," he whispered.

Blaine's eyes fell to the floor, but with a deep breath, he answered. "It's just me and Coop here. Our parents live in Westerville, near Columbus."

Kurt needed to know more like it was air. He was nearly desperate to hold Blaine, to be the one
person he'd spill all his secrets to, but he knew that the only thing that would get him there was
time and trust. He wouldn't push Blaine for details today. "Oh," was all he said instead.

"Yeah," Blaine replied, his voice laced with emotion. He walked over to Kurt and leaned against
the counter next to him. "What do you wanna get?" he asked, deliberately changing the subject as
he handed Kurt the menu.

Kurt's pulse quickened once again at Blaine's nearness, and he looked over the menu to distract
himself. What had he been thinking suggesting he style Blaine's hair when just standing next to the
boy in the kitchen affected him so strongly? He seriously needed to get grip. "I'll have the Lo Mein
noodles and General Tsao's chicken," Kurt said, reaching into his pocket for his wallet.

Blaine looked up from the menu and smiled. "Good choice," he said, then noticed that Kurt was
taking money out. He reached over and placed a hand on Kurt's. "Don't worry about it dummy. It's
on me."

The moment Blaine's fingers touched his, sparks flew through Kurt as if their skin ignited a flame.
He meant to pull away, to look away, he really did, but instead his eyes flew up to Blaine's and he
found himself captivated, drowning in amber pools of heat. "Are you sure?" he breathed.

"Yeah, it's no big deal," Blaine assured him, his own eyes locked on Kurt's. He wasn't sure how
long they stayed that way, fingers brushing, eyes hypnotized. It felt like both forever and only a
moment, but finally he looked away, unwilling to let himself get fully lost. "You can set your stuff
down in my room if you want. It's just upstairs, the room straight in front of you at the end of the
hall," he said fumbling with his phone to dial the Chinese restaurant.

Kurt cleared his throat and nodded. "Alright. Take your time ordering. I'm going to go raid your
closet," Kurt teased as he walked away.

"Stay away from my clothes, Hummel!" Blaine shouted after him, then turned back to the phone.
"Oh, what? No, not you. I'd um, I'd like to place an order for delivery."

"Not a chance, Anderson," Kurt yelled back with a giggle. Blaine rolled his eyes, shaking his head
at Kurt, and rattled off their order. Kurt Hummel was going to be the death of him.

Kurt walked into Blaine's room cautiously, unsure of what he was going to find. He expected to
find it like Finn's with clothes strewn everywhere. He imagined pictures of Harleys on the wall,
pinups, maybe some heavy metal posters. He was pleasantly surprised to find it clean and mature.
Blaine's scent was everywhere in the room and his head was getting dizzy with it. He immediately
noticed a guitar in the corner, next to a desk with several non-descript notebooks. He walked over
and let his fingers glide over the covers that just begged to be opened and read. He stopped himself
though because he knew it wouldn't be right.

He allowed himself one moment of imagining Blaine sitting on the bed singing to him, before he
snapped himself out of it and dropped the bag of supplies on Blaine's bed. So what if he played
guitar? So what if he was ridiculously attractive and surprisingly sweet and full of such delicious
surprises? So freaking what? He did not like Blaine Anderson and he was sure as hell not going to
let himself fall for him. He sat on the edge of Blaine's bed and took a deep breath. He needed to get
himself together.

Blaine hurried up the stairs, trying to fend off the damage Kurt could be doing in his closet. But
when he reached the top of the stairs and glanced down the hallway to his bedroom, he froze at the
breathtaking sight. Kurt was sitting on his bed, looking off into the distance, and the image made
Blaine's heart thumped loudly in his chest. The things he could do to Kurt on that bed, his bed, would surely be hotter than any porno that Puckerman could scrounge up. He slowly made his way to the doorway, casting those thoughts aside with every step. It may be the place but it certainly wasn't the time for that. One day, Blaine thought, one day maybe I will make him mine.

Kurt turned from the guitar to see Blaine lingering in the doorway staring at him. "Are you just going to stand there or are you coming in," Kurt asked with an amused smirk.

"Uh, yeah, sorry," Blaine said nervously, walking into the room. Damn this boy for always making him a nervous wreck. "What happened to raiding my closet?"

"I got sidetracked," Kurt admitted, tilting his head to the corner of the room. "I didn't know you played guitar."

"There's a lot you don't know about me," Blaine flirted, resting himself casually against the wall.

"What I don't know," Kurt challenged, matching Blaine's flirtatious tone, "is if you're any good."

"Oh well," Blaine said, though he was walking toward his guitar. "What are you willing to exchange to find out?"

"I don't have to exchange anything," Kurt said knowingly. Kurt may have been placed in the dweeb category at school before his growth spurt, but he knew now that he was one hot piece of ass. Plus he delighted in the way Blaine's eyes always seemed to roam his body. He was fairly certain that Blaine at least found him sexually appealing. Not that he cared or anything, but it was definitely an ego boost. So he used his assets, leaning back on his hands, and put his long legs and lissome body on display.

Blaine couldn't help but lick his lips at the sight. "Ok, that is so not fair," Blaine whined unintentionally.

"All's fair in love and war," Kurt said without thinking, his voice low and seductive.

"Fuck," Blaine stammered. "Fine, just...sit up and put your fine ass body away Hummel." Kurt smiled widely, clapping enthusiastically as he curled his legs under him and went from sexy to childlike in an instant. "Oh, you have been spending too much time with Britt," Blaine shook his head with a laugh.

"Shut up and play the damn guitar, Anderson," Kurt snapped playfully.

Blaine picked up his guitar and rested on the edge of his desk. Kurt watched him eagerly as Blaine's forehead furrowed, stroking the strings and playing a few chords before his voice rang out in beautiful acoustic song.

Here we go again, I kinda want to be more than friends
So take it easy on me, I'm afraid you're never satisfied
Here we go again, we're sick like animals, we play pretend
You're just a cannibal and I'm afraid I won't get out alive
No, I won't sleep tonight

Before he knew what was happening, Kurt's heart was beating too fast and he was blushing too strongly to panic like he should. Blaine's smile and eyes lit up like the sun when he performed and the words were exhilaratingly terrifying, a controlled danger that thrilled him. Blaine's voice was raw and full of passion and even more incredible then he remembered. Kurt's head was spinning.
Oh, oh, I want some more
Oh, oh, what are you waiting for?
Take a bite of my heart tonight

Oh, oh, I want some more
Oh, oh, what are you waiting for?
What are you waiting for?
Say goodbye to my heart tonight

Choosing the song had been risky, which is why Blaine was pretty sure his thinking had not come directly from his brain. Once he realized the words he was singing, he momentarily panicked, afraid that Kurt might run. But the look of pure enjoyment on Kurt's face, not to mention the adorable flush of his cheeks, convinced him to continue.

Here we are again, I feel the chemicals kicking in
It's getting heavy and I want to run and hide
I want to run and hide
I do it every time, you're killing me now
And I won't be denied by you, the animal inside of you

He'd been playing this game for years now, ever since the Sadie Hawkins dance back in Westerville. Reel a boy in, get hot and heavy and then leave before he could get hurt. But something was different about Kurt. He didn't want the game, he wanted more. Blaine wanted him. His eyes were locked on Kurt's, unable to look away. He had no idea why Kurt mattered to him so much, what was so different about the fiery geek who never let Blaine get away with anything. All he knew was that he was starting to really care for the boy and that terrified him.

Hush, hush, the world is quiet
Hush, hush, we both can't fight it
It's us that made this mess
Why can't you understand?

Whoa, I won't sleep tonight
I won't sleep tonight
Here we go again

Oh, oh, I want some more
Oh, oh, what are you waiting for?
What are you waiting for?
Say goodbye to my heart tonight

Blaine looked at Kurt expectantly, breathless from the exertion and nerves, waiting for Kurt's critique, but Kurt could only stare. "That bad, huh?" Blaine frowned, clearing his throat awkwardly.

"Bad? Are you insane?" Kurt finally managed to sputter out. "Blaine, that was incredible." Blaine scoffed, clearly unconvinced, but leave it to Kurt to call him on it. "Don't scoff me at me. I'm being completely serious. The raw passion in your voice is...breathtaking. That was beautiful, Blaine. Truly."

"Yeah?" Blaine asked, his voice quiet and uncharacteristically shy.

"Yeah," Kurt nodded, his cheeks reddening. "Play something else."
Blaine smiled to himself and began playing a Katy Perry song. For fifteen minutes, Blaine sang random songs for Kurt, enjoying the way Kurt's eyes sparkled with delight. Lost inside those eyes and the music, Blaine let his barriers melt away and with them Kurt's walls came tumbling down as well. They weren't the badboy leader of Shaker Hills' most dangerous crew and the dweeb at the bottom of the social ladder. They were simply Kurt and Blaine, and neither of them wanted the moment to end.

It did though, as soon as the doorbell rang with the Chinese food. Blaine carefully put his guitar back on its stand then raced downstairs to get the door. Kurt took the opportunity to catch his breath and settle his racing heart, reminding himself once again that this was not a date and he was not going to allow himself to fall for Blaine. This was just two friends hanging out. Blaine's song hadn't meant anything.

Kurt went downstairs to find Blaine setting the kitchen table for them. Kurt joined him and emptied the bag, pulling out cartons of Chinese food, duck sauce, mustard, and fortune cookies.

"So, how was school today?" Blaine asked as they sat down to eat. Kurt shrugged noncommittally but said nothing. "Jackass still isn't bothering you, is he?" Blaine asked, instantly on defense.

"No," Kurt shook his head quickly. "Whatever you said to him worked because he hasn't even looked at me all week."

Blaine smiled smugly. "Good. What's with the face then?"

Kurt shifted in his seat uncomfortably, not wanting to start any drama with the Crew but not wanting to lie to Blaine either. "It's nothing."

"Bullshit," Blaine said clearly unconvinced. "Seriously, what's wrong?"

Kurt's shoulders slumped, a long sigh escaping his lips. "Puck hates me. We haven't had another fight but he glares at me in the halls now like I just squashed his puppy or something."

Blaine chuckled softly. "Puck does not hate you," Blaine said in amusement.

"Uh yeah, he does," Kurt argued with certainty.

"No, he doesn't," Blaine assured him. "Puck's just not good with sharing."

"Yeah, well, it's not like he owns you," Kurt grumbled.

Blaine put his fork down and sat back watching Kurt for a moment. If Kurt had seemed like it didn't really matter than he'd blow it off with a flippant remark and a change in subject. But Blaine could tell that for whatever reason this really mattered to Kurt. And he knew it mattered to Puck too.

"I moved here the summer before 8th grade," Blaine shared. "Cooper was working a lot, trying to make a name for himself at the hospital still. There were days he had 16 or 24 hour shifts and sometimes I'd hang out at the hospital with him, but a lot of the time I spent alone. I didn't know anyone, and the truth is," he glanced up at Kurt who watched him keenly. "The truth is I was afraid. I didn't know how anyone would react to me here. Puck came after me one day in the park when he thought I was hitting on Britt, but instead of backing down, I stood up to him. A lot like you," Blaine added with a smile. Kurt smiled back shyly. "Something possessed me to tell him the truth, that I was gay. It was an accident really, but instead of beating me up he took me under his wing. Made me who I am today. We've been like brothers ever since. He's my best friend Kurt, and I know he's worried that you'll change all that. Undo all his hard work."
"I wouldn't ever want to take you away from someone who was that important to you," Kurt whispered.

"I know you wouldn't," Blaine said. "He just doesn't."

Kurt nodded. The atmosphere in the room had grown heavy, too heavy for a night that had been so light and alive only moments earlier. Kurt grabbed a fortune cookie and threw it at Blaine. "You first peasant," he ordered with a smile.

Blaine caught the cookie with a proud grin and carefully opened it up. He snapped it in half, popping one side into his mouth while he opened up the fortune. "You can open doors with your charm and your patience," he read, then quickly added, "in bed."

"I don't doubt for one second that's true," Kurt cracked, then opened his own cookie. "Your dearest wish will come true," Kurt read.

"In bed," Blaine chimed in, wagging his eyebrows, but instantly feigned deference at Kurt's wry face. "Your Highness."

Kurt broke out into laughter, his cheeks flushing red for the hundredth time since he'd met Blaine. The badboy followed suit and together they finished their dinner, amongst laughter and carefree chatter.

"I changed my mind," Blaine said as Kurt ushered him into Cooper's master bathroom. "I don't wanna do this anymore."

"Too bad cause it's the only reason I agreed to come here tonight," Kurt smirked as he pulled the products of his bag and placed them on the counter. He ran his fingers through Blaine's gelled hair, businesslike in his demeanor as he tested the weight and length of the locks. Blaine closed his eyes, his stomach already stirring from the touch of Kurt's fingertips. All too fast, they were gone. "Now, you have two choices. You can either go wash that crap out yourself or we can get a chair and I can wash it out for you," Kurt said, holding the defrizz shampoo and conditioner out for him.

Blaine instantly knew that this was a terrible idea. Both choices were no win situations. Showering while he knew Kurt was right in the other room waiting for him would lead to nothing but a need to jerk off as quickly and quietly as possible. But the idea of sitting fully clothed while Kurt ran his fingers delicately through his hair was already making his pants extremely tight. Kurt waited expectantly, and Blaine sighed. "I'll go grab the chair from the bedroom." He quickly escaped.

He took the moment to adjust himself and breath, begging his body to calm down and his blood to return where it belonged. He grabbed the chair that sat in the corner of Cooper's room and carried it back in, fitting it by the sink.

"Ok, just sit down, lean back and close your eyes," Kurt told him, then smiled at Blaine's anxious look. "Don't worry so much, I've done this a million times with Marley and Harmony."

"How about with Charmander?" Blaine asked, the trace of jealousy returning without welcome as Kurt wrapped a towel around his shoulders.

Kurt laughed and ducked Blaine's head under the water. "A Pokémon reference? Really, Blaine? You really are a dork." Blaine smirked, sending Kurt a wink before closing his eyes.

As much as Chandler annoyed Kurt, delight shot through him at Blaine's jealousy of their friendship. The fact that the hottest guy in school could feel threatened by the 'dweeb' as Blaine
called him, made his heart soar even a little more. He gazed down at the boy, long eyelashes fluttering against closed lids, and slowly worked the shampoo, then conditioner, into his now curling locks. Kurt tried to imagine a world in which this made some sort of sense. But try as he might he couldn't. It didn't matter though. He was more than happy to just enjoy the time he got to spend with the real Blaine both inside and outside the shop.

Kurt wrapped a towel around Blaine's head and carefully sat him up so he didn't get dizzy. "My hair smells like raspberries," was the first thing Blaine said. He decided that was better than damn Kurt, that was the hottest thing anyone has ever done to me.

"Better than cigarettes," Kurt retorted as he scrunched Blaine's hair dry and threw the towel to the side. He turned back to see Blaine's beautiful curls in full force, small droplets of water trickling down his neck and disappearing beneath Blaine's shirt. "You might want to take that off," he said breathlessly pointing to his button down. "So it doesn't get too wet," he reasoned.

"As you command, Your Highness." Blaine smirked seductively as he removed the shirt, and Kurt couldn't stop staring at the tank that hid underneath clinging to every perfect place on his body. Blaine crossed his arms over his chest, flexing his muscles. "I know I'm hot stuff, Hummel but can we get on with this before my hair dries and I look Borat," Blaine teased.

Kurt tore his eyes away, clearing his throat in embarrassment. "You are so full of yourself," he said as he grabbed Blaine out of the chair. "Turn around and face the mirror."

Blaine straddled the chair, his pulse quickening with anticipation. He watched Kurt in the mirror, unable to take his eyes off of him. Kurt looked at him pointedly. "Pay attention to how I'm doing this. I promise your hair will look great if you do this exactly how I do it."

Blaine rolled his eyes and huffed. "What makes you think I'll do my hair this way on a regular basis?" he asked, but he watched carefully as Kurt squirted a small amount of curling mousse into his palm.

"When you see how amazing it looks, you will," Kurt assured him. He began working the mousse evenly into Blaine's hair, reveling in the soft curls, as he scrunched them tightly then softly let them fall into place.

Blaine wondered how the room had suddenly gotten 20 degrees warmer as he felt sweat starting to ooze from every pore. He had no idea just how badly this would turn him on, but each time Kurt fisted his hair, his cock throbbed with want. Blaine couldn't pay attention to anything Kurt was doing. All he wanted was to turn around and pin Kurt up against the wall.

"I think it's done," Blaine snapped, his self-control waning. "How much more could there possibly be to do?"

"Oh my God, stop complaining!" Kurt exclaimed, squirting the last bit of product into his palm. He came around in front of Blaine, leaning on the counter and started shaping the curls along his brow, twirling the hair around his fingers. "You are such a freaking baby," he laughed.

Blaine looked up at him desperately, nearly shaking with the power it was taking not to just lean over and kiss him. "You need to learn to work more quickly," he said.

"I'm almost done," Kurt said, twisting a few curls. "You need to learn more patience," Kurt said as he twisted the last of the curls. "There. I'm all done."

"Fucking finally," Blaine said, at last taking a moment to truly look at himself in the mirror.
"Well?" Kurt asked, biting his lip nervously in anticipation. He really wanted Blaine to like it. If he didn't, the whole evening could go downhill very quickly.

Blaine took in Kurt's work and was extremely impressed. Instead of the disastrous poof he was so accustomed to, his curls were silky smooth and controlled. Blaine didn't think it was possible for him to look any hotter than he already did but damn, he looked good.

Blaine looked up at Kurt with a satisfied smirk. "Not bad. Not bad at all."

Kurt smiled sweetly, relieved, and reached up to Blaine's hair to twist another curl. "I know."

Unable to control himself any longer, Blaine placed his hands on Kurt's hips, and swung his leg over the chair to stand face to face, their bodies pressed close together. Kurt let out a surprised squeal, his hands instinctively resting on top of Blaine's chest. Kurt subconsciously licked his lips, his heart beating frantically. Blaine caught the action, licking his own lips before closing his eyes and leaning in to kiss Kurt. He brushed their lips together softly, sweetly, for only a moment. Sparks shot through them both and their eyes fluttered open looking at one another questionably, longing for more.

Kurt swallowed nervously as his arms trailed up Blaine's back, feeling every twitch of every muscle, before he laced his fingers back in Blaine's hair. He surged forward, their lips meeting halfway, fueled by every ounce of tension that had stood between them the entire evening. The heat in their skin rose as Blaine wrapped his arms around Kurt's waist. Kurt deepened their kiss, needing to taste him, needing to know him more than he already did, and he felt like his entire world was spinning.

Blaine moaned softly into the kiss, his toes curling as he slowly discovered just how perfectly they fit together. His hand traveled down Kurt's ass slowly, not wanting to scare him away but unable to resist. Blaine squeezed gently yet possessively, sending an entirely new thrill up Kurt's spine. Kurt tugged on Blaine's curls, hungry for more. Blaine squeezed Kurt's ass harder, their bodies on fire as they thrust their hips toward one another. Kurt felt Blaine's unmistakable hard-on brush against his but instead of freaking out, it egged him on. He moaned into the kiss, wanting more, needing more, and Blaine was more than happy to oblige.

Blaine cupped Kurt's ass, lifting him up slightly and placing him on the bathroom counter. They stopped for just a moment, their eyes meeting, checking in, and seeing only desperation for more. But just as Kurt wrapped his legs around Blaine's torso, the shrill of Kurt's cell phone alarm broke through their haze.

Kurt leaned his forehead on Blaine's. "I have to go," he breathed out, willing his racing heart to slow down as realization set in.

"Right, yeah," Blaine said flustered. He took the first step back, running his fingers through his hair as Kurt jumped down from the counter. "Let me help with your stuff," he said, turning his attention to the Kurt's hair products.

"No, no. It's fine. I brought those for you so keep them," Kurt said, unable to look at Blaine. "In case you decide to do your hair like this again." Blaine nodded, a thin smile gracing his lips, but he said nothing. "I gotta go. I'll see you soon."

Kurt quickly exited the bathroom, hurried down the stairs, and ran out to his car. Blaine followed and watched him out the front door until his car disappeared down the block. He closed the door softly and leaned heavily against it. He'd never felt so scared and confused and thrilled all at the same time.
Kurt's hands were shaking so badly that he stopped the car to settle down as soon as he got out of sight of Blaine's house. Had Blaine freaking Anderson really just kissed him? And had Kurt actually kissed him back? Had the world turned upside down and shifted on its axis to become some type of place where one of the biggest dweebs and one of the biggest badasses could kiss and actually have it mean something more than a casual hookup, or even worse, a roguish conquest?

Kurt wasn't convinced. He started questioning everything as he pulled back on the road and drove the short distance to his house. His mind was racing, wanting more and regretting what he'd already done at the same time. The Blaine he'd grown to know over the last week was sweet and kind and self-conscious and completely lovable, but was that really the true Blaine? Or was the guy he presented to the world, the one who didn't give a damn about anyone or anything, who solved his problems with his fists and threats and spit in the face of authority, was that the real Blaine? Because Kurt knew only one thing for certain; the second Blaine would certainly break his heart if Kurt let him.

Kurt couldn't let that happen again, once had been more than enough. The last boy he let in shattered him, destroyed his ability to trust and forced him to build the walls that stood today; walls that Blaine was so deftly tearing down. As he pulled into his driveway and walked his heavy heart inside, he wondered about seeing Blaine again. He wondered how Blaine would act, what he would say, whether he would try to kiss him again or pretend it had never happened. Kurt honestly had no idea which of those possibilities he would prefer, which would make him feel like things were still okay between them. He didn't know what could ever let him truly trust Blaine.

"Hey Kiddo, how'd it go?" Burt asked, tearing Kurt from his thoughts. He looked up to find his father in the living room with the newspaper, a newspaper he'd probably already read earlier that day but was using to appear nonchalant in his waiting up. Kurt plunked down on the couch and curled his feet up underneath him.

"Did you ever think you knew someone only to find that maybe they were completely different than who you thought they were?" Kurt wondered quietly.

Burt looked at Kurt's confused and worry glazed eyes, and recognized himself in his son. "Yes," he replied with a fond smile.

Kurt's eyes flicked to his Dad's, needing more than anything the perfect advice that his Dad almost always gave him. "What did you do?" he asked.

"I married her," Burt revealed with a smile. As Kurt's mouth fell open in surprise, Burt leaned in towards him. "When your Mom and I were in high school, I thought she was the most stuck up, self-obsessed, spoiled princess that had ever walked the hallways of our high school. I was just a mechanic's son and she was the daughter of one of the richest businessmen in town. She always had the best of everything, the best clothes, the best car, the best parties. And she certainly didn't have an eye for me at all."

"How did you two get together then?" Kurt questioned. His father had never told him this before and he was captivated by the story of his mother.

"Turns out her friends were just as self-absorbed and stuck up as she was and left her high and dry one day after a football game. That was the first time I came to her rescue, and I never stopped until the day she passed away," Burt shared. "Turns out, she only acted that way to keep the friends
who'd always been there for her. When she had someone else to believe in her, she didn't need to hold on to those old ways anymore.

"Did you just trust right away that she was different?"

Burt chuckled and shook his head. "No," he answered, his eyes dancing at the memories. "I wanted to trust her. But it took time. And it took time for her to trust me as well. She'd been hurt in the past and the things I didn't like about her were exactly the things that had kept her feeling safe. It didn't happen overnight by any means Kurt. But it did happen." Burt yawned and patted his son on the leg before getting up with a groan. "I'm headed up to bed. This old man needs sleep." He started up the stairs but Kurt stopped him with a question.

"When was the first time you kissed her?" Kurt blurted out, his heart racing. He knew that what had happened that night between him and Blaine was written all over his face. But Kurt needed to know the answer.

Burt smiled down at Kurt, remembering the kiss like it was yesterday, but also pleased, knowing what the question meant to Kurt. "That very first day I rescued her," he answered.

"Did you ever regret it?" Kurt asked fearfully.

Burt paused only a moment before he answered honestly. "Not in the long run, Kurt. Never in the long run."

Cooper pulled up to a pitch dark house and immediately began to worry. Well, in actuality he'd been worried about Blaine's evening with Kurt all day. There were so many things that could go wrong. Between rounds and emergencies a million different scenarios had run through his mind and almost none of them ended with him coming home to a Blaine as happy as he'd been when he'd left that morning. Cooper had seen and heard enough to know that if anyone could break down Blaine's walls it was Kurt and he knew that would be both terrifying and thrilling for his little brother. He'd kept his fingers crossed though and held onto the hope that Blaine wouldn't do anything stupid, that Kurt would be everything Blaine wanted him to be, and that the evening would be nothing short of perfect.

The dark house did not bode well.

Before anything else, Cooper checked to make sure that Blaine's motorcycle was still there, which it was. He didn't breathe a sigh of relief yet though. Puck or Santana or any of the Crew could have still picked him up and whisked him away to goodness knows whatever trouble they could get into. He hated that he didn't trust his brother, but the fact was, Blaine had given him little reason to over the years.

He opened the door and toed off his shoes, flinging his keys on the hall table, and hung up his coat in the closet. The house was silent and he prayed that Blaine had just fallen asleep upstairs, hopefully not crying, but it wasn't even 11pm and he found that thought unlikely.

He moved to flip the light switch on but was startled by the miserable voice that came from the couch. "Hey Coop."

Cooper flicked the switch to find Blaine, knees pulled to his chest, forehead resting on his arms folded beneath him. Cooper cocked an eyebrow. "Went that well, huh?" he teased lightly. Blaine mumbled into his lap but it was completely inaudible. "Sorry, wanna try that again?" Cooper chuckled.
Blaine lifted his head and rested his chin on his arms. "I kissed him," Blaine told him, his voice small and thick, his eyes heavy though Cooper noticed it didn't seem like he'd been crying.

Cooper pursed his lips and folded his arms on his chest. "And what did Kurt do?" he questioned.

"He kissed me back," Blaine told him before throwing his forehead back on his arms dramatically.

"Oh how terrible," Cooper declared sarcastically. Blaine though did not react. He didn't bite back, he didn't lash out, and he didn't start crying. This was serious. Cooper crossed the room and sat down at his brother's feet. He dropped a comforting hand on his head and took notice of the curls. "Your hair looks nice," he said encouragingly.

Blaine turned his head and looked up at him. In that moment he looked like such a lost child to Cooper and it melted his heart. "Kurt did it," Blaine told him. "Apparently that's what fabulously gay teenagers do," he shrugged with a soft smile.

"Then you guys had some fun tonight," Cooper exclaimed happily.

Blaine thought back to playing the guitar for Kurt, the fortune cookies, Kurt doing his hair. "We had tons of fun tonight Coop. It was perfect," Blaine answered, his voice full of wonder and regret and that edge that was forever present.

"Then what's the problem?" Cooper asked wanting to understand what scared him so much.

"There's no such thing as perfect, Coop!" Blaine suddenly exploded. "I'm not even close to perfect! I'm nothing but a screw up! I was wrong before when I said that I was out of his league. Kurt's beautiful and brilliant and he's going to go off to New York and make a name for himself while I'll be stuck here working at a garage for the rest of my life! He's completely out of my league! How can I possibly be the kind of guy that Kurt Hummel deserves?"

"Squirt."

"And he ran away so quickly, I know he regrets it. What if I've completely ruined my friendship with him? Or what if it's all just some horrible joke like…" Blaine's voice faltered. Cooper's heart fell.

"Just because it happened once Blaine doesn't mean it's going to happen again," Cooper said softly. "You've got to start trusting people again. Kurt's a nice kid and you know he would never do what those guys did to you," Cooper tried assuring him.

"I've been with a ton of guys since then and I've never felt like this before. Why now?" Blaine asked desperately. "Why him?"

"Cause Kurt's not like any of those other guys. He's special, but so are you, Blaine. You care about him and that's ok," Cooper said. "It's not a bad thing."

Blaine shook his head determinedly. "No, it's not ok. I can't afford to care about him," Blaine insisted.

"But you can," Cooper encouraged. "And you should. Kurt could be really good for you, Blaine, you just have to let him in." Cooper stood up, placed a comforting hand on Blaine's shoulder, and leaned in to kiss his brother's forehead. "Just think about it, alright?"

"Night, Blaine." Cooper smiled softly before heading upstairs to bed, once again leaving Blaine alone to his thoughts.

Blaine tossed and turned most of the night, his dreams and waking thoughts plagued with images of the past mixed together with kissing Kurt. Had he gone too far? Had Kurt enjoyed it or hated it? Did it make Kurt's stomach flutter the way it had Blaine's or had he felt nothing at all? Had he gone home to laugh with Chandler or had he called Marley to talk about how beautiful it had been? What would have happened had Kurt's alarm not gone off?

Blaine threw off his blankets and went downstairs to the kitchen, the refrigerator light making him squint in the darkness. As he grabbed the milk and poured it into a saucepan his mind continued to race, his fraying nerves fighting his pure exhaustion. He wanted desperately for the kiss to have meant something to Kurt and yet it terrified him at the same time. What was he supposed to do then? The only person he'd ever called boyfriend had completely betrayed him. Since that time he'd never let himself get attached. He'd taken what he wanted and never cared before what they'd thought or felt.

But Kurt was different. In a hidden corner of his mind he could picture himself dating Kurt, being boyfriends, but he turned away from it immediately. He couldn't be Kurt's boyfriend. He couldn't allow himself to open up and let Kurt see him for who he truly was. It was too dangerous, not just for Blaine, but for Kurt too. Kurt deserved so much more than a screw up like Blaine who would surely end up doing nothing but breaking his heart, whether it was intentional or not. He couldn't put Kurt through that. He wouldn't.

He took the milk off the stove and poured it into his mug with chocolate. He grabbed a few marshmallows from the cabinet and sat down at the table, a small piece of paper catching his eye. He grabbed the fortune and rolled it over in his hand. "You can open doors with your charm and your patience." Blaine threw it down on the table. He could close doors too, burn bridges behind him. His parents had all but abandoned him. All he had left were Cooper and his Crew and he knew for sure that they would not take kindly to him being with Kurt. Puck especially. His friends would tease the hell out of him for going soft, but Puck would see it as a betrayal. None of them would accept someone as moral as Kurt to be a part of them.

But none of that changed the fact that Blaine was falling for the boy, nor did it change how much Blaine craved Kurt's friendship. And for Blaine that was the most important thing. He had to do whatever it took to keep Kurt in his life, no matter how much his heart desired more. He'd talk to him tomorrow when he went to get his check from the shop and set the record straight. He only hoped that Kurt would agree.

Blaine drove around the hospital and the garage for an hour before steeling his nerve and finally going inside. He went straight to Burt's office, glancing only briefly through the glass towards the pumps and register where he knew he'd find Kurt. Just the sight of the beautiful boy made him question his resolve as his pulse quickened. Kurt laughed at something his customer said and Blaine's lips immediately joined him in a smile. He shook his head and continued on his way, knocking on Burt's door.

Burt looked up and smiled motioning for Blaine to come in. "Hey Mr. Hummel," Blaine greeted. "Just stopping by for my check."

Burt reached into his drawer and pulled it out, swiveling his chair as he handed it to Blaine proudly. "First paycheck, huh?" Blaine gave a reserved smile. "Well congratulations. You earned it."
Blaine's face lit up at Burt's words, feeling for the first time in a while like maybe he'd actually done something right. His gaze immediately shifted to Kurt and it tempered. Burt tilted his head knowingly. "Why don't you go talk to him?"

"Yeah," Blaine muttered, barely listening.

"Life is short bud," Burt told him, unable to keep his fatherly advice to himself. "No time for regrets."

Blaine looked back at Burt, a sadness that pulled at Burt's heart filling too young hazel eyes. "My life is full of regrets," Blaine said before he walked out to Kurt.

Kurt was at the front desk filling out paperwork and doing his best to ignore the presence that suddenly filled the empty office. He didn't need to look up to know that it was Blaine and he really, really hated how attuned his senses were to the badboy. Blaine leaned on the counter nonchalantly, willing himself to be patient as he waited for Kurt to acknowledge his presence. Kurt stopped his hands from shaking, slowed his heart from racing and glanced up at Blaine through his eyelashes, a nervous smile playing at his lips. Blaine was certain his heart stopped. Damn him for making this so fucking hard, Blaine thought.

"Hey," Kurt greeted confidently, then raised his brow with a smirk. "Decided to come to work today after all?"

Blaine blushed and looked away, hating how adorable that one little gesture was. "Just picking up my check, don't get too excited," he teased nervously.

"Oh excited was not the word I would have chosen," Kurt rolled his eyes to keep himself from screaming. He tilted his head. "I like your hair. You did a good job."

"Yeah?" Blaine asked cheerfully, his hand automatically flying to his curls. Kurt nodded and Blaine turned toward the pumps to hide his blush and his nerves. Kurt was making this even harder than he thought it would be when all Blaine really wanted to do right now was kiss him again. "Listen about last night," Blaine started, his voice just above a whisper. "I don't want you to think…I mean, we're not…"

"Blaine, relax, don't give yourself a headache," Kurt teased to hide the sadness he knew would be coming. He already knew what Blaine was going to say and quite frankly, he didn't think he could handle hearing it. "Last night was fun, but it's not a big deal."

"Oh?" Blaine said, his eyebrows shooting up in surprise. "Ok…"

"Really, Blaine. You don't have to worry about me thinking I'm your boyfriend or anything just because we kissed," Kurt said, his eyes flitting back to his paperwork. "I mean yeah, it was a great kiss—"

"It was, huh?" Blaine interrupted with a smirk.

Kurt glanced up, matching Blaine's smirk before looking away again. "But I know it didn't mean anything. It was just a kiss. Friend's kiss all the time without it meaning anything, right?"

Blaine ignored the way his heart ached hearing Kurt say that their kiss hadn't meant anything. Because to Blaine it meant the whole world. "Right," he said, his voice waver ing slightly.

"Right. So don't worry, you don't have let me down easily or anything. I'm a big boy," Kurt said softly.
Blaine swallowed the lump in his throat and nodded. "Good. So, we're cool?"

"Like the other side of the pillow," Kurt flashed a fake smile as he forced back tears. "Did you need anything else?"

Blaine leaned off the counter and shook his head. "Naw. I'm going to head home. I'll catch ya Monday at school?"

"Yeah of course," Kurt answered and watched as Blaine headed back out the door. He hated the way he already missed him. With a long sigh, Kurt pulled his cellphone out of his pocket and typed out a text.

To: Marley R.
Sleepover tonight? Just us two?

Kurt leaned against the counter, waiting for Marley to respond.

From: Marley R.
Sure. Is everything ok?

Kurt glanced out the glass window, watching Blaine wave to his Dad and Burt wave back. The image should not make his heart hurt so much.

To: Marley R.
No, I don't think it is. See you at 8?

Kurt's gaze followed Blaine outside as he climbed on his motorcycle and drove away, missing the worried look on his father's face as Burt watched his son.

From: Marley R.
See you at 8. I'll bring the Rocky Road.

Kurt smiled sadly at the text before pocketing his phone and going back to work.

Kurt and Marley had been sprawled on Kurt's bed for close to thirty minutes not saying a word, but the pint of rocky road was nearly gone. As soon as Marley had arrived Kurt grabbed two spoons, handed her one, and silently drowned his sorrow. Marley was dying to know what was wrong and she tried to wait Kurt out, but eventually her curiosity got the better of her.

"So," Marley started quietly. "Any particular reason as to why we're eating ice cream this late at night? Isn't your skin going to hate you for it later?" she asked teasingly, hoping that it would help Kurt ease into the conversation.

Kurt looked up from his bowl, gulping the ice cream bite he'd just taken. "I kissed Blaine," he said in a rush.

"What?!" Marley blanched.

"Or he kissed me. We kissed each other. I don't know," Kurt shook his head, setting the spoon down in the ice cream carton.

Marley set her own spoon down, grabbed the carton, and set in on the bedside table. "When did this happen?"
Kurt sighed, tucking his legs underneath him. "Last night when we were hanging out. I don't even know how it happened. One minute I'm fixing his hair and the next minute we're totally making out."

"How was it?" Marley asked, eager to hear more.

Kurt could still feel the brush of Blaine's lips on his, the press of his fingertips into his hips. He could still feel his heart beating as Blaine's hand slowly trailed down to his ass and Kurt had held his breath in anticipation. He remembered the feel of Blaine's muscles under his touch and his desire to get to know the boy's body even more. He could still taste Blaine's tongue on his. "Honestly? It was incredible," Kurt confessed, his cheeks flushing. Marley squealed excitedly, moving closer to Kurt. His eyes opened wide. "I've never felt more alive than I did in that moment, Mar."

"Kurt, that's amazing!" Marley exclaimed.

"No it isn't," Kurt groaned. "It's not amazing, it's terrible!"

"Why?" she frowned. "Blaine obviously likes you and you keep saying that he's not as bad as everyone makes him out to be. What's the problem?" Marley questioned.

"The problem is I don't trust him. I can't trust him," Kurt said sadly. "He's Blaine freaking Anderson for goodness sake. Ok yeah, he's not as bad I originally thought, but what would a guy like Blaine want with me of all people?" Kurt wiped a stray tear away, hating how truly affected he was by it all. "He's Shakers' biggest badass for a reason. Do you think come Monday we're going to be BFFs? No. He's going to go right back to his Crew and he's going to be that arrogant asshole everyone expects him to be. He's not going to be the sweet goofball I've come to know, and I can't do that all again, Mar. After everything that happened with Dave, I just can't. I won't."

Marley moved over to sit next to Kurt, wrapping a comforting arm around his waist and resting her head on his shoulder. "Maybe it won't be so bad. Maybe he'll still treat you the same when he comes back to school," she suggested, though she knew it wasn't likely.

"I doubt it," Kurt shook his head. "His attitude is his shield and one simple kiss from me is certainly not going to tear it all down. I just," he paused not wanting to say the words but knowing he had to. "I hate that I like him. A week ago he was nothing but an egotistical delinquent and now…"

"Now you wish he was more?" Marley supplied cautiously.

Kurt nodded. "Yeah. But that's never going to happen. I should be happy he's even my friend. At least he got Kyle to stop harassing me."

"This is true," Marley agreed.

"What do you think I should do?" Kurt asked, resting his head on top of Marley's.

"I don't know," Marley shrugged. "Play it by ear I guess."

"Yeah, I guess," Kurt sighed, reaching over Marley to grab the ice cream. "Monday is going to be hell. Between Blaine going back to his, I'm too cool for you, attitude and Chandler's sudden obsession with me, I'm totally screwed."

"Chandler has been a little intense lately, hasn't he?" Marley said, pulling a face.
"That's one way to put it," Kurt scoffed. "I swear to god, he says one word to me about Blaine and I'm just going to punch him in the face."

Marley giggled. "Wow, violent much? Didn't know Blaine rubbing against you meant Blaine rubbing off on you too," she teased.

"Oh shut up," Kurt laughed, grabbing a pillow and playfully hitting Marley. They spent the rest of the night talking about fashion, the upcoming auditions at school and gossiping about their favorite celebrities. Kurt hated how frequently things reminded him of Blaine and the Crew. He hated how he kept unintentionally bringing them up in conversation. How had they made such an impact on his life already? One thing was certain, Monday was going to be a very interesting day.

"Nick can come over to help you write your apology letter," Cooper had told Blaine Sunday as he headed out the door for his daytime shift in the Emergency Room. "No funny business and no one else. I'd let Sterling come too but that letter would just get you expelled."

Blaine looked at the clock. It was noon and Nick was due over any minute and thank god because Blaine had been completely unable to concentrate on anything but the memory of Kurt's body pressed against his since he'd left the shop yesterday. He'd spent the night before strumming his guitar and filling his latest notebook with lyrics of perhaps the first love song he'd ever written. He had it bad and he needed to talk with the least judgmental and most level-headed member of his Crew.

Nick pulled up at half past 12 and Blaine let him in. "Hey bro it's so good to see you!" Nick said pulling Blaine in for a hug. It may have been less than a week, but for the past three years they'd barely spent a day away from one another, aside from when Nick had done summer stock this past summer. "Thank goodness you're coming back tomorrow before Puckerman kills Jeff and Santana and Quinn rip each other's eyes out."

"That good, huh?" Blaine laughed and led Nick up to his room. "Well then we better get this idiotic letter written so I can whip them back into shape."

Blaine sat at his desk, his laptop switched on. Nick flopped onto Blaine's bed. "Ok, so what does Williams want you to write?"

"Dear Mr. Williams," Blaine rattled off in a sing-song voice while he typed. "I'm sorry for being such a bad boy. Smoking is bad for you and smoking in the boys' room is very, very bad. But you see, Do ya ever seem to have one of those days where everyone's on your case from your teacher all the way down to your best girlfriend?" Nick's smile slowly grew until he burst out laughing as Blaine continued writing Motley Crue. "Well you know I use to have those about all the time. But I found a way to get out of it, Let me tell ya 'bout..."

Blaine spun around and grabbed his guitar, starting to sing.

Sittin' in the classroom thinkin' it's a drag
Listening to the teacher rap-just ain't my bag
When two bells ring you know it's my cue
I'm gonna meet the boys on floor number 2

Nick flipped around and grabbed the microphone that sat on a shelf in Blaine's music corner. He sidled up next to Blaine and held the mic out to both of them as they started to rock out hard.
Neither boy could finish singing, laughing too hard to get the words out. Nick fell back on the bed, his sides hurting from his hysteric and Blaine doubled over on the chair catching his breath. "Somehow...I don't think...that's exactly...what Mr. Williams...had in mind," Nick stammered between breaths.

"A letter like that should get me an achievement award," Blaine said, breathing in deeply and exhaling slowly to calm himself. "Mr. Williams needs to take the stick out of his ass."

"Come on Blaine, let's get this done and then we can do something fun," Nick suggested reasonably.

They settled down and started to write, suggestions coming from both boys as they crafted a heartfelt letter to convince the man that hated Blaine that he had indeed learned his lesson. Nick lay on the bed behind Blaine as he typed and flipped through his friend's songwriting journal that he'd left on the bed. Nick was the only member of the crew that Blaine ever shared it with and he'd seen most of his songs before. But being grounded had obviously given Blaine time to write so Nick scanned through the latest. The last one gave him pause.

You look at me with an ancient soul
And a child's eyes
Caressing me softly
Kissing me gently
Filling my soul with a serenity
I have long forgotten.

And yet that serenity is quickly erased
By the betrayal of the world outside
The gentle love that we have embraced
For the two of us will always be denied.

We try to find our way
In a world that defies understanding
In a world where black and white are illusions
And good and evil figments of imagination.

We search the world over to find
That one place that will always feel right
That one place that makes sense of madness
But it lies only in the serenity of love's touch.

And yet that serenity is quickly erased
By the betrayal of the world outside
The gentle love that we have embraced
"Okay, thank god that is done," Blaine said snapping his laptop shut and turning to Nick. He froze when Nick's eyes stared back at him, admiration and amazement at Blaine's words shining.

"Something you want to tell me Blaine," he asked carefully.

His chest fluttered with panic and he felt an overwhelming urge to flee the room or kick Nick out. Telling Nick was one thing, Nick reading his innermost thoughts about Kurt was something else entirely. But what's done was done and this was Nick. He needed to tell someone other than Coop.

"I kissed Kurt," Blaine breathed. "You can't tell anyone."

Nick's brow furrowed and he held back a chuckle. "Dude, everyone already thinks you're fucking him. What's the big deal?"

"That's the big deal!" Blaine shouted, swiping his songbook from Nick's hands. He paced the room, not wanting to admit the feelings that were stirring inside him. "Who the fuck writes that about some dweeb that they just kissed?"

"Someone who's falling in love," Nick smiled warmly.

Blaine dropped his head and gave a brittle laugh. "I can't fall in love with Kurt Hummel," he declared.

Why not?" he asked softly, his heart jumping slightly at the thought of Harmony.

"Because the last time I fell in love I ended up in the hospital with broken ribs and bruises. If Kyle…" Blaine faltered and looked away, but Nick flew of the bed to meet him, forcing his eyes back.

"The Crew is not going to let Kyle hurt you or Kurt," he insisted.

Blaine shook his head. "No way are Puck and Santana and Quinn going to put themselves on the line for that. They'll laugh me out of the Crew so fast it would make your head spin, then they'll go after both of us. That's if Kurt even feels the same way, which I'm nearly certain he doesn't." He looked up, his face determined. "No, this is the way it has to be. I've been with tons of guys before without it meaning anything. Kurt's no different."

Nick let it go the rest of the day, but he knew one thing for sure. For Blaine, Kurt was very different.
Blaine sat slumped in the uncomfortable plastic chair waiting for the Principal and his guidance counselor. "I don't even understand why we have to do this," he mumbled flicking his eyes to Cooper before staring back at the wall. "It's fucking 7:00 in the morning."

"We have to do this because if we don't they aren't going to let you back into school at all, and for God's sake stop swearing. Hold it together for a half hour. Can you do that for me?" Cooper nearly pleaded. He had to get to the hospital by 9 at the latest, Blaine needed to cooperate.

"Dr. Anderson," the Principal called good-naturedly as he walked into the office and immediately shook Cooper's hand. "A pleasure, as always." He stressed the last word, side-eyeing Blaine with disdain. This wasn't their first meeting and there was no one in the room who believed it would be their last. "Mr. Anderson, come this way."

Principal Williams led the two to a conference room in the guidance office. "Unfortunately, Ms. Jacobs couldn't join us today so it's just us."

"Great," Blaine muttered under his breath rolling his eyes. He knew that she would have stood up for him, but now he was on his own. Cooper placed a quick hand on his and Blaine shut his mouth.

The principal shuffled papers and pulled out Blaine's rather large file. "We all know why we're here. Blaine was suspended for a week for, once again, smoking in the restroom. This on top of his numerous other infractions, his history of both after school detentions and in-school suspensions, as well as his overall poor attitude led us to believe that a break would be good for Blaine," he smirked condescendingly.

Cooper ignored it though and sat up straight, smiling proudly. "I think it has been very good for Blaine. Since he was suspended he got a job and has been working nearly every day during his time off. He's made a good name for himself with the boss and he'll continue working there after school and on weekends. I've noticed a real change already."

The principal raised a brow and looked at Blaine in doubt. "And do you have the apology letter that you were asked to write?" Blaine reached into his inside coat pocket and silently handed over the letter. The Principal read it, disbelief clearly written on his face. Blaine glowered at Cooper, but at his brother's pleading glance he pulled himself together and slapped on a face of contrition when the Principal lowered the letter and peered over at him. "Do you think you've changed, like your brother said? Do you think you should be allowed to come back to Shaker Hills?"

"Yes Sir, I do," Blaine answered, burying deep his desire to reach over the table and punch the man. "I've definitely learned my lesson."

"I wish I could believe that Blaine. You're a smart kid with a lot of potential. But how am I supposed to trust you when we both know you were the organizer of that disgusting prank played on the very same teacher who initiated your suspension," the principal asked, a smug expression on his face.

Cooper's shock turned quickly to anger at Blaine, but changed to confusion when he saw genuine surprise on Blaine's face. "I organized what?" Blaine choked out in astonishment.

"Come on Mr. Anderson, you know very well what I'm talking about," Principal Williams insisted. "It was remarkably obvious that you were the one who had Quinn and Jeff fill Mr. Peters' drawer
with cigarette butts. And if it's true, I have every reason to expel you from Shaker Hills High School."

Blaine whipped his head to Cooper, his heart racing in a panic. "I have no idea what he's talking about Coop, I swear!" He grabbed his phone and as quickly as possible tapped through to his Facebook messages. "Here," he said handing the phone over to Cooper. "That's the message I sent to Nick last week. I know I wasn't supposed to contact them, but I specifically told them NOT to do anything for revenge!"

Cooper looked at the message and handed it over to the Principal. "See for yourself, Mr. Williams," he said. "I know you don't have much reason to trust my brother, but the fact is I know when he's lying and right now I believe him."

The principal read Blaine's message clearly stating that the Crew was not to do anything to get revenge for his suspension. Blaine watched, anger and nerves combining so strongly, his leg was bouncing uncontrollably and he was seriously craving a cigarette right then. The Principal slowly put the phone down and Blaine recognized defeat in the man's eyes.

"I'm giving you one last chance Anderson," Principal Williams told him as he handed Blaine his phone. "But your brother better be right that you're a changed man, because one more screw up and you are done here. Is that understood?"

"Yeah," Blaine responded gruffly.

Cooper reached over to shake the principal's hand, cutting off Blaine before he could get himself into any more trouble. "Thank you Mr. Williams, Blaine and I greatly appreciate what you're doing for him. I assure you, there won't be any more issues."

"I expect not Dr. Anderson," he declared as he closed Blaine's file back up and stood from the table, looking at Blaine. "I suggest you get yourself to class on time today."

Blaine waited until Principal Williams left before throwing himself out of his chair and pacing the room. "Deep breaths Squirt," Cooper urged.

Blaine did as Cooper said and felt the swirling anger in his chest slowly settle into determination. "I'm fine," Blaine assured him, though the chill in his voice and the blaze in his eyes were the only evidence Cooper needed to see he was lying.

Cooper placed a hand on Blaine's back and guided him firmly out of the building and back to their car. "Listen to me carefully Blaine. Whatever you're feeling toward Mr. Williams, let it go. Just do what you need to do for the rest of the school year and graduate. That will be your best revenge."

Blaine bit his lip and looked out toward the football field where he knew his Crew was waiting for him. Blaine took a breath and looked at his brother. "Don't worry about me Coop. I have every intention of doing what I need to do."

As soon as Cooper drove out of the parking lot, Blaine stormed over to the spot under the bleachers where his Crew always met up. Jake was the first to see Blaine come around the corner, eyes blazing with rage, and knew instantly they were in trouble.

"Hey Bro," Jake said, nodding towards Blaine. "Nice curls."

Puck looked over at their leader and smirked. "Hey, man! It's good to-" Puck didn't finish his greeting though because Blaine was suddenly grabbing his jacket collar and slamming him against
the fence. "Dude! What the hell?"

Blaine ignored him, walking straight over to Jeff, grabbing his jacket collar, and pinning him against the fence next to Puck. "What the fuck were you thinking?!" Blaine hollered angrily, sending Quinn a glare that stopped her from coming to her boyfriend's aide. "Did I not specifically say that you were NOT to get revenge? What the fuck were you thinking doing that shit to Peters' desk?!" he asked, shaking Jeff a bit before releasing him.

"It was Puckerman's idea," Jeff said quickly, his voice high with fear. "I'm sorry!"

Blaine turned to Puck and punched him in the arm with full force. "Can't you fucking listen for once?"

"I told you he'd be pissed," Nick said to Santana under his breath. Santana half shrugged but said nothing, keeping a protective arm around Brittany. It scared Britt when Blaine got angry like this.

"Are you kidding me with this shit?" Puck snapped, coming face to face with Blaine, ignoring the pain that shot through his arm. "Are you seriously pissed that we taught that asshole a lesson in not messing with you? We weren't going to let him get away with suspending you!"

"He already got away with it!" Blaine yelled in Puck's face before giving him a hard shove. "I was almost expelled because of your stupid prank!"

"But you weren't even here," Jeff said quietly, wishing they'd listened to Nick and never done it.

"Did you really think that Williams would believe I had nothing to do with it?" Blaine snapped, turning his attention back on Jeff. "Did you even think at all? Thank God Cooper was able to convince him that I didn't or you dumbasses would be leaderless!"

"We're sorry, Blaine," Quinn said softly, walking over to Jeff and standing in between him and Blaine. "We didn't mean to get you in trouble."

"Yeah, man. We were just trying to get a point across," Jeff half shrugged.

"Which was what exactly?" Blaine yelled, his anger steady. "What the hell was the point of filling Peters' desk with cigarette butts?" Brittany untangled herself from Santana, walked over to Blaine, and wrapped her arms around him from behind before things got too heated. He felt her arms and didn't resist but didn't let it stop him. "There was no fucking point! Other than some ridiculous attempt to get even."

"Alright, we get it," Puck griped, crossing his arms. "We shouldn't have done what we did. We're sorry. Can you quit flippin out now? Jesus, I didn't think Hummel would have you going soft so quickly."

Blaine lunged at him but Brittany managed to strengthen her grip and drag him away. She was the only one in the Crew that was ever able to calm Blaine down when he was this heated. "Puck's just trying to take the blame off himself and put it on Kurt, Blaine, you know it," she whispered as she held him strongly.

"This isn't about Kurt," Blaine told her, his anger slowly dissipating. "I can't fuck up anymore Britt, not like that. One more screw up and I'm gone. I can't do it to Cooper." I can't be sent back home, he thought to himself. Brittany said nothing, simply smiled sweetly at him and kissed his cheek. He squeezed her hand tightly and took some long, deep breaths. When he was finally settled he turned back to the group and looked at his friends. "Alright Crew. It's time to make my return known and moron over here is announcing my entrance," he said stepping away from Brittany to
shove Puck's shoulder.

"Now, that's what I'm talkin about!" Puck exclaimed, throwing an arm over Blaine and walking towards the school building.

"Have you heard anything from him yet this morning?" Marley asked as they made their way inside the school building and headed to Kurt's locker.

He twirled the combination on his lock and opened the door. "No, and I'm sure I won't," Kurt said, preparing himself for it even if he hoped it wouldn't be true. "Everything's going to go back to normal, and I will once again just be that dweeb Hummel."

"With a nice ass at work," she giggled nudging him.

He nodded, rolling his eyes. "Yes, with the nice ass at work. At least there is some consolation," he smirked.

He switched out his books and closed his locker, when the commotion from the hallway froze him and Marley in their tracks.

"HOOTIE HOO!" Every student in the hallway turned at the sound of Puck's voice. "Anderson is back in the house, baby!" Puck shouted out. Blaine stood next to Puck, strutting down the hall, with his wingmen, Nick and Jake close behind. Quinn strode proudly, chin held high and her arm linked firmly in Jeff's, with Brittany and Santana bringing up the rear.

"Oh dear Lord," Kurt muttered under his breath, leaning against his locker. Try as he might, he couldn't picture himself in amongst that crowd, scowling at the world as he preened by Blaine's side. "He couldn't just come back to school, could he? He has to make it into a big production," he complained.

Marley shrugged with a sorry frown for her friend. "Did you expect anything less?"

Kurt glanced at her for a moment before looking back at Blaine, who was drawing near. Truth was, he had expected less. Or rather, he expected more. Once he grew to like Blaine, he began to hope that the week spent with him and his father, away from school and the horrible influences of the Crew, would change him. Maybe convince him to try flying under the radar, or at least knock him down a few notches. But the cocky smirk plastered on Blaine's face proved that Kurt's hopes were merely the pipe dream of a silly crush.

"No, I guess not," Kurt sighed. "Whatever. It doesn't matter." Kurt pulled his bag over his shoulder dismissively. He refused to let one kiss with this boy, no matter how amazing it was, affect him.

Blaine felt the reassuring return of the armor he had slowly let slip away over the past week, as his fearful classmates parted for him and his Crew like the Red Sea. He'd worried that maybe it would be different, maybe he'd have lost his influence and his dominance at Shaker Hills with his absence. But it appeared that his suspension had only increased their fear and he felt it wash over him like a wall of protection.

But at the end of the hallway, standing at his locker, looking sinfully gorgeous in his tight jeans and bow tie, was Blaine's kryptonite. As he neared Kurt all he wanted to do was sweep him into his arms, kiss his lips, let him run his fingers through his curls. But he couldn't. After Puck's comment earlier, he knew that even saying hello would destroy everything he'd worked so hard to build in this school. Instead, out of eyesight of the rest of the Crew, he threw Kurt a devilishly sexy and ridiculously arrogant smirk before continuing down the hallway.
Kurt's breath caught in his throat, his knees went weak and he licked his lips, before he came to his senses and huffed away in the opposite direction. He hated how cheap Blaine's greeting made him feel. But most of all he hated how quickly his heart was beating just to have been acknowledged.

Being back at Shaker Hills together was not going to be easy at all. He was in for a very long day.

It didn't take long for Kurt to remember how much he truly disliked Blaine's badboy façade. Gone was the sweet boy who had sung to him and bought him dinner and cringed nervously under Kurt's nimble fingers. Gone was the boy who had kissed him and that Kurt had hungrily kissed back. All that was left was the arrogant prick Kurt remembered much too well. The problem was though that Kurt didn't just feel the old revulsion and disgust when he watched Blaine assert his dominance and control over the students and teachers alike. Now that Kurt knew how different Blaine could be, he was overwhelmed with disappointment every time Blaine acted out.

But then a part of him wondered if, like Chandler said, the act had all just been to get into Kurt's pants, and this was truly the real Blaine. He didn't want to believe it. He'd feel like a complete and total idiot for falling for it if it were true. But as the day went on, Blaine made it harder and harder to believe in the sweet, gentle, cocky but self-conscious boy he could have grown to love.

Kurt watched him, in Chemistry, their one class together, as he and Jeff slipped baking powder where it didn't belong into their neighbor's beaker, leaving the poor kid to fend off the teacher's anger and to clean up the mess. He watched as a one of the football players harassed a shy and quiet freshman in the hallway and Blaine and Puck just walked by, barely batting an eyelash, not a care in the world. And he watched as Blaine stood with a satisfied grin as Santana and Quinn gave a cruel and damaging tongue-lashing to a girl who had dared to call Brittany dumb.

He watched Blaine all morning and he didn't like what he saw one bit. But most of all, he didn't like that other than the smirk this morning, never once did Blaine even acknowledge Kurt's existence, much less his friendship. It was as if the past week had never happened and had been a complete figment of his imagination.

Kurt started to wonder if maybe it had been.

By lunch, Kurt's disappointment and regret had grown to anger, and when the girls checked in to see if he'd be sitting with them or with Blaine, he assured them that sitting with the Crew was the absolute last place he wanted to be. Marley ran to make a quick stop at the library after drama class, but Kurt and Harmony headed over to Kurt's locker to grab his lunch. They both stopped dead in their tracks when they saw Blaine casually leaning up against it, one foot up. Harmony didn't miss the hitch of Kurt's breath. She looked around subtly for Nick or other members of the Crew, but Blaine appeared to be alone. She looked up at Kurt nervously.

"I'll see you at the table?" she asked tentatively.

Kurt nodded firmly, his posture stiff, but sure. "Yes. I'll be right there."

Harmony gave his hand a quick squeeze and scurried off. Kurt took a deep breath, swallowed hard, and walked confidently over to his locker. He'd expected Blaine to move aside for him, but instead Blaine held firm to his spot, stoically standing completely in Kurt's way, arms crossed.

"Is there something you needed, Anderson?" Kurt asked loudly hands on his hips. He was too focused on Blaine to notice the wandering eyes of students surrounding him, ready for the faceoff between the dweeb and the Crew's leader. They didn't know what Kurt had done, but he was
clearly in for it. The truth was, the school had been waiting all day to see who Anderson's first victim would be.

"Actually, yeah," Blaine said angrily. He noticed the growing crowd and kept his cool. "Nothing to see here folks, just a small disagreement between the Crew and this little geek. Move along to your classes, I don't need witnesses," he crooned.

Kurt's stomach began to boil as he glanced at the quickly dissipating crowd. "I wouldn't be the one talking about being little, Anderson," he snapped without thought. "Now if you will excuse me, I need to grab my lunch so I can sit with my friends."

A week ago Kurt's comment would have ended with Kurt nursing his wounds, but today Blaine slid merely over, and Kurt stepped forward to open his locker. Having Blaine this close to him, and acting like an ass, was causing his fingers to shake against his combination lock and he hoped Blaine didn't see it.

Blaine did see though and he hated that he caused the reaction. He closed his eyes and tempered his anger before he spoke again. "Why didn't you tell me about what my Crew did to Peters?" he asked as Kurt entered his locker combination, his tone firm with an underlying softness. "Don't you think that's something I should've been made aware of?"

"I'm sorry but when exactly did it become my job to tell you what your Crew does or doesn't do?" Kurt glowered. "We may be friends but I'm not your spy," Kurt grabbed his lunch bag and slammed his locker shut. "Though I'm not even sure we're that anymore," he spat before starting to storm off.

He didn't get far though because Blaine's hand was suddenly on his bicep, swiftly turning him around. "What the hell does that mean?" Blaine spat.

Kurt locked eyes with him, suddenly neither afraid nor charmed. "I don't know Blaine, you tell me? You're the one that's virtually ignored me all day. I saw you and Jeff sabotage Ian's science experiment. I watched you walk by with willful ignorance as the jocks harassed one kid, and your girls bullied another. That's not the Blaine Anderson I'm friends with." Kurt watched the anger and coldness disappear from Blaine's eyes and melt into hurt and understanding, but Kurt didn't care. "Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to eat lunch with my real friends." Kurt tried to step out of Blaine's firm grip.

"Wait, hold on," Blaine said, pulling Kurt down the hall until they reached a hidden corner Blaine knew well. He glanced up and down the hall quickly, making sure they were alone. His voice was quiet, his eyes were soft again and reminded Kurt of the Blaine he knew. "Look, I'm sorry I ignored you. I wasn't trying to, ok? I'm just…I'm not used to having friends outside of my Crew. I guess I'm just trying to find my footing.

Kurt understood, but he couldn't accept the apology. He had been here before, and he would never forget the pain that type of relationship had caused him. "Yes well, when you find it, let me know," he uttered, then glanced at his arm. "Now kindly remove your hand."

Blaine softened his grip, and brushed his thumb lightly along Kurt's bicep. His eyes sparkled with desire. "At least come have lunch with us," he whispered. "We're way more entertaining than Chester and those dweebs."

Kurt pulled his arm roughly from Blaine. "His name is Chandler, and he, like those dweebs, are my friends, Anderson. You want me to sit with you? Earn it," he taunted before turning on his heel and walking off.
"Fuck," Blaine muttered under his breath, punching a nearby locker loudly enough for Kurt to hear, and walked out to the quad to meet his Crew.

Blaine all but slammed his lunch tray down on the table, taking his regular seat next to Puck. He was the last one there and Jeff and Brittany looked up at him expectantly.

"Where's Kurt?" Brittany asked, her face dropping with disappointment as she glanced around for him.

Blaine rolled his eyes, hiding the multitude of emotions currently coursing through his veins. "Sitting with the dweebs."

"What's the matter, Anderson? Kurtie doesn't want to be your friend anymore?" Puck sneered mockingly.

"Don't call him that," Jeff and Brittany cried simultaneously, both glaring at Puck.

Puck scoffed. "Why the hell not?"

"Johnson calls him that," Blaine answered, his tone cold and hard, putting an immediate end to the conversation. Puck heard the edge in his voice and didn't even roll his eyes. The last thing he wanted was a repeat of that morning.

Santana though had no qualms about riling Blaine up. "So whaddya do to piss Porcelain off?" she asked with a smirk.

"What the fuck makes you think I did anything?" Blaine snarled, though he kept his eyes on the lunch he was picking through. "He's the one that hid your damn prank from me."

"That's surprising," Puck muttered to Jake, but Blaine overheard it and turned a glare on him. "What? It is! The kid's a total dweeb. It's like, in his nature to be a snitch."

"That's not true!" Brittany said defensively.

"Clearly not," Blaine muttered to himself.

"Yeah man," Jeff told Puck as defensively as Britt, while he gave Blaine a good-natured kick under the table. "Kurt's cool as fuck. Quit doggin on him," Blaine's eyes widened at Jeff's words, but Quinn snapped her head with a glare. She'd had just about enough of her boyfriend suddenly sticking up for that damn kid so much.

So had Puck. "Oh come on-"

"Shut it, Puckerman," Blaine snapped. "One more word about Hummel and I swear to God I'm gonna fucking punch you in the face."

Puck huffed in aggravation. "Jesus, fine. I won't say anything else about your precious Kurt," he sneered. Blaine jumped out of his seat but Nick quickly grabbed him and pulled him away from the table and into the corner by one of the gardens.

It was suddenly becoming clear to them all how much Kurt truly meant to Blaine. And how quickly that fact was changing everything.

Kurt regretted eating with his friends and the other theater kids as soon as he sat down. They were
all giving him awkward looks, with the exception of Harmony and Marley who looked at him apologetically. Chandler was openly glaring at him.

"What?" Kurt snapped at them all.

"Nothing," said Chandler. "We're just shocked you didn't sit with Anderson's Crew now that Anderson's back."

"I'm not surprised," said Deirdre, a junior who gossiped entirely too much for Kurt's liking. "Word in the lunch line is that you two just had quite the confrontation at your locker. Some people seem to think he was ready to kick your ass because you've been making eyes at Sterling."

"Oh my god, that is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. I have NOT been making eyes at Sterling, he's straight and has a girlfriend. And I've only sat with them twice," Kurt insisted. "Why would I sit with them just because Blaine is back in school?"

"Oh, so it's Blaine now, huh?" Chandler said more loudly than he needed to, his jealousy evident in his attempts to out Kurt's newfound relationship.

"Do not start with me, Chandler," Kurt warned, his eyes narrowing as he saw ears around the table perking up. Kurt didn't need everyone knowing, but Chandler knew exactly what he was doing.

"I'm just saying," Chandler shrugged, crossing his arms. "You've always called him Anderson and now he's Blaine? I guess you two really have become friends since he started working for your Dad. But then again, he did ignore you all day so really, how good of a friend could he possibly be?"

"Chandler, I swear to God," Kurt said through gritted teeth.

"Or are you just secret friends?" Chandler continued mockingly. "Do you only hang out outside of school? Is that what it is? Or are you actually sleeping with him like the jocks seem to think? Cause I gotta be honest here, Kurt, I didn't think you'd stoop so low. I thought you had better taste in guys than some delinquent who's only goal is to screw every gay guy in the state."

"Oh my God!" Kurt snapped. "What the hell is your problem?"

"I don't have a problem," Chandler said, with a vicious grin and an innocent shrug. "I'm just calling it how I see it."

"No. What you're doing is acting like a prick because it's even plausible that I might be sleeping with the hottest guy in school instead of you," Kurt hissed, swiftly grabbing his lunch. "Well you know what? I'm sick of it. I am sick and tired of you acting like a jealous little bitch just because I'm friends with Blaine and his Crew. You need to get over it or you can consider our friendship over." Kurt abruptly stood up to leave.

"Kurt, wait, where are you going?" Harmony asked, her loyalty in the moment completely split.

"To go sit with the Crew who actually wants my company," Kurt said before storming off towards the courtyard.

As Chandler watched Kurt walk away, regret filled him. He hadn't meant to piss Kurt off so badly, but Kurt didn't seem to realize how much his friendship with Blaine was hurting them both. If he didn't figure things out quickly though, he feared he would push Kurt straight into Blaine's arms, a place that would inevitably lead to nothing but pain.
Kurt opened the door to a tense scene in the courtyard. Blaine and Nick were whispering on a bench in the corner. Puck and Quinn were glaring angrily while Brittany, Jeff and Jake just looked sad. It was clear that Blaine's first lunch back had not gone over any better than his own.

Blaine looked up at the sound of the door and their eyes met. Blaine looked lost, confused, and for a moment Kurt realized that maybe this was just as hard for Blaine as it was for him. The anger that he'd been holding on to all morning diminished slightly.

Kurt approached the table cautiously. "Can I sit with you guys," he asked, his eyes remaining on Blaine.

"Of course," Brittany beamed, nudging Jeff with a bright smile. "Scoot over," she said. Jeff and Brittany both parted so Kurt could sit between them.

"Great," Puck said sarcastically with an exasperated eye to Quinn that she returned.

"Not a word, Puckerman," Santana warned though, pointing a finger at him. She could see what Blaine saw in the kid. His snark and guts were exactly the type of thing that would turn Blaine on, and she knew that Blaine wasn't as tough under the surface as he pretended to be. But what truly mattered was that Kurt made Brittany happy and for that reason alone, Santana was willing to give him a chance.

Blaine rose from the bench, his arms crossed as he approached the table. "I don't know if I should allow it since you so rudely declined my earlier offer," he said with a cheeky grin that, at least to Kurt's eyes, clearly hid his nervousness.

Brittany spoke up before Kurt had the chance to answer. "Ignore him, he's only kidding. Of course you can sit with us. You don't even have to ask," she said, patting the now empty space next to her. Kurt smiled appreciatively and sat down. Brittany pulled out her bag of cookies and handed one to Kurt. "I'm glad you decided to join us today," she smiled.

"Me too," Kurt smiled back uneasily.

Blaine and Nick took their seats once again, Nick sitting between Puck and Blaine this time to head off any further drama.

"Better watch out, Jeff, Kurt might be mad at you too," Blaine side-eyed them. "He wasn't too keen on our little improvement to Ian's experiment this morning."

Jeff smiled sheepishly at Kurt. Kurt gave them both an unimpressed glare. "Now why in the world would I be mad at you for making that poor boy's project explode, forcing him to stay after class to clean up a mess that you were responsible for?"

Jeff pouted, his shoulders slumping. "Please don't be mad at me, Kitty-Cat. Even though that shit was totally hilarious, I shouldn't have sabotaged Ian's project. I'm sorry." Kurt rolled his eyes, quickly glancing at Blaine who was watching their exchange curiously.

Blaine raised a surprised brow at Jeff's nickname for Kurt, and looked over at Quinn, instantly seeing the daggers she was sending Kurt. Blaine expected Kurt would bitch Jeff out for the name but instead, Kurt simply shrugged, a small but amused smile on his lips. Kurt had told him at the shop that Jeff had been friendly to him, but he hadn't realized at all exactly how close they had gotten.

"Don't apologize to me. I'm not the one whose project you exploded," Kurt said in a sing song voice before taking a bite of his sandwich.
"Right," Jeff nodded. "I should apologize to Ian. I'll do that later. Then will you stop being mad at me?" he asked with a boyish grin.

Before Kurt could answer, Puck snapped. "Are you fucking kidding me with this shit?" All eyes turned on Puck. "You're going to apologize to some geek just because this dweeb said so? Christ, Sterling. Here I thought that Blaine was going soft when really, you're the one who's ready to prance around in a fucking leotard. You better watch it, Quinnie or Jeff here is gonna have himself a boyfriend."

"What the hell is your problem, Puckerman?" Kurt snapped unable to control himself.

"You're my problem!" Puck yelled. "You're nothing but a pathetic little dweeb and as soon as Blaine's done fucking you you'll be nothing but a used up cock slut!"

"Puck!" Blaine admonished but both boys ignored him.

"What's wrong, Puckerman?" Kurt egged on, ignoring the fear he felt both from facing off with Puck and the truth behind Puck's words. "Are you afraid that Blaine might actually have a life outside your stupid little crew, or are you just jealous that he'd rather spend time with me than you?"

Puck rose up from his seat slowly, glaring down at Kurt. "You need to quit pushing my buttons, Hummel, or I swear I'm going to-"

"You're going to do what?" Kurt interrupted, standing up and meeting Puck eye to eye. "What are you going to do, Puckerman? Beat the shit out of me? Go right ahead. It won't change the fact that I'm a snarky bitch nor is it going to change the fact that you're nothing but a loser who is never gonna make anything of himself!"

"Enough!" Blaine barked, slamming his fists into the table. He had thought Kurt was kidding when he said that Puck hated him but it was becoming more and more evident that Puck really did. Not that Blaine could blame him with how strong Kurt was coming at him. "Both of you, sit down!" he demanded.

Puck and Kurt held their stare for a moment longer before Puck finally backed off and sat down. Kurt though remained standing, his gaze squarely on Blaine. Blaine froze for a moment, his eyes shifting between his best friend and the boy he was quickly falling in love with.

Finally he turned to his best friend. His voice was calm, his face was hard as stone. "You know Kurt told me you hated him, but I guess I had to see it with my own eyes to believe it. I don't know what the hell your problem is, but I promised you I wouldn't put up with you disrespecting Kurt. So you can gather your shit and get out of here, I don't want to see you anymore today."

The courtyard was silent as their leader and the guy who'd anointed him as such faced off. Brittany gripped Santana's hand and Nick and Jeff nervously watched one another. Jake and Quinn both were holding their breaths waiting for Puck's next move, and Kurt just stared at Blaine, never before truly seeing him in action. In that moment, he was terrifying.

Puck was the first to move, grabbing his things, but moving in close to Blaine. "You know what Anderson?" he whispered roughly. "Fuck you." He turned and slammed out the doors.

To say that Blaine's heart broke was an understatement, but he bit back his tears, keeping his eyes strictly on the table. He fooled no one though, least of all Kurt. "Blaine," Kurt whispered, forgetting everyone around him and trying to take his hand.
Blaine though pulled away. "If you're going to sit with us Kurt, you need to tone down the bitchiness. I won't have you making waves in my crew," he said softly, though there was an underlying hardness that Kurt didn't miss.

Kurt swallowed back his own tears that now threatened to fall. "Then maybe it will just be easier for everyone if I don't sit here anymore," he choked out before grabbing his own things and running out the door.

The school bell rescued the Crew from further discussion and they quietly gathered their things and made their way out the door. As everyone else left, Blaine sat down to catch his breath. He didn't see anyone make their way up to him, but his eyes snapped up when he heard his voice.

"We can try to straddle both worlds Blaine," Nick told him. "But I don't see how we can possibly bring them together."

Blaine started out on the short walk home to grab his motorcycle. Walking home gave him time to think, which was a good thing because there wasn't a chance in hell Puck was driving him home today. The hairs on the back of his neck stood though when he sensed someone following behind him. He'd become quite attune to his surroundings and signs like that since his attack, and he turned, poised to engage in whatever battle might be coming his way. But he was unprepared for the onslaught that awaited him from the person who stood before him. "You may think that everyone is afraid of you Anderson, but I'm not."

Blaine didn't know Harmony well. He knew that she hung out with Kurt and he knew that she spent the summer with Nick doing theater in the park, but beyond that, he knew very little. He was about to learn more. She approached him, all attitude and swagger that reminded him a bit of Santana, and showed no fear as she got completely in his face. "So let me tell you something I know about you. You hurt people. You use them, to protect yourself in this tiny little bubble. You make people fear you, even your friends, so they can't be themselves. And now you're even doing it to yourself. But I swear to god, if you do it to Kurt, you'll be sorry. He has been through way too much to have to put up with your bullshit too. So don't screw with him. If you truly like him, own it. Don't hide it because it hurts," she said, her voice beginning to tremble with emotion. "It hurts him and it hurts the people around you, and it will hurt you too."

Blaine's jaw was slack with astonishment and he barely had a chance to process what was going on before Harmony spun around and stormed away. Blaine turned slowly back toward his house and began walking, trying to figure out what had just happened. But as he mounted his motorcycle and drove to the shop, her words simply tumbled over and over again in his head.

Kurt was in the back room, grabbing the tools and parts he'd need to complete the job his father had assigned him when Blaine came in and closed the door. Blaine had no idea what he was going to say but he needed to say something. The blowout at lunch had left him completely on edge and then Harmony tipped him over. Blaine feared that his friendship with Kurt might actually be strained beyond repair and the thought of losing Kurt broke his heart in a way he wish it hadn't.

"Hey, you got a minute?" Blaine asked cautiously.

Kurt froze at the sound of Blaine's voice. "What do you want? I'm busy," Kurt answered, already holding back the flood of emotions he felt.

"I just need a minute," Blaine said, his voice soft and pleading.
Kurt took a deep breath, stood upright, and crossed his arms. "What?"

Blaine ran his fingers through his hair. "Look, I'm sorry about today. I hadn't expected Puck to act like that."

"Anything else?" Kurt asked with a raised brow. Blaine opened up his mouth to say more but quickly shut it. "No? Great. Now if you'll excuse me." Kurt reached over to rummage through the bin of nuts and bolts.

Blaine sighed in exasperation, not wanting to lose this moment, feeling it was now or never. "What do you want me to say?"

"I don't want you to say anything," Kurt snapped, his voice breaking. "Look, I get it, ok? I get that you're Mr. Big Man on campus. I get that you and the Crew have a reputation to uphold and can't be seen with the likes of a dweeb like me. And I get that the Crew is your family and has been ever since…" your parents abandoned you, he stopped himself from saying. "Since you moved here." He took a breath and fought back the tears he didn't want to shed. "And I get that you've only known me a week," he finished softly.

"Kurt," Blaine breathed, but Kurt didn't let him finish as he swallowed back the lump in his throat.

"But what I don't get is why you're wasting your time, and my time, pretending to be my friend when everyone clearly thinks it's absurd."

"I'm not pretending Kurt," Blaine barked with conviction. He stepped in closer, resting his hands gently on Kurt's hips. "I would never pretend," he whispered. "And I don't waste time. I wouldn't risk Puckerman's wrath for just anyone you know."

Kurt sucked in a breath at the feel of Blaine's hands on him again, and he lowered his head, willing away the desire to do nothing but kiss him. "You hated telling Puck off today, I know you did. He's your best friend and for whatever reason, you chose to stand up to him for me. And for what? Because he said what everyone else was thinking?"

Blaine slid one hand around Kurt's waist, pulling him closer, while he lifted Kurt's chin with the other so their eyes would meet. "I stood up for you because I wanted to. Because I already told Puckerman to respect you and since he hadn't, I put him in his place. I don't regret it. He'll get over it. But you wouldn't have forgiven me if I hadn't." Kurt wanted nothing more than to look away from Blaine's gaze, unable to handle the intensity behind him, but Blaine wouldn't let him. "I'm sorry that being friends with me is so complicated." Kurt shook his head, his hands instinctively resting on Blaine's chest. He felt Blaine's heart beating hard in his chest. Kurt smiled sadly, because the beat matched his own. "What? What is it?"

"I just…I don't understand you," Kurt admitted quietly. "I don't know if the guy I've come to know and like this past week is the real you or if the asshole I saw at school is."

Blaine cocked his head, a mischievous smirk gracing his features. He let go of Kurt's chin and linked his hands around Kurt's back. "You like me?" His golden eyes twinkled with delight.

Kurt's cheeks flushed red at the slip up. "That's not what I meant," he said quickly as he tried to step away from Blaine. Blaine though kept a firm hold on him.

"You can't deny it, Kurt. Rumor has it I'm one hot piece of ass," Blaine teased. "I don't blame you for being madly in love with me."

"Oh, please! You're the one that can't stop staring at my ass and couldn't keep his lips to himself"
this weekend," Kurt quipped, his heart racing. No matter how angry he had been all day, all he desperately wanted right now was to feel Blaine's lips against his again.

As if in answer, Blaine let his hands slip down to Kurt's ass, momentarily forgetting that someone could open the door at any moment. "Don't act like you didn't like it, Hummel," Blaine purred seductively.

"I do believe I conceded it was a great kiss," Kurt said lowly, leaning in closer to Blaine but stopping directly in front of his lips, "But that doesn't change the fact that you kissed me," he whispered against Blaine's lips before backing away.

"Well, I believe you're the one that said friends kiss all the time," Blaine countered.

Blaine traced his hands up Kurt's ass, and over the muscles of his back. Kurt's pupils grew dark and his lids grew heavy beneath Blaine's touch, until warm fingers reached his neck. Blaine brushed his thumbs softly against Kurt's perfect bare skin then crashed their lips together furiously. Kurt couldn't struggle if he tried, quickly melting into Blaine's arms as he hungrily deepened the kiss, his hands fisting Blaine's collar. As much as they both denied it, there was tremendous fire between them and want in the kiss, a desperate hope that somehow, in some way they would learn how to scale the walls that kept them apart. But for now, they were still too high and just before Kurt could completely drown, Blaine abruptly pulled away.

"You really need to stop doing that," Kurt breathed out, his eyes fluttering open.

Blaine smirked. "What can I say? That pretty mouth of yours is entirely too irresistible."

Kurt shoved Blaine away, laughing. "Oh you have no idea," he winked playfully. He grabbed his toolkit and turned back to Blaine, who was biting his lip. "Now quit attacking my face!"

"I don't know if I can do that," Blaine said hotly, leaning on the table. Kurt rolled his eyes, doing his best to hide his smile. "So are we cool?"

"Oh what? You think you can just kiss me and everything's ok?" Kurt asked seriously.

"My kisses have been known to cure illnesses," Blaine smirked. Kurt crossed his arms, jutting his hip in the sexiest way. "Seriously though, I'm sorry about today. I know being friends with me is complicated. You said so yourself. I'm one person when I'm with my crew and I'm an entirely different person with you. But that doesn't mean we can't be friends. It just means that we have to be different in school."

Kurt looked away, memories of Dave flooding him. "I don't know if I can do that, Blaine," Kurt said, his voice small and full of emotion.

"Can we at least try?" Blaine asked hopefully. "I really want us to be friends, Kurt. Not just here but in school too. We just have to find a balance, that's all."

Kurt knew he should say no. He knew that what Blaine was asking wasn't any better than what Dave had asked him not so many years ago. But the hopeful look on Blaine's face combined with the small pout was too much for Kurt to handle. With a deep sigh, Kurt nodded.

"One chance, Anderson. You have one chance to prove to me that you can handle being friends with me," Kurt warned him.

"That's all I ask," Blaine said, his face breaking out in a relieved smile. Kurt smiled back, ignoring the anxiety he felt. What was he getting himself into?
Blaine walked into school Tuesday morning with new determination to show Kurt that they could be friends both in and out of school. He was not going to let anyone stand in his way. He would prove to everyone, himself included, that being friends with Kurt was not as absurd as they believed.

Blaine strutted down the hall, smirking when he saw Kurt and Marley standing at Kurt's locker talking. With an extra bounce in his step, he walked straight over to them. "Good morning, Kurt, Marley," Blaine greeted, a flirtatious tone slipping through. Kurt and Marley looked up in surprise at the sound of Blaine's voice.

"Hi," Marley squeaked.

"Good morning, Blaine," Kurt said cautiously. "Can I help you with something or…?"


Marley turned back to Kurt, her eyes wide. "What was that?"

"Um…I'm pretty sure that was Blaine trying," Kurt said with a pleasantly surprised smile, his eyes following Blaine down the hall.

"Trying to what? What aren't you telling me?" Marley asked suspiciously.

"Nothing," Kurt said a little too quickly, forcing himself to look away from Blaine. "We talked yesterday at the garage and we're going to try and figure out this whole friendship thing. That's all."

Marley narrowed her eyes. "No, there's something else. I can tell."

Kurt bit his lower lip, avoiding Marley's gaze by reaching into his locker to swap out his books. He could nearly feel his cheeks burning in memory. "We may have…kissed again yesterday," he whispered.

"What?!" Marley shrieked.

"Shh!" Kurt said, quickly glancing around to see if anyone was listening. Fortunately for him, those in the hallway were too preoccupied with their own lives to pay attention to two theater geeks chattering away. "It's not a big a deal."

"It's a huge deal!" Marley whispered back frantically. "How did it happen?"

"I don't even know," Kurt said exasperatedly. "One minute I'm completely furious with him and the next he's like, kissing me. But it's not a big deal," he assured her, knowing full well that it was a very big deal. "He was just trying to get me to forgive him for being a jerk yesterday."

Kurt closed his locker and started down the hall. Marley quickly followed to stay by his side. "Well it obviously worked," she said with a knowing smirk.

Kurt rolled his eyes, willing his blush to go away. "Can we please not talk about this right now?"

"Fine, but we are so talking about this later," Marley said, waving a finger at him.
"Go to class, Mar. I'll see you in drama, and we can finish trying to figure out our audition songs for next week." Kurt told her. Marley giggled softly and waved goodbye before walking down a different hall.

Neither saw Blaine eavesdropping on the two friends from his locker down the hall, a satisfied smile now plastered on his face.

Blaine strutted out of first period, sending a devilish grin to his teacher before walking out of the classroom and over to his locker. He had actually behaved during class, but that didn't change the fact that his teacher cautiously side-eyed him the entire period. Blaine's effect on his fellow classmates built the protective walls around him that made him feel safe. But the effect he had on his teachers made him feel powerful and in charge. He loved every single minute of it.

Blaine dialed his combination and opened his locker to switch his books, casually glancing around the hallway. His eyes landed on Kurt at his locker just down the hall. Blaine relaxed against the cold metal and took the opportunity of being alone to watch the boy he was falling hard for. He watched as Kurt exchanged his books. He bit his lip as Kurt bent down to pick up a pen he had dropped, laughing at Kurt's quiet swearing while willing away his arousal at the perfection Kurt's tight jeans highlighted. He had to look away. How could this one boy affect him so much? Unable to control himself for long, Blaine glanced back at Kurt again, only to find Kurt staring right at him.

They locked eyes for a moment, Blaine smirking at the unmistakable blush that crept up Kurt's cheek at being caught staring. He thought about saying hi. It would be so easy to just walk over, have a short but undoubtedly flirty exchange, then walk off to class without a care. His attention was diverted though, when a shove to his shoulder knocked him back into his locker, startling him more than hurting him.

"Take a picture Anderson, it lasts longer," Puck taunted and he and Quinn laughed as they walked by.

Blaine closed his eyes against the rush of memories and the knot that quickly tied in his gut. He knew his Crew was just playing around with him, as they'd done a million times before. But Puck and Quinn's laugh was spiteful in its sound and he quickly closed his locker sending Kurt an apologetic smile before walking off in the opposite direction. He didn't see Kurt's face fall with disappointment and worry. But as she glanced behind her, a smirk playing on her lips, Quinn didn't miss a thing.

By Wednesday, Blaine was certain that he was in way over his head. How was he supposed to show Kurt that he could handle their friendship if he was too self-conscious to talk to him? How was he supposed to uphold his reputation at school when all he wanted to do was wrap Kurt in his arms and never let go? How was he supposed to be friends with Kurt when he desired so much more?

Saying hello to Kurt the previous morning had been a total fluke, a sudden surge of confidence stemming from the momentum of a morning pep talk with Cooper coupled with a nearly empty hallway. But as soon as they were surrounded by their fellow classmates, and especially the Crew, his conviction faded away and his barriers shot back up. Blaine was the guy that didn't give two shits about the world. He was the guy that didn't show emotion other than anger. He couldn't just smile at Kurt without whispers and rumors spreading through the corridors like wildfire. He couldn't just joke around with Kurt like they did in the shop without everyone thinking that he'd gone completely soft.
It was wearing on him, and it was wearing on Kurt. They'd been quiet yesterday at work, soft smiles exchanged, a *you're highness* here, a *peasant* there. But it was clear that Kurt was growing increasingly less patient with Blaine's silence at school, snapping at him when it was uncalled for, once to the point of Burt ordering Kurt to run to the parts store for something. Blaine had almost hoped that Burt would talk to him then, ask him what was wrong. But Burt kept his distance, letting the boys work out their feelings for one another without too much interference. It was hard to let Kurt grow up, but he was just grateful that Kurt still allowed him to watch from the sidelines.

Blaine didn't want it to be this way. He was trying, he honestly was, but Nick was right that it was near impossible to navigate both worlds at Shaker Hills. In his dreams at night he pictured himself and Kurt, walking hand in hand, kissing goodbye at their lockers as they walked off to their separate classes. It was a dream he knew wouldn't come true, one that would shatter his entire façade.

One deadly glare from Kyle Johnson as they passed in the hallway proved to Blaine he couldn't let that happen.

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Blaine and Jeff laughed as they entered the chemistry classroom Thursday morning, Jeff’s giddiness only increasing when they noticed the two beautiful sights of a substitute teacher and the projection screen.

"Movie Day!" Jeff shouted and high fived Blaine. He went over to Kurt and high fived him as well, but Kurt's response was half-hearted. "You okay Kitty-Cat?" Jeff asked worriedly, taking the seat behind him.

Kurt shot a glance to Blaine, still standing two rows down, but then let his eyes drift to Ian, walking through the door. "I believe your promised apology is long overdue," he gently prodded.

Jeff turned to follow Kurt's gaze and grimaced at the sight of Ian. "Right. An apology," he mumbled under his breath. Then he turned back to Kurt quickly. "How does one do that again?"

Kurt rolled his eyes and shook his head, a smile playing at his lips. "You're a bright boy Jeffrey, figure it out. Just pretend he's Quinn. I'm sure you have more than enough experience apologizing to her."

Jeff stuck his tongue out at Kurt then crossed the room to talk to Ian. Blaine slid into a seat in Kurt's field of vision, and smiled nervously when their eyes met. Kurt blinked, and turned away. Two could play at this game.

The room was brought to order, the lights were turned out and the movie was started. Jeff slid back into his seat and scribbled away at a note. He folded it neatly into an origami square and flicked it over Kurt's shoulder to land in his lap. Blaine watched as Kurt fondly shook his head, but read it anyway. Kurt snorted, scribbled something back, and reached around to drop it on Jeff's desk with a smile. Jealousy surged through him and he felt an overwhelming desire to punch Jeff in the face for finding it so easy to fall into a friendship with Kurt.

Instead he pulled out his phone, hiding it behind his desk, though the sub was paying absolutely no attention anyway, and sent a quick text.

**To: Kurt H.**

**Jeff's not that funny.**

He watched as Kurt reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone, hiding it underneath his own
desk. Kurt smirked at Blaine's message and quickly typed back.

From: Kurt H.
He's funnier than you.

Blaine scoffed as he typed his response.

To: Kurt H.
Fine, but I'm definitely hotter.

Other than when he typed, Kurt kept his eyes completely trained on the movie screen. Blaine, however, watched Kurt carefully from behind, every movement of his muscle, every twitch of his cheek or crinkle of his eyes that might give away what Kurt was thinking. He waited anxiously as Kurt's fingers typed a message and hit send.

From: Kurt H.
Maybe…but he's not afraid to talk to me.

To: Kurt H.
I'm talking to you right now.

From: Kurt H.
With your lips, Blaine.

To: Kurt H.
My lips prefer to do other things to you ;)

Blaine could see the red in Kurt's skin nearly immediately, and it made him want to stand up and cheer that he'd finally rattled the hard shell Kurt had been wearing since Tuesday. Kurt quickly turned and glared back at Blaine, but it lacked any sting and merely caused Kurt to flush even more. Blaine smirked mischievously and tapped his phone, almost daring Kurt to answer his last text.

Jeff watched the whole exchange with stunned wide eyes. Making boys blush was what Blaine did, what he thrived on. He led them on, made them feel special, then had his way and left them behind, often within the span of only a few hours. But this thing with Kurt, it was glaringly different.

From: Kurt H.
I'm sure they do, but I bet my lips could teach yours a thing a two ;)

Witty banter, invites to lunch, and now Kurt was making Blaine blush? It was becoming increasingly obvious that Blaine wanted more than just sex from Kurt, and Jeff was torn between being excited and worried for them both. There was no one Jeff knew, not that Chandler kid, not the jocks and certainly not the Crew, who was going to handle this well if it got out.

Kurt left Chemistry with Jeff by his side. He could feel Blaine's presence behind them but ignored it as best he could. He had sat through the rest of the class trying not to picture what wonderful things his and Blaine's lips could do together, losing all attempts to keep his arousal at bay, and it had been entirely Blaine's fault. Thank god it had been dark.

"So are you gonna sit with us today?" Jeff asked Kurt, glancing back at Blaine as if to ask
permission. Blaine gave a simple nod but said nothing. "Britt was pouting all day yesterday because you didn't join us, which of course just made Santana cranky."

Kurt didn't answer though, the sight of Chandler waiting for him at his locker pulling his attention. "I'll talk to you guys later," was all Kurt said before storming down the hall.

"Well, this should be entertaining to watch," Jeff smirked to Blaine, who was sending Chandler his own glare.

"Go to class, Jeff," Blaine ordered. Jeff pouted slightly, but Blaine's tone was clear it wasn't debatable and he backed off without a word.

Blaine walked over to his locker and opened it to switch out his books, all the while never taking his eye off of Kurt. As an argument between Kurt and Chandler escalated, he quickly realized it was probably the reason Kurt had ultimately decided to sit with them Monday at lunch. Chandler couldn't have been giving Kurt any easier a time than Puck was giving him. He smiled proudly as Kurt snapped at Chandler, arms flailing about angrily. Blaine couldn't hear what they were saying, their voices barely above a whisper, but the more Chandler talked, the angrier Kurt seemed to get. Blaine could only shake his head as Chandler shrank back as if in fear of Kurt's wrath. The boy was a complete moron. If Chandler couldn't see how ridiculously sexy Kurt truly was when he grew angry then he sure as hell didn't deserve to have him. Had it been Blaine on the receiving end, he would've egged Kurt on to the point of boiling, then kissed him fiercely until the fire turned to passion. An eager smile played at his lips.

"You're staring. That's probably not really the best way to keep people from talking," Nick said pointedly.

Blaine jumped at the sound of Nick's voice. A faint blush crept up his cheeks as he turned to look at his friend. "I was not staring," he protested, though Nick wasn't fooled. Nick raised a brow, a knowing smirk gracing his features. Blaine huffed, quickly glancing around for the rest of his crew before whispering to Nick. "Ok, fine. I was staring. But I can't help it! He's fucking sexy when he gets bitchy."

Nick laughed quietly and nodded. "You know, I'm not in the least bit surprised that you think that," he teased.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Blaine asked, instantly defensive.

"Nothing," Nick backpedaled quickly. "It's just that as dominating as you pretend to be, I'm not exactly surprised that you'd find Kurt's true dominance attractive," he said cautiously.

Blaine narrowed his eyes for a moment before sighing. "Fuck. What is wrong with me?" Nick opened his mouth to answer but Blaine stopped him. "Don't answer that."

Nick quickly shut his mouth and held back a grin. This was the side of Blaine he'd only ever seen before in the privacy of his bedroom, attached to a guitar or furiously jotting down lyrics. It was nice to finally see it outside in the real world. Blaine turned back to Kurt. The argument had apparently resolved, much to Blaine's chagrin, because Kurt and Chandler were hugging. Blaine swallowed down the jealousy he felt stirring in his chest, wishing it was him instead of Chandler. He slammed his locker shut, and walked off to his next class with Nick.

Chandler rested his chin on Kurt's shoulder, and his eyes went immediately to the sound of the locker slam. He grinned slyly seeing Blaine storm off. Chandler may not be the hottest guy in school, he may not be the coolest. But he had the power to make Blaine Anderson jealous, and that
was something incredible.

Blaine lingered by the theater before fourth period on Friday, subtly glancing down the hall in case Kurt showed early. He was starting to feel like some crazed stalker, peering around every corner and down every corridor just so that he might catch a glimpse of Kurt. But he couldn't help it.

Kurt was like a drug, intoxicating and addictive, and the more he denied himself the more he craved it. Their little bits of interaction in Chemistry class and at the shop the past few days weren't nearly enough to satisfy him. He felt like he was starting to lose his mind and he wasn't sure how much more he could take.

Just as Blaine decided he needed to stop being so pathetic, Kurt and Chandler started heading his way. Blaine backed around a corner where he could watch unseen. He scowled at the way Chandler's hand was resting on Kurt's shoulder. Blaine could tell by Kurt's expression that whatever Chandler was saying wasn't something he wanted to hear, but Chandler just kept on chattering away, either oblivious or indifferent. Sure Kurt was smiling a little, but the smile was forced and didn't make his eyes dance at all like the beautiful, care-free smiles Kurt occasionally offered to him. Kurt was uncomfortable and it made Blaine's stomach tie in knots. He actually sighed in relief when Chandler finally removed his hand.

"Man, I do not like that kid at all," Santana whispered as she and Brittany approached Blaine.

Blaine tensed, looking at the girls with a raised brow. "What kid?" he asked, praying she wasn't talking about Kurt.

"That nerd talking to Hummel," Santana sneered. "He acts like he owns Porcelain or something. And he keeps giving Britt nasty looks. He better watch himself."

Blaine visibly relaxed and grinned. If Santana didn't like the way Chandler treated Kurt, then he wasn't just seeing things. "You like Kurt enough to go to bat for him like that?" he asked curiously. He knew Santana had an entire vocabulary to describe the geeks at this school and he was shocked by the protective tone in her voice.

"I would," Brittany answered instantly. "I love him. He's magical."

Blaine gave her a sweet smile before glancing back to Santana. "Tana?"

"Look, he's tolerable," Santana shrugged. "I mean, it's not like I'm going to invite him over for a sleepover but the boy's got balls, going head to head with Puckerman, and I can respect that. If I have to," she added with a smirk.

Blaine turned back to Kurt, pursing his lips against the relieved smile that threatened to betray him. Santana still noticed though and couldn't help but smile a little too. She knew what it was like to be in love, to want nothing but to hold that special someone close and never let them go. She hadn't thought she would ever see Blaine fall, especially not with someone like Kurt Hummel. But it was becoming more and more obvious how much Blaine cared for the kid and she couldn't begrudge him that. Her acceptance though didn't mean she had to make it easy. With a mischievous glint, Santana left Brittany's side and walked over to the pair.

"Awe crap," Blaine said under his breath. "What is she doing?" Brittany shrugged, not even hiding her hopeful smile.

"Look, Kurt, I know you think it's the best song for your audition, but it's not. Everyone will take it the wrong way," Chandler was complaining.
"You mean everyone will think it's about Blaine?" Kurt snapped. Chandler gave him a half shrug and nodded. "Well, so what if they do? I'm not going to-"

"Yo, Hummel." Kurt stopped mid-phrase and quickly turned his head to see Santana approaching him. "We's gotta talk," she demanded, looping her arm around Kurt's and pulling him away.

Chandler scowled and stormed into the auditorium as Kurt allowed himself to be led off without so much as a protest. He had been desperately trying to make things right with Kurt since Monday, apologizing for how he had acted, trying to help him pick the right song for the school cabaret auditions, and he'd gradually been getting back into Kurt's good graces. But it seemed like every time he and Kurt took a step forward, the Crew would get in the way, forcing Chandler three steps back. He needed to do something quick. He was not about to let those delinquents steal Kurt away from him.

"Hi, Kurt," Brittany said excitedly, kissing his cheek before she threaded her arm through his and rested her head on his shoulder.

"Hi Britt," Kurt smiled and Blaine noted how his face lit up to match Brittany's. He also noticed how his bright blue eyes grew two shades darker when Kurt turned to him. "Hey Blaine," Kurt greeted with attempted nonchalance but there was a subtle seductiveness that Kurt could not hide and Blaine did not miss.

Blaine eyed Kurt up and down before confidently sliding his hands into his pockets and leaned against the wall. "Kurt," he smirked devilishly, enunciating the T and bringing focus to his mouth.

Kurt's eyes instantly flicked down to Blaine's lips who grinned wickedly. Kurt quickly looked away before the desire to kiss Blaine overwhelmed him and he turned his attention to Santana whose arm was still looped through his. "What did you need to talk about, Tana?"

"Nothing really," Santana shrugged, enjoying the game of cat and mouse playing out in front of her. "I just wanted to save us from having to watch you spend any more time with that geek," she sneered.

"That geek is my friend," Kurt snapped defensively pulling away from her. "No one is forcing you to watch, you don't even have class around here right now, and last time I checked, I was a geek too."

"Yes well," Santana said, her eyes roaming down Kurt's body. "Anderson here says you've got a nice ass so I'll make an exception," she smirked, her eyes flicking to Blaine. Kurt huffed, his cheeks filling with unwelcome heat, and avoided Blaine's glance. "Pretty sure that's what drew him to the wrong side of the building. Don't you think he's got a nice ass, Anderson?"

Blaine smirked at the adorable blush that crept up Kurt's cheeks, and it took all his willpower to keep his own cheeks from matching. "It's alright, I guess," he shrugged, though his eyes indicated an entirely different sentiment which did not go unnoticed by Santana. "You sitting with us at lunch today, Kurt?"

"No," Kurt answered quickly, his gaze shifting to the floor. "I mean, I can't. I have an assignment to work on before the weekend, so I'll be in the library." Blaine narrowed his eyes. He got the feeling that Kurt was lying but before he could call him out on it, the warning bell rang. "I have to get to class. You know, the one with all the dweebs," he directed at Santana who simply shrugged. "I'll see you guys later." Kurt untangled his arm from Britt and quickly hurried off.

Santana turned her attention on Blaine with a wicked grin as they headed off to class. "What? Why
are you looking at me like that?" Blaine asked suspiciously.

"Oh nothing," Santana said with a half shrug. "Except the fact that, you know, you totally want to take Hummel under the bleachers and screw his brains out," she all but purred.

"Well when I do, I'll thank you to keep the gawkers away," he winked at Santana. Santana gave him a look which clearly said Blaine could rely on her.

"Oh my God, you guys could totally make unicorn babies!" Brittany exclaimed with an excited clap.

Blaine just smiled apologetically at the innocent girl. "Britt honey, boys can't have babies."

"Even if they're unicorns?" Brittany asked sadly, her shoulders slumping.

"Even then," Blaine said, linking his arms with his girls. "Come on, we have to hurry. I'm sure Peters would just love to nail my ass to the wall if I'm late."

Jeff and Quinn were walking towards the cafeteria for lunch when Jeff noticed Kurt heading the opposite way. "Hey, I'll be right back," Jeff told her with a quick kiss to her cheek.

She didn't let go of his hand though. "Where are you going?" Quinn asked, glancing in the direction Jeff was staring. She immediately scowled when she saw Kurt. "Seriously?"

"What?" Jeff shrugged. "I just want to make sure he's ok for lunch."

"Hummel's a big boy, Jeff, I'm sure he's fine," Quinn said, her annoyance evident. Jeff ignored her though and quickly went after Kurt. Puck came up behind Quinn, draping his arm over her shoulder to make his presence known. She looked up wryly. "You know, I'm getting real sick of that dweeb," she told him.

Puck snorted a laugh and nodded. "You and me both."

Kurt sat down on the floor in a hallway, hidden away from the students, a sigh of relief escaping his lips. He pulled his lunch out of his bag and began to eat. Like with Blaine, he had lied to his friends, telling them that he needed to work on an assignment in the library and couldn't have lunch with them. But the truth was that he just needed a break from feeling like the rope in a game of tug of war being played by Chandler and the Crew. So he lied to them all about where he was going and opted to have a drama free lunch.

"Hey, what are you doing over here?" Jeff's voice suddenly rang out, disturbing Kurt's peace.

"Oh for fuck's sake," Kurt muttered to himself, his head thrown back against the wall in exasperation. "One lunch. All I wanted was one lunch where I could be left alone and you just had to come and ruin it."

Jeff smiled as plopped down next to Kurt. "Don't be like that, Kitty Cat. You know you love me."

"Yeah, whatever," Kurt scoffed. "How did you find me?"

"I followed ya," Jeff said proudly.

"Of course you did." Kurt rolled his eyes. "You're not going to leave me alone now, are you?"
"Nope," Jeff said with a goofy grin. Kurt sighed, loud and obnoxious, before noticing that Jeff was empty handed and eyeing his sandwich. He sighed again, but gave Jeff half. "Thanks, Kitty Cat."

Kurt hummed and nodded. He couldn't complain about Jeff intruding on his peace too much. Truthfully, he didn't mind Jeff's company. The blonde's happy-go-lucky personality made it easy for Kurt to talk with him. Kurt had so far always felt comfortable with Jeff. He'd never felt like he had to be someone else and Kurt was grateful for that. He wished that everyone could just be that way.

"So why aren't you having lunch with your friends?" Jeff asked curiously.

"Chandler," Kurt said and Jeff nodded.

"Gotcha. He's kind of intense about you," Jeff pointed out.

Kurt sighed. "I know. Especially lately. It's like, one guy shows half an interest in me and he becomes this obsessive bitch."

"Well, to be fair, it is Blaine Anderson. I'm not surprised Chandler's jealous," Jeff shrugged.

"But there's no need to be," Kurt said in exasperation.

"Sure there is," Jeff said, earning him a glare. "What? I'm just saying. Blaine's a force of nature at this school, sexy as hell if I do say so myself, and Chandler looks like a turtle." Kurt smacked Jeff's shoulder, biting back a laugh. "Anybody would be jealous of who Blaine was fucking."

"We are not fucking!" Kurt screeched, his face turning scarlet.

"Not yet," Jeff smirked. "But Blaine's totally into you and I know you're into him. It's only a matter of time." Kurt opened his mouth to retort but stopped when Jeff held his hand up. "Hold on, my phone's vibrating."

Jeff read the text from Quinn wondering where he was. He quickly replied, letting her know that he was having lunch with Kurt and would see her after. He slipped the phone back into his pocket and turned his attention back on Kurt.

"Now, what terrible lie were you going to tell about not having the hots for Blaine?"

"I don't fucking believe this," Quinn muttered, staring angrily at her phone in disbelief.

"What's wrong? Where is he?" Nick asked.

"He's ditching us for Hummel," Quinn sneered, not caring if Blaine would be upset with her or not. "He's fucking ditching us so he can eat lunch with that fucking dweeb!"

"Quinn," Blaine warned.

"No!" Quinn snapped. "Screw your stupid little fuck buddy! My boyfriend would rather have lunch with him than me and that is so not ok!"

"Quinn."

"Fuck this shit," Quinn said, grabbing her things. "I'm out of here."

"Well, this can't be good," Nick said. Blaine watched Quinn storm off warily. She was wearing her
bitch-in-charge look and Blaine knew that it could only mean trouble. As Puck turned to watch her
go though, no one noticed the scheming grin on Puck's face.

"-and I am so sick and tired that everyone keeps assuming we're together when we're not!" Kurt
screamed, his face red and his breathing labored from ranting. Jeff pursed his lips to prevent from
laughing but couldn't help but let it out. "This is not funny, Jeff!"

"Dude, but it so is!" Jeff said, laughing harder. "I'm sorry but you're hilarious when you get all
pissed off. Any angrier and you'll be blowing steam out of your ears."

Kurt smacked his arm, a small laugh escaping his lips. "Seriously though, Blaine and I are-

"Just friends. Yeah, yeah. I heard you the first one hundred times," Jeff interrupted with an eye roll.
"Look, you're my homey now so I'mma be real honest with you. Blaine doesn't do this."

"What do you mean?" Kurt questioned.

"I mean, he doesn't have friends outside of the Crew. He doesn't stand up for, no offense, kids like
you, and he has never put himself on the line just for a piece of ass," Jeff said, suddenly very
serious. "And he certainly doesn't exchange sexy text messages in the middle of class." Kurt looked
away, his cheeks flushing deeply, and Jeff continued. "I've known Blaine for a long time and I've
never seen him act like this."

"Ok, and?" Kurt asked, his voice quiet and shy.

"And, that means something," Jeff told him. "Blaine's the kinda guy who picks up a guy, screws
him that night, then never calls again. I've never known him to get to know someone just to get
them into bed. If by some chance they say no he just moves on to the next one. He doesn't befriend
his hook-ups, he doesn't change his hair for them, and he sure as hell doesn't invite them into his
inner circle. Yet, he's doing all of that with you. In my opinion, Blaine likes you, like for real likes
you." Kurt looked back up at Jeff and Jeff didn't miss the hope behind his eyes. "Blaine's a good
guy. I mean yeah, he has some issues but he has a good heart and honestly, I'm not that surprised
that he's into you. I actually think it's pretty cool. But, that doesn't mean that the others will agree."

"Like Puckerman," Kurt muttered to himself, his eyes filling with unshed tears.

"Like Puckerman," Jeff confirmed. "Maybe even like Tana, Jake, and Quinn. Britt loves the hell
outta you and Nick's too diplomatic to dislike anyone for no real reason. But the others? They
aren't so welcoming." Kurt sighed heavily, resting his head on the wall. "What I'm trying to get at
is that being friends with Blaine will be real hard, never the less being with him. But that doesn't
mean you shouldn't try. I think, in the end, you and Blaine could be really good for each other.
You're just gonna have to really fight for it."

"And if I don't want to fight for it?" Kurt questioned. He wanted to, desperately, but he was scared
to put himself on the line only to be abandoned, or even worse, used. He was scared that he would
be the only one fighting.

"If you don't, then he doesn't mean as much to you as I thought he did. But he does, doesn't he?"
Jeff asked with a raised brow.

Kurt glanced at Jeff, tears streaking down his face that he quickly brushed away in embarrassment.
"I don't know. Maybe?"

"Well then, do it. Fight for him. Just...be careful and hang in there. I guarantee you some days will
be a thousand times worse than others, but that doesn't mean it won't be worth it," Jeff said with sad smile. Kurt nodded but said nothing as the lunch bell rang. "Come on, Kitty Cat. I'll walk you to class."

Blaine quickly scoured the halls for Jeff and Kurt. He wasn't thrilled that Kurt had lied about going to the library and he was more than a little surprised that Jeff had chosen to hang out with him over the Crew. After a few frustrating minutes, Blaine finally spotted them heading towards the Math hall. He pushed through the crowd, walking over to them, only to stop a few feet away when he noticed the heartbreaking look on Kurt's face.

"What's wrong," Blaine asked in a demanding tone.

"Nothing," Kurt said with a bit of confusion. Blaine had barely spoken to him all week outside the shop, and suddenly he was worried?

"No? Then why the hell does it look like you were crying?" Blaine questioned, crossing his arms.

Kurt blanched, glancing over at Jeff who gave him a small shrug. "I wasn't crying," he assured Blaine. But like a moth to a flame, his eyes shifted as Kyle and Lance rounded the corner and discovered the trio. The jocks smirked at the boys and whispered to one another. Kurt froze.

Blaine followed Kurt's gaze and instantly noticed the two jocks. "Are they fucking with you again?" he asked Kurt angrily. He couldn't imagine any other reason why Kurt would be crying in school.

"What? No," Kurt assured him grabbing his shirt sleeve, but the motion only served to escalate Kyle's whispers to sniggers of disdain.

"Do not lie to me," Blaine ordered through gritted teeth. He took a step closer to Kurt, demanding the truth. "Are they fucking with you again?"

"No, I swear," Kurt said quietly. "I mean, they send me dirty looks sometimes but that's it. But it's not why--"

"Let's go," Blaine ordered Kurt and Jeff in a tone that left no room for argument, or for Kurt to finish what he was going to say. Both followed him as he walked in the direction the jocks headed. Blaine took deep breath, almost appreciative for a place to pour all of the emotions whirling in his head.

Kyle and Lance preened as the boys approached but the fire in Blaine's veins was burning bright. Kurt's heart raced in his chest. The hallways were empty, the final bell had rung, classroom doors were closed. He'd never seen Blaine like this up close and personal and he'd certainly never watched it from by his side. But even more surprising was the immediate change he saw in Jeff as he transformed from dorky to dangerous. Kurt knew he shouldn't be here. He should turn around and walk into his classroom. But standing with them was both exhilarating and terrifying and he found himself transfixed.

"Pin them," Blaine ordered and Jeff didn't hesitate. Jeff was slim but tall and he walked toward the jocks with no fear or hesitation. Kyle and Lance stepped backwards until they were pinned side by side against the lockers. Jeff placed a soft palm against each of their chests, holding them in place with the force of determination alone. With Jeff doing the dirty work, Blaine stepped up and addressed the pair. Kurt felt his heart in his throat.

"Kyle. Lance. It's a pleasure to see you boys again." Blaine's voice was steady and clear, soft and
yet stronger than Kurt had ever heard him before. "It's been a little while since we last chatted, and I was pretty angry that day. I'd apologize, but I don't want you to think I didn't mean what I said, because I truly did mean every word. But here's something you need to know now. Kurt Hummel over here," he said pointing over to Kurt but never taking his eyes off of the jocks, "he's my friend. He's not just my boss' kid, though for that reason alone I'd protect him from the likes of you. But he's my friend. So you treat him with the same respect you treat my Crew. That means no dirty looks, no whispers behind his back. You mess with him, and you mess with me. Is that understood?"

Kurt didn't even hear the jocks' answer, his head swimming with Blaine's words as they played over and over in his head. He's my friend, Blaine had told them. It wasn't blurted out in the midst of emotion, it wasn't whispered under his breath. Blaine had declared their friendship to the biggest jocks in the school sure and clear and without hesitation. By the end of the next bell it would be all over the school, there would be no hiding it. Every inch of Kurt was suddenly tingling.

He didn't see Kyle and Lance walk away and he didn't see Jeff slip into their math classroom. His vision was centered on Blaine alone, everything else surrounding him a fog. It broke slightly when he felt Blaine's hand on his arm. "Are you okay?" Blaine asked him worriedly.

Kurt nodded, trying to remember how to speak. "Yeah," he managed to breath.

Blaine chuckled and reached a hand up to brush Kurt's cheek tenderly. "Do you want to go to class?" he asked in a soothing tone.

Kurt gulped at the spark of Blaine's fingertips on his skin. "I want to kiss you," he sputtered.

Blaine instinctually licked his lips, his eyes darkening as heat coursed through his veins. He reached down, holding out his hand for Kurt's. "Come on."

Kurt contemplated for less than a moment before taking Blaine's hand and allowing himself to be led away from the class where he belonged to a side door in an empty hallway. "If we leave we can't come back in," Blaine warned him. "The doors lock behind us."

Kurt had never cut class before. He'd never left without permission and he most certainly never did it so he could hook up with a guy. But Blaine was not just any guy and this was not just any hook up. "Let's go," he whispered excitedly.

They slipped out the door together and Blaine started running, hand in hand with Kurt, toward the bleachers. As soon as Blaine pulled him underneath, Kurt crashed his lips against Blaine's, the kiss desperate and raw as fire and passion coursed through their veins. Blaine felt his skin bristle, and his body shuddered at Kurt's boldness when lithe fingers grasped at his curls and he let out a desperate moan. Blaine didn't hold back as he begged for entrance, his tongue swiping over Kurt's silky skin. Kurt parted his lips eagerly, delighting in the taste of Blaine. The sudden intensity of their kiss slowed and Blaine pulled Kurt in as close to him as he could. Only once they could feel the beating of their hearts against one another were they at all willing to part for air.

Blaine ran his fingers through Kurt's hair. "Wow," he sighed, catching his breath. "I hope you don't kiss all your friends that way."

"I don't want to just be friends," Kurt hummed still lost in the moment. But when his words reached his ears, and the flash of something in Blaine's eyes met his, he snapped back to reality. "Oh god, I'm sorry. Forget I said that."

Kurt tried to pull away, but Blaine held him close, refusing to let go. "What if I don't want to forget
"it?" he asked, with a playful smirk.

Kurt studied Blaine's eyes, the gold that sparkled with delight mixed with the ever present sadder, deeper mocha tones. He had to look away and he took a moment to take in his surroundings. The sunlight streamed through the bleachers, painting lines on the grass beneath their feet, some patches more faded than others. Beneath the lowest seats, shrouded by the metal and the darkness, Kurt could see remnants of the Crew's gatherings.

"What are you thinking?" Blaine asked easily.

"I'm just wondering if this is where you bring all the guys to fuck," Kurt said shyly with a hint of insecurity, a slight blush still gracing his cheeks.

Blaine's heart was pounding in his chest, but over the last few minutes he'd somehow managed to earn just a little bit of Kurt's trust and the last thing he wanted to do right now was betray it with lies. The time for fear and pretense was over. "There are no guys, Kurt," he admitted nervously.

Kurt's eyes narrowed, confusion swimming in an ocean of deep blue at Blaine's words. "What?"

"There are no guys," Blaine repeated. He stepped back, taking Kurt's hands in his, "I mean, there are guys I've kissed and we've gotten off, and maybe I've let a few go down on me, but…" Blaine's gaze dipped for a moment as he took a breath and licked his lips nervously. When he looked back up his face was the most genuine and bashful Kurt had ever seen it. "But I haven't been with any guys. Not like that."

Kurt stood stunned, so many of the things he'd thought about Blaine suddenly called into question. "Then why does everyone…" he trailed off.

Blaine shrugged. "They think I do, so I let them think what they want to think. No one knows the truth, not even Puck or Nick."

"Why tell me?" Kurt asked softly.

Blaine brushed his fingers through Kurt's hair tenderly. "Because you matter to me, Kurt. You make me want to tell you my secrets. You make me want to let down my walls and let you in. You make me want to risk everything for you." He swallowed hard, willing himself to hold Kurt's gaze. "But I'm too scared."

Kurt stepped in closer so he could feel Blaine warmth against him again. "What are you scared of?" he asked cautiously.

Blaine lowered his eyes as shame filled him. "Trusting you."

Kurt wanted to understand. He wanted to understand why Blaine pretended to be someone he wasn't and why he cared so much about what other people thought. He wanted to know who had betrayed him so terribly that he had to protect himself from even the possibility of love. He wanted to know every secret that Blaine held in his heart and break down every wall that kept them from being all that they could be together. But he didn't ask for any of that. Because in his own heart, he had his own fears and his own walls, and his own secrets that he too held dear. So instead he leaned in and kissed Blaine, soft and slow, much more like the first time.

Kurt pulled away, and their eyes met, their emotions reflecting off each other. "I'm scared to trust you too."

Blaine smiled softly, a small sigh escaping his lips. "So then, what now?"
Kurt shrugged. "I don't know. Take it one day at a time?" Kurt's hand trailed up Blaine's chest, resting on his collarbone. "Get to know each other? Learn to trust again?"

Blaine slid his arm around Kurt's waist, bringing their bodies together once more. "And in the meantime what are we? Friends during school but friendlier outside of school?"

Something in Kurt's heart screamed at him to say no, but he couldn't deny himself the pull he felt towards Blaine. He couldn't deny the fact that he was falling hard. And maybe Jeff and his Dad were right. Maybe fighting for Blaine would be worth it and in the end he'd have no regrets. After all, Blaine had already done more than Dave ever did. Kurt convinced himself that the agreement would be temporary, just until they both found their footing. Their courage. What Blaine was asking for was everything that he feared, but with a deep sigh, Kurt swallowed his fears and nodded.

"Yeah, if that's what you want," Kurt said nervously, his heart suddenly in his throat.

Blaine smiled, genuine and true, and Kurt was sure he'd never seen a more beautiful sight. "I do," he said softly.

"Yeah?" Kurt asked, his eyes shining with hope.

Blaine smiled bashfully and nodded. "Yeah."

Kurt ducked his head, not wanting Blaine to see the unshed tears and fear in his eyes. Blaine lifted Kurt's chin though, looking deep into the storm of emotions, understanding them all because he felt the same. He gently brushed Kurt's lips with his thumb, then leaned in, giving Kurt a gentle kiss that held a promise Blaine hoped he would be able to keep.
Before the Storm

Blaine hummed absentmindedly as he dressed for the shop Saturday morning, and the giddy grin that met Cooper at the breakfast table was more telling than if he’d read his little brother’s diary.

Cooper continued flipping through his medical journal, merely quirking a brow at Blaine. "So you and Kurt have figured out how to make things work?" he asked without sounding unduly curious.

Blaine's blush as he stared at his cereal bowl was enough to tell him he was right, but Cooper just turned the page and waited for him to share. "We've figured out how to try," Blaine shrugged, looking up nervously at his brother. "I guess that's enough for now."

Cooper put the journal aside and smiled with pride. "Good for you," he said. "I mean that Blaine. I'm really proud of you for trying. I know how hard it is for you to put yourself out there again after last time."

"Yeah," Blaine uttered shyly.

"Things will be different Blaine, you'll see. Kurt's different," Cooper said.

"Kurt's amazing," Blaine gushed, his eyes dancing with wonder. "It's been almost four years since…last time, and he's the first boy I've ever really wanted to try with."

"Then you should trust that. You've learned how to read people really well," Cooper said. "Just be careful."

"Careful of what?" Blaine's eyes narrowed, concern and a touch of anger toying with his good mood.

"The choices that you make. The world around you. His heart. This isn't gonna be easy for either of you, and if you don't work together then you're both going to end up hurt. You may need to make some choices that scare you."

"You mean Puck," Blaine frowned.

"I mean Puck," Cooper confirmed with a nod. "I mean Kyle. I mean Kurt's friends." He looked at Blaine, whose eyes had started to fall to the table in defeat and he grabbed Blaine's hand. Blaine glanced up through his lashes with a sigh. "I mean you, Blaine. I know how things are at Shaker Hills. If it comes down to you and Kurt against the world, think long and hard about your choice."

Blaine nodded and got up, grabbing his coat and his helmet for the road. "Way to ruin a guy's good mood," he grumbled as he slipped his jacket on. "Couldn't just let me be happy for a few minutes?"

"Sorry, I'm just not used to what Happy Blaine looks like is all," Cooper teased and he managed a small smirk out of Blaine. He walked over and put his hands on Blaine's shoulders. "You've got two days before you go back to school. Don't let them go to waste by being stupid, k Squirt?"

Blaine rolled his eyes. "You always know just the right thing to say," he quipped, but his smile widened as he headed out the door. The fact was, Cooper really did always know the right thing to say.

The day at the shop was filled with soft smiles, sly finger brushes, and secret kisses in the break
room. He had been nervous on his way over after his talk with Coop, but the moment he saw Kurt all his fears washed away. Kurt was beautiful, he was brilliant, and he was Blaine's. As long as Blaine didn't do anything stupid.

Their eyes locked as Blaine walked in the door and Kurt's immediate blush made him want to just sweep Kurt into his arms and kiss him senseless. But he didn't, walking past silently with a smirk and a side-eye into the break room where he clocked in and put his things away in his locker. The door clicked shut behind him, and before Blaine could even turn, Kurt's arms were around him. Blaine spun around and their lips met feverishly, quickly in case anyone else arrived, and their eyes were dark when they pulled away.

"Good morning," Kurt sputtered breathlessly and Blaine chuckled.

"Well good morning, Your Highness," Blaine teased, grinning giddily. "Do you greet all your peasants that way?"

"No," Kurt answered with his own grin. "Just the ones I'm friendlier with."

"Well this friendlier peasant has to go to work," Blaine responded with a quick kiss and then pulled out of Kurt's arms. "See you later." He winked before walking out. Kurt sighed blissfully, watching Blaine go before following him out.

Kurt hummed happily as he spent the day changing oil and rotating tires, sneaking a glance through the glass to Blaine whenever he could. Blaine's smile was bright at the register and there was a skip in his step whenever he was needed at the pumps. It was an odd feeling for Blaine, being this happy. Cooper was right, he couldn't even remember the last time he'd felt like this. Letting Kurt in, learning to trust him, was incredibly terrifying. But it was also exhilarating and whenever his fear tried to overwhelm him a single smile from Kurt was all the incentive Blaine needed to keep trying. Kurt was just as scared as Blaine but he just kept reminding himself that Blaine wasn't Dave. Blaine had already proven to him just how different he was and as long as Blaine was willing to try Kurt was too.

Throughout the day, Burt kept a careful eye on the boys. All week they'd been at each other's throats, the tension between them strong enough to nearly cut with a knife, and then suddenly overnight it had all washed away. He watched Blaine whisper into Kurt's ear and he saw his son's face flush rose with delightful embarrassment. He paid strict attention to Blaine whenever Kurt spoke to him, noticing the adoring look in Blaine's eyes as he watched Kurt walk away. Burt knew the boys were trying to navigate their friendship. He understood there were feelings between them that frightened them both. But something had obviously happened between them yesterday that Kurt had neglected to share, something beyond the kiss he'd hinted at the other night, and Burt had no intention of just letting it go. He was happy to see Kurt finally let someone in, but he needed to be sure wasn't leaping too far too fast.

"Blaine, you're all set for today," Burt said an hour shy of closing, hoping to get a chance to talk to Kurt privately. Blaine looked at him curiously, but went into the break room to clock out and text Cooper that he was early. As he waited for Cooper's text back, he wondered if Burt was angry at him and Kurt had acted all day. He really hoped not.

*From: Cooper*

**Hi Blaine, Nurse Beth here. He put me in charge of his cell. He's stuck in a surgery gone longer than planned, so he wants me to tell you you're on your own for dinner. Sorry bud:**

Blaine sighed and slipped his cell in his pocket. He was used to it by now, but he hated it nonetheless. He walked out sullenly through the garage to his motorcycle, trying to decide what to
do. Typically he'd have immediately rushed over to the Puckerman's, but he was pretty sure he
wouldn't be all that welcome right now.

Burt noticed the change in Blaine's demeanor and followed him out, wiping the oil off his hands.
"Everything ok, kid?" he asked with concern.

"Yeah, everything's fine," Blaine answered unconvincingly. "Coop's just stuck in surgery again,
and Puck's too pissed at me right now to go over there, so it's just me for dinner."

Burt had wanted to talk to Kurt, but maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea to get to know Blaine a little
better first, get a clearer sense of what was going on between those two. Besides, he couldn't let the
kid go home alone looking so sad. He made a quick decision. "Why don't you come over for dinner
tonight?"

"Oh, no," Blaine shook his head in embarrassment. "I wouldn't want to impose. I'm okay."

"You wouldn't be imposing Blaine," Burt said with an encouraging smile. "Come over for dinner.
I'm sure Kurt would love it."

"What would I love?" Kurt asked curiously as he walked outside. Watching his Dad and Blaine
talking had been too nerve-wracking to just sit by and wait.

"Blaine coming over for dinner," Burt said, smirking at the immediate blush that crept up Kurt's
cheeks. "His brother has to work late tonight so I figured instead of spending the night by himself,
he could come over and eat with us."

Kurt smiled that shy smile Blaine adored so much and nodded. "Yeah, you should totally come
over for dinner. Carole's a great cook."

Blaine looked back and forth between them. "I...yeah, ok. Thanks for the invite," he said with a
nervous smile to Kurt.

"Good. I'll call Carole now and let her know to expect one more," Burt said with a satisfied grin
before walking back inside.

Blaine pulled out his phone and sent Cooper a quick text, so Beth could pass on the plan to him.
"Are you ok with coming over?" Kurt asked softly. "I know it's hard to say no to my Dad,
especially, when he's your boss. But I don't want you to feel uncomfortable or anything."

"Yeah, no it's fine," Blaine stammered nervously. "I just..."

"You just?" Kurt cocked his head to the side.

Blaine ducked his head, his cheeks flushing. "I've never had dinner with a guy I was..." Blaine
trailed off, biting back the urge to say the guy he was dating.

Kurt stepped closer, reaching for Blaine's hand and intertwining their fingers. "A guy you're
being friendly with?" he supplied quietly.

"Yeah," Blaine nodded with relief.

Kurt shrugged. "Yes well, I haven't exactly been friendly with too many guys before either so this
is new territory for me too." Blaine could sense that there was something more to Kurt's statement,
something deeper, and he desperately wanted to erase any doubts Kurt had.
Blaine slid his arm around Kurt's waist, pulling their bodies together. Sparks immediately raced through his skin. "Well then I guess it's a good thing we're figuring this out together," he said, his tone soft, his eyes blazing with desire. Kurt looked away, willing his heart to slow down. The things this boy did to him were unreal. "You're adorable when you blush, did you know that?" Blaine chuckled.

Kurt rolled his eyes, pushing Blaine away, the blush on his cheeks deepening. "Go take a walk and get us some coffee, peasant. Cool yourself down there a bit," he joked.

Blaine sighed dramatically. "Of course, Your Highness," he said with a bow. Kurt sent him a wink and took off back to work.

Blaine had expected it to be awkward in the Hummel home during dinner. Whether it was his parents or Puckerman's, he was used to silence, fighting, uncomfortable pauses and disapproving looks. Even at Nick's house he felt more tolerated than welcome the few times he'd gone over for dinner. But here, with Burt and Carole and Kurt, he felt at ease and almost wanted. It was something he thought he could get use to if he let himself.

Kurt and Burt joked around the same way they did in the shop and Carole was nothing but a sweetheart, including Blaine in the conversation without it being forced. There was a moment where Blaine was thrown back into his childhood, memories he'd forgotten from before he came out of the closet when his parents still loved him. He could still smell the aroma of his mother's apple pie. He could hear his dad and Cooper heatedly discussing the latest Buckeye's game. He remembered how blissfully unaware he had been of his parents ignorance, how simple life had been.

Kurt noticed the far away expression on Blaine's face and instinctively reacted, placing a gentle hand over Blaine's. "Hey, you okay?" he whispered.

Blaine looked up at Kurt, the memory of his past fading, and gave a small smile. "Yeah, I'm fine."

Kurt smiled in return, giving Blaine's hand a gentle squeeze before removing it. Neither one noticed the adoring smile on Carole's face or Burt watching them warily.

Blaine insisted on helping to clear the dinner table, but Burt quickly sent them away once they were done. "Alright you two are excused," he told them with a grin. "Just keep the door open," he demanded.

Kurt led Blaine upstairs to his bedroom, swallowing his nerves. He knew Blaine's room hadn't been the hardcore thug sanctuary he'd expected, but he still worried that Blaine would take one look at his theater geek chic room and start laughing. He should have known that Blaine would only have eyes for one thing.

"So, this is it," Kurt said nervously as he and Blaine entered his room. Blaine took in the surroundings, the Broadway shows and Taylor Lautner pictures, and nodded his approval, much to Kurt's surprise, before throwing himself on Kurt's bed and lying down. "By all means, make yourself comfortable," Kurt said sarcastically as he sat gingerly at the end of his bed.

"You're too far away for me to be comfortable," Blaine said with a cocky grin, folding his hands behind his hands. "So, Mr. Hummel, what's it like having the hottest guy in school lying on your bed?"
Kurt bit his lip before seductively crawling over next to Blaine, lying down on his side with his head propped up by his hand. "Well, considering I sleep here every night I'd have to say I'm quite used to it."

Blaine smirked, twisting onto his side and propping his own head up with his hand so they were face to face. "Well aren't you cocky," he teased.

Kurt shrugged, his free hand resting in the space between them. "Maybe a little," he said with a cheeky grin.

Blaine's hand found its way to Kurt's, their fingers intertwining. "There's nothing little about you, Kurt," he said lowly.

Kurt blushed but held Blaine's gaze, both of their eyes darkening with desire. Blaine started to lean forward, desperate to taste Kurt's lips again but Kurt backed away. "My dad is right down stairs and he will not hesitate to shoot you."

"Your Dad doesn't scare me," Blaine whispered lowly.

Kurt shivered, glancing down the hall before quickly pecking Blaine's lips. But Blaine placed his hand on the back of Kurt's neck and deepened the kiss, letting his tongue roll over Kurt's until he heard Kurt's sharp intake of breathe and let go.

"I could get used to you doing that," Kurt mumbled, his forehead resting on Blaine's.

Blaine smiled mischievously and nodded. "Me too," he whispered before reluctantly pulling back.

They were quiet for a moment, Kurt rubbing small circles into Blaine's hand, thinking about the night so far. Blaine held so many secrets from his past that Kurt just wished he understood, and the almost haunted look Blaine had at dinner worried him. "So, what happened tonight?" Kurt tried softly. "At dinner? You were kind of out of it for a minute."

Blaine looked away and sighed. "It was nothing," he said shaking his head.

"Blaine," Kurt pushed.

"I said it was nothing," Blaine snapped, his eyes flashing hot back to Kurt's.

Kurt startled at Blaine's tone, pulling his hand away. He sat up against the wall with a frown. "Sorry. I shouldn't have brought it up."

"No, Kurt, don't apologize," Blaine insisted, immediately filled with guilt for snapping. He sat up himself and edged over next to Kurt. "I didn't mean to snap at you like that. I just… I don't want to talk about it."

Kurt could see Blaine's struggle. He could see the vulnerability. He was fairly certain whatever it was had to do with his parents and the reasons he was living with Cooper. And while he was desperate to know more, he wouldn't push Blaine for details. "It's okay," he said with a small smile.

Blaine reached over for Kurt's hand again, but the ring of his cell phone interrupted him. He reached into his pocket, smiling sadly when he saw it was Cooper. "Hey, Coop."

"Hey, Squirt," Cooper greeted. "I'm heading out of the hospital in five."

Blaine sighed, glancing sadly at Kurt. "Ok. I'll head home now." Kurt pouted and it took all of
Blaine's willpower not to throw the phone to the side and just claim his lips again.

"Actually, don't head home," Cooper told him. "I was hoping we could catch a late movie. It's been way too long since we've gone out."

Blaine's eyes brightened. After the memories that dinner had brought up, some brotherly bonding actually sounded perfect. "That sounds really great, Coop, I'd love to. I'll meet you at the theater?"

"Yep. See ya there," Cooper promised excitedly.

Blaine hung up and slid his phone back in his pocket. "Looks like I'm going to the movies with Coop."

"That sounds fun," Kurt smiled. "You should go see the new Gerald Butler one. I heard he's shirtless in it."

Blaine laughed as he scooted off Kurt's bed. "Coop loves him so we just might. Wanna walk me out?" he asked with a wickedly sexy smirk.

Kurt's eyes sparkled and he and nodded. "Yeah, come on."

"Thanks for inviting me to dinner, Mr. Hummel," Blaine said as he and Kurt walked past the kitchen.

"Sure thing, Blaine. You're welcome anytime," Burt said with such a genuine smile that it nearly brought a tear to Blaine's eye.

"Mrs. Hummel, everything was delicious. You'll have to give Cooper and me some cooking lessons," Blaine winked charmingly and Carole couldn't help but blush a little. Blaine was really something else.

"I'm going to walk him out," Kurt told his dad before he grabbed Blaine's hand and they went out the front door.

Burt stayed in the kitchen, looking out the window while Blaine and Kurt walked to the motorcycle.

"I can see why Kurt is so enamored with him," Carole smiled, wrapping an arm around Burt's waist. "He is quite the charmer, and not at all tough on the eyes. But I didn't think you'd fall for his good looks, so stop spying on them," Carole teased as she tapped him playfully and grabbed her drink from the counter.

"I'm not spying," Burt argued. "I'm just keeping an eye on things. He's a good kid, but they seem to have suddenly gone into overdrive and I'm not going to have Kurt hurt again."

"I love that you want to take care of him," Carole said earnestly. "But I'm pretty sure that Kurt would not appreciate you watching him kiss his boyfriend goodnight," she finished, laughing at the slightly alarmed look that flashed across Burt's face before walking out of the room.

"They aren't boyfriends," Burt called to her. "Kurt would've told me," he grumbled, his eyes glued on the boys who were standing a little too close together for his liking.

"What are the chances that your dad is watching us?" Blaine asked, dropping Kurt's hand as he
swung his leg over his bike.

"I'd say about 100%," Kurt laughed, stepping closer to Blaine so their faces were merely an inch apart.

"Does that mean I can't kiss you goodnight?" Blaine asked seductively, staring at Kurt's lips, licking his own. There was something about the bike that threw away every ounce of vulnerability and caution and made Blaine feel like the most powerful man in the world.

Kurt could feel it, the switch in Blaine, and there was absolutely no denying that it turned him on immensely. "It means he'll see us if you do," Kurt smirked with a half shrug. "It's up to you if you want to risk the wrath of my father."

Blaine chuckled darkly, sliding his arm around Kurt's waist. "I thrive on risk," he purred before capturing Kurt's lips in a kiss that was so full of passion it left both boys breathless.

"You better go," Kurt whispered, his forehead on Blaine's, despite every desire to never let him go. "Don't wanna keep your brother waiting."

Blaine breathed out and nodded. "Yeah." He looked at Kurt, so beautiful in the soft glow of the moonlight, blue eyes shining, craving more. "Goodnight, Kurt."

Kurt grazed his lips once more against Blaine's, before stepping out of his embrace. "Goodnight Blaine." Blaine sighed deeply, put his helmet on, and drove away.

Sunday in the shop was much of the same; coy looks from across the garage, lingering fingers when Blaine would hand Kurt a wrench or a screwdriver, stolen kisses in the break room. It was just them and Burt so they took advantage of the semi-privacy to be together. As the day went on though, their nerves started to increase. They had already heard enough from their friends to know that come Monday, the entire school would be watching them. Texts full of questions and demands for answers were coming at them throughout the day, wanting to know what the hell was going on. It got to the point that they both decided to lock their phones up for the afternoon. They were going to make the best out of the time they had together before the world tried to tear them apart.

Of course when their best included knocking over half the nuts and bolts when Blaine not so accidentally slammed Kurt into the wall of the supply closet, Burt had had enough.

"This is a place of business not a brothel, boys," Burt snapped furiously. "Neither of you is getting paid to screw around so I highly suggest you two get this behavior under control right now, is that understood?"

"Yes Dad," Kurt blushed with embarrassment.

"Yes Sir," Blaine answered, trying desperately not to laugh.

"Blaine, clean this up. Kurt, my office, now," Burt demanded.

Kurt shuffled across the garage, feeling more like a chastised child then an employee, but he supposed in that moment Burt felt more like a father than a boss. Burt followed him and closed the door. "Sit," he ordered and Kurt took a chair as Burt sat in his own. "We need to talk," he said, his tone firm yet gently.

"I'm sorry about what happened in there," Kurt started but Burt interrupted him.
"It's not about that," Burt told him. "Well, it is, but not like that. I'm just..." Burt crossed his arms, trying to find the right words. "What exactly is going on with you and Blaine?" he asked.

Kurt grimaced nervously. He had been waiting for his dad to ask about Blaine. Dreading it even. He thought he would have done it last night, but they'd quietly just watched a movie together instead once Blaine left. Now, he had no choice but to answer. He glanced quickly in the direction of Blaine.

"He'll be cleaning that mess up for a while Kurt," Burt assured him. "Now what's going on?"

"We're…friends?" Kurt half shrugged.

Burt raised a brow. "Friends?" he asked. "Friends who what? Snap at each other, argue, flirt, argue some more, then kiss?" Kurt smiled sheepishly. Burt leaned forward on the desk. "Tell me the truth, Kurt. What is really going on with you and Blaine?"

Kurt sighed loudly. "I don't know," he said, looking down at his hands. "I mean…I like him." He admitted softly. "And he likes me, and we're just...testing the waters?"

"Kurt."

"What do you want me tell you, Dad?" Kurt huffed. "We're getting to know each other. Seeing where things go."

"Uh, huh," Burt nodded. "And this past week when I had to send you to the parts store because you were about ready to rip Blaine's head off, what was that?"

Kurt looked up at Burt guilty. "I'm sorry about that. He…I was upset with him and I kinda lost it. I hadn't meant to."

"Ok," Burt said scratching his head. "Why were you upset with him?"

Kurt looked away, taking a deep breath. "Because he wouldn't talk to me at school," he muttered, almost hoping his father wouldn't hear.

But Burt did hear and he immediately understood. "I see," he said, his tone clipped.

"But he wasn't being mean or anything," Kurt quickly amended. "He's just having a hard time being my friend at school because that's the way things are at Shaker Hills. It's not the same thing as McKinley, it's not because we're gay. It just because, we don't belong together, you know?" Kurt rambled, trying to make his Dad understand. "But on Friday he essentially announced to the entire school that we are friends and come Monday everyone's going to be talking about us. So now it's out and we can fight them all together."

"Do you think he will?" Burt had kept quiet, taking it all in. Trying to piece together what Kurt was saying without asking the way too many questions that were popping into his head. But this one was important. "Fight together I mean? If you two are going to do this he should not leave you on your own to deal with it, I won't let you go through that again and I won't put up with it."

"He's trying, Dad. And I'm trying. And we just...we're trying to find a middle ground I guess." Burt said nothing, simply watching his son with wary eyes. "Don't give me that look, Dad. Yes, I think he will fight with me. He's already stood up for me once and our friendship a second time. I know it kind of looks and feels like the same thing all over again, but I promise, this time it's different."

"You're right," Burt nodded. "This is different. But, that doesn't mean that hiding your…"
relationship, is any better than hiding your friendship."

"We're not hiding it," Kurt insisted. "Not exactly. We're just...we're learning to trust each other, Dad." He said, his voice wavering. "I don't know what happened to him but...it's something that haunts him, I can tell. And I want to trust him, Dad, it's just hard. But I want...I want to fight for this. Even if this leaves me broken-hearted in the end...I don't want to let go."

Burt sighed deeply, wondering exactly when his baby boy grew up. "Well then, all I can say to you is to be careful. You're a smart boy and I trust you, but be careful. Remember that you matter, Kurt. Don't give your heart away completely or too quickly. You don't want to get so far gone that you can't come back." Kurt ignored the little voice in his head that said it was too late. "And if something doesn't feel right, don't do it. It's okay to take things slow, even if he doesn't want to. Listen to your instincts. They won't steer you wrong."

Kurt nodded. "I'll be careful. I promise."

"Good," Burt said with a small smile, and he stood up. Kurt did as well and Burt came around the desk and wrapped protective arms around him. "I love you, bud. I just want what's best for you."

Kurt inhaled deeply, taking comfort in his father's scent. "I know. I love you too, Dad."

"Alright," Burt backed away, straightening up, and clapped a hand on Kurt's shoulder. "Let's finish up that car out there so we can all go home."

They found Blaine at the car, all finished cleaning up, with the tray of equipment they needed from the tool cabinet. Kurt gave him a soft smile letting him know everything was okay, and Burt gave him a pat on the back. The three worked quickly among idle chatter, falling into step like they'd been rebuilding cars together their whole life. To Kurt and Blaine it just felt right. To Burt it felt like hope.

"I'm so glad you find this amusing," Kurt said to Marley later that night on the phone. He hadn't meant to tell her everything, but he needed to talk to someone other than his dad and he knew Marley would take their secret to the grave.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Marley said, forcing herself to stop giggling. "But the thought of your dad catching you two making out is really funny." Kurt rolled his eyes, a smile on his lips. "Especially since you specifically told us all that you would never do such a thing in your father's place of business."

Kurt groaned, burying his face into his blanket. "I can't help it! I feel like I'm drowning whenever he's near me. It's like I forget the world even exists," he said with a longing sigh.

Marley smiled softly into the phone. "Well I'm happy for you," she said earnestly. "I mean, tomorrow's going to be completely crazy but..."

"Ugh, I know. Don't remind me," Kurt said just as his phone beeped in his ear. He quickly glanced at the screen and saw the picture of Blaine studying the car parts books Kurt had saved a couple weeks prior. "Hey, Blaine's on the other line so..."

"Go talk to your boyfriend," Marley whispered conspiringly. "I'll see you in the morning."

"K. Night Marley," Kurt said quickly before switching over, a giddy grin in place. "Hello," he answered shyly.
"What would you say to skipping school tomorrow?" Blaine asked immediately. The smile on Kurt's face widened just at the dreamy quality of Blaine's voice. "We could go somewhere for the day, just the two of us, and be back before school let out."

Kurt sighed, snuggling into the pillow Blaine had laid on the day before. A day alone together sounded lovely. "We are not skipping school, Blaine," he answered firmly.

Blaine pouted into the phone. "I knew you were going to say that," he grumbled.

Kurt laughed softly. "Then why did you ask?"

"I thought I'd give it a shot," Blaine said with a long sigh.

"Are you that worried about school?" Kurt asked quietly.

"No," Blaine scoffed, though Kurt didn't believe him. "Maybe? I don't know. I just…I want to have more time with you before, ya know…"

"Everyone tries to keep us apart?" Kurt supplied.

"Yeah," he agreed sadly.

"We're going to be fine, Blaine," Kurt tried to assure him even though he had no idea if they would be. "We just gotta hang in there but we can do this."

Blaine laid back in his bed, tucking his free arm underneath his head. "You have that much confidence in me? In us?" he asked softly.

"Yeah, I do," Kurt said, his fingers playing with the edge of his blanket. "I'm not saying it's going to be easy but that doesn't mean it's not worth the fight."

"I know. You're right," Blaine nodded. "I'm sorry. I guess I'm just getting in my head is all." Kurt hummed softly but said nothing. They were quiet for a moment, just listening to the other breathe, when Blaine spoke up. "Can I ask you something I've been meaning to ask?"

"Of course," Kurt said a little nervously.

"Why me?" Blaine asked cautiously. "Why not Chandler? Or that guy Robert from AV club that's always trying to flirt with you? Why me?"

"Because you're different," Kurt said softly. "Because you're constantly surprising me. Because you're passionate and you make me laugh like no one else can. You love my snark and you don't back down from a challenge." Blaine grinned widely, his heart swelling with emotion. "And of course because you have a really nice ass," Kurt concluded with a smirk.

Blaine laughed, pure and true, and Kurt could only melt at the sound. "I knew you only wanted me for my body," he teased.

"You know it," Kurt laughed, hugging the pillow tightly. He closed his eyes, inhaling Blaine's lingering scent.

"You know it," Kurt laughed, hugging the pillow tightly. He closed his eyes, inhaling Blaine's lingering scent.

"You want to know why I chose you?" Blaine asked, though he didn't give Kurt time to answer. "Because you see me for whom I really am. Because you gave me a shot when no one ever does and because…because you're the most beautiful boy I've ever met."

Kurt blushed deeply. "Careful Blaine. You're going to start sounding like a hopeless romantic," he
teased softly.

"I used to be one," Blaine murmured wistfully, and Kurt's heart jumped slightly at the tiny secret he'd just been granted. "I just...I really like you, Kurt."

"I really like you too, Blaine," Kurt breathed out, his heart hammering in his chest. "And you can be a romantic all you want. It's sweet. You're sweet and I really like that about you."

"Yeah?" Blaine questioned with surprise. "It doesn't make me any less of a badass?"

"Not to me. In fact, I think it makes you more of a badass," Kurt told him. "And it makes you really brave which I admire."

"You're just saying that," Blaine said self-consciously.

"No, I'm not," Kurt assured him. "You don't give yourself enough credit Blaine, and to be completely honest, you're kind of amazing."

Blaine smiled gently, a small sigh escaping his lips. "Only kind of?"

"Hm, maybe a little more than just kind of," Kurt said shyly.

"Well, Mr. Hummel, you're a little more than kind of amazing too," Blaine said earnestly. He glanced at the clock on his nightstand, a yawn escaping his lips. "We should probably go to bed. You know, school in the morning and all."

"Yeah," Kurt said, reluctant to hang up even though he too was tired.

"I had a really great weekend," Blaine said shyly.

"Me too," Kurt admitted softly.

Goodnight, Kurt," Blaine said.

"Goodnight, Blaine," Kurt whispered. He hung up and set his phone on his nightstand and snuggled into his pillow once more, hoping against hope that they were going to be okay tomorrow.
Reason to be Brave

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Cooper dropped Blaine off at school Monday morning when Puck didn't show. Blaine was quiet on the way, nerves twisting his belly into knots. Coop thought about leaving it be, but he took a risk and reached for Blaine's shoulder before he got out of the car.

"If you need me Squirt I'm always here for you," he said sincerely. "You don't have to go through anything alone."

No matter what he sometimes said or did, Blaine loved his brother more than anyone else in the world. "Thanks Coop," he said with a soft smile before stepping out of the car.

His defenses and confidence were up. Blaine and Kurt both knew that there was no way they'd get out of today unscathed. Blaine's announcement to Kyle on Friday was like giving the entire student body of Shaker Hills a free pass to finally bring down the great Blaine Anderson and he had to be prepared. But as he walked down the hallway his classmates still stared at him with the same frightened expression that they always had. Blaine smirked with relief. At least that part hadn't changed. Yet. He approached Kurt's locker, quickly surveying the hall and slowed his pace, but didn't stop.

"Good morning, sexy," Blaine whispered, his lips grazing Kurt's ear, making him shiver. Blaine turned to watch his reaction as he continued down the hall backwards. Kurt's eyes followed him, smiling shyly at the heated gaze Blaine sent him. Blaine smiled and winked before turning back around and arriving at his locker.

He stood frozen, staring at the word written on it.

_Loser_

It was such a simple word, one that his own friends called him in joking. But in that moment, the simple word taunted him. Blaine could hear the snickers around him. He could feel the eyes of his classmates burning through him as his power and control slipped through his fingers. He felt himself whisked back in time to Westerville and for a moment his entire world was suddenly collapsing. Before it could though, he closed his eyes and rushed back to the here and now and his anger boiled deeply in him, determined to take control of the situation before it got out of hand.

"Who the fuck's responsible for this?!!" Blaine yelled out, his fists clenched with fury. He scanned the faces of the crowd, everyone looking at the person next to them, but no one said a word. "Show your fucking face! Quit being such a coward and face me like a man!" When no one came forth, Blaine snarled at the crowd and punched his locker. "You," Blaine pointed at a junior boy who was on the basketball team. "Clean this shit up!" When the boy only started dumbfounded, Blaine stalked over to him. The jock was taller by several inches but Blaine's glare was deadly. "I said, clean this shit up," Blaine said evenly, though his eyes were blazing. "NOW!"

The jock startled before quickly running off to the boys' bathroom to grab napkins to clean off Blaine's locker. Blaine glared at him the entire time, all the while keeping an eye out for any indication of who the culprit was. When Blaine's locker was cleaned the jock ran to his girlfriend's side, grabbed her hand, and quickly walked off before Blaine could take any more of his anger out on him. Blaine opened his locker, switched out his books, and slammed it shut with a crash before
storming off to class.

Kurt watched the entire scene from down the hall, forgotten by Blaine, his heart racing frantically. School had barely even started and Blaine was already being targeted for their friendship. The realization of how difficult their relationship was truly going to be for Blaine finally dawned on him. He had known that it would be tough. He had known that no one would accept it. But actually seeing the first battle, knowing that it was likely small in comparison to what was to come, made Kurt realize how way in over his head he was. Kurt had always been a loser, first at McKinley, now here. He didn't have far to fall. But Blaine was falling from the highest peak and if no one caught him before he landed the plunge would be devastating. With a shaky breath, Kurt texted a single word to Blaine then closed his locker and walked off to class.

From: Kurt
Courage

Kurt's text that morning had grounded Blaine and given him strength, but by lunch time it was dwindling. There were no other incidents but the whispers and questioning looks were enough to keep Blaine on edge all day, resulting in him snapping at most of the student body. At lunch in the courtyard, Blaine slammed his tray down on the table but pushed it away and rested his head on his arms, a long aggravated sigh escaping his lips.

"What's the matter, Anderson?" Puck asked with mock concern. "Can't take the heat?" He didn't like seeing Blaine struggle at all but he'd warned his best friend and had been ignored and rebuked. Now Blaine would get what he had coming to him and maybe, just maybe, he'd come to his senses.

"I can take the heat, Puckerman," Blaine said through gritted teeth though he didn't lift his head. "Stop acting like you fucking care."

Puck smirked cockily. "You're right. I don't care. Maybe if you won't listen to me you'll listen to everyone else. I already told you that hanging out with that damn dweeb was bad for you but no, you decided to ignore me and for what? A piece of ass? Get your shit together, Anderson."

"Puck's right," Quinn pronounced, ignoring the glare Jeff was sending her. "Everyone already thinks that you've gone soft just for being friends with Mr. Goody Two Shoes. And whether you give a shit or not Blaine, your reputation is our reputation. So you fuck with it and you fuck with us. What do you think is going to happen when everyone finds out you two are boyfriends?" Blaine's head snapped up, his gaze meeting Quinn's. "And don't act like that's not what this is. We know you Blaine and you wouldn't put up with this bullshit for any quick fuck under the bleachers. You'd have him screaming your name and then sobbing without a goodbye within minutes. But this dweeb you're fucking keeping around. You like him, we all can see it," she glowered. "And pretty soon, everyone else will too."

Blaine grabbed his drink and stood up. "You know what? Fuck this. I'm not even hungry," he said and stormed off out the doors.

"Me either," Brittany said, quickly following Blaine out.

"Wait for me," Jeff said angrily. He threw Quinn a disgusted glance as he grabbed his things.

"Jeff, come on," Quinn said in exasperation. Jeff ignored her though and left the courtyard.

"Good going morons," Santana muttered, picking at her food.
"What? We're just stating facts here," Puck defended.

"Whatever," was all Santana replied.

Nick and Jake glanced at one another, the only two who had stayed silent. Instead they'd carefully watched the scene to see how it would unfold. If the Crew couldn't accept their leader's relationship with Kurt, there was no way that either Harmony or Marley would be tolerated. Puck would beat the shit out of his little brother if he knew he was truly interested in Marley, and then endlessly tease her to the point of cruelty just to get a point across. Jake couldn't let that happen. Nick's stomach clenched, seeing everything he and Harmony had worked so hard to build falling apart before his eyes. She wouldn't wait for him forever. As they watched Kurt and Blaine fight for their friendship she was growing discontent with the secrets and the lies. She wanted Nick to be strong and proud for her. But like everyone else in the Crew, he just wanted a place where he fit in, and felt protected.

"So will you come to my audition on Friday?" Kurt asked as he packed up in the break room at the end of the day. "I'd really like it if you were there."

Blaine shrugged, pulling on his leather jacket. "I dunno," he mumbled.

"Don't give up on me already Blaine, we can do this," Kurt whispered, grabbing his hand cautiously. Blaine had been on edge all afternoon and Kurt couldn't help but worry about his reaction.

Blaine simply sighed though, and pulled Kurt close. He kissed him gently, filling himself with the strength that Kurt had and the love that he was beginning to feel for the boy. "I'm not giving up," Blaine whispered. "I just don't know what to do."

Kurt wanted to tell him to just leave the Crew, let them do what they will because it didn't matter. Popularity and being on top in high school didn't mean anything in the real world. But he knew that it wouldn't help because in Blaine's heart, leading the Crew wasn't about any of that. They took care of him and made him feel safe the way a parent should. The way his parents hadn't. Kurt had figured out that much. Besides Cooper, the Crew was the only family he had. Kurt held Blaine tighter, resting his head on his shoulder. "You'll think of something," he answered hopefully. "I believe in you."

When Kurt opened his locker after first period Tuesday morning, the last thing he was expecting was a note to fall out. He picked up the folded sheet of paper, glancing around the hall before opening it.

_You're just another notch in his belt, COCKSLUT._

Kurt's heart jumped and he crumbled up the sheet of paper, immediately shoving it in down into his messenger bag. He put his English book away and grabbed his Chemistry one before closing his locker and scurrying off. He fought back the tears that threatened to spill over. He didn't want it to affect him. He was used to this. He'd managed before and he could manage again. But as he started to turn the corner he heard Quinn and Jeff arguing, and the note was forgotten.

"I can't believe you're acting like this!" Jeff hissed. "And why? Just because I want to be friends with Kurt?"

Kurt's breath hitched at the mention of his name, stepping back so he's not seen.
"He's just some stupid dweeb!" Quinn argued. "Why do you care so damn much? It's not like Blaine is actually going to keep him around!"

"I wouldn't be so sure," Jeff warned. "But it doesn't matter. I don't care about what happens between Blaine and Kurt. I like the guy and I'm going to be his friend as long as he'll let me. Which won't be too long with the way you and Puck are acting. What the hell is wrong with you?"

"Oh there's nothing wrong with me. I'm not the one with some crazy delusion that you can be friends with someone like Hummel and command the respect required to be a part of the Crew, much less lead it. But by all means, be his friend, Jeff. You can tumble to the bottom of the food chain all you want, but won't be taking me with you." Quinn snapped before turning the corner and coming face to face with Kurt. "Well, looky here. It's your new best friend, Jeffrey," Quinn sneered. Jeff glared at her but said nothing. "Whatever," Quinn scoffed and continued down the hall.

Jeff slid his hands in his pocket, a deep sigh escaping his lips. "How much of that did you hear?" he asked quietly.

Kurt looked down, willing his tears away. "Enough to know that you should chase after your girlfriend instead of standing here and talking to someone like me."

"Naw man. I'm not gonna chase after her when she's like that. She needs to cool down a bit," Jeff said then took a good look at Kurt's glistening eyes. "Hey, what's wrong Kitty Cat? You upset about what she said?" Kurt shook his head but said nothing. "Dude, come on. We're friends. Tell me what's wrong." Kurt gulped, leaning against the wall. With a shaky hand, he pulled out the crumbled up sheet of paper and handed it to Jeff. Jeff opened it up and quickly crumpled it back up like such trash belonged. "Dude! What the hell?!" Jeff exclaimed angrily.

"I found it in my locker," Kurt said quietly. "Please don't tell Blaine. He's got enough on his plate because of me. He doesn't need to know this, I can handle it myself."

Jeff ripped the paper up and threw it away in a nearby trashcan before leaning on the wall next to Kurt. "You know it's not true, right?" Kurt shrugged, his eyes to the ground. "Look at me Kitty Cat." Kurt reluctantly looked up. "It's not true. You know it's not. Don't let the haters get you down. That probably came from some jealous asshat that wants in Blaine's pants. Or yours, cause I mean, you're one sexy dude too," he said with a smirk.

Kurt rolled his eyes, smiling a little. "Are you sure you aren't gay?"

"Straight as a ruler," Jeff said confidently. "Except for Nicky maybe. I'd probably make an exception for him," he joked. Kurt snorted a laugh just as the warning bell rang. "You alright now?"

"Yeah, I'm ok. I just hadn't expected it," Kurt sighed, pushing off the wall and walking to Chemistry. Jeff followed. "I'm really sorry about Quinn," he said softly.

"Don't," Jeff shook his head. "She has no reason to act like this just because we're friends. Whatever issues she has she can get over them. I'm not going to bail on you just because she wants me to."

Kurt turned to Jeff, grabbing his bicep to stop him. "Do you hear yourself? You're picking some dweeb over your girlfriend, Jeff. Of course she's pissed."

"First of all, you're not a dweeb. And second of all, I'm not picking you over her," Jeff said in
exasperation. "Just because I want to be your friend doesn't mean I love her any less. And if wants to act like a spoiled brat just because I'm friends with you then she's not the girl I fell in love with." Kurt looked away, hating how much he was affecting the Crew's lives. Jeff slung his arm over Kurt's and started continued down the hall. "Come on, let's get to class before Blaine sends out a search party."

Blaine tapped his pen anxiously as he waited for Kurt and Jeff to arrive. He'd hoped they could grab just a few minutes to talk since Kurt was always there first and the fact that he was seconds away from being late was making Blaine's pulse race with anxiety. Just as the final bell rang though, Jeff and Kurt scurried in and took their seats. The first thing Blaine noticed was the tension in Kurt's shoulder. He glanced at Jeff, giving him a questioning look, and Jeff merely shrugged before quickly turning his attention to their teacher.

Jeff avoided eye contact with Blaine the entire first half of the class period and Blaine was certain he was hiding something. When the teacher told them to get in their pairs for lab, Blaine immediately flew to Jeff's side to interrogate him.

"What's wrong with Kurt?" Blaine demanded.

Jeff put his goggles on and started on the lab. "Nothing," he said dismissively. He got out the beakers and the test tubes and started to set them up. He held out Blaine's goggles to him expectantly.

Blaine swiped them from Jeff, but didn't put them on. "Do not lie to me, Jeffrey," Blaine admonished. "Did something happen?" Jeff didn't answer. "Tell me," Blaine ordered, his tone leaving no room for argument.

Jeff's shoulders slumped. He glanced behind him and saw Kurt hard at work with his own partner before looking back at Blaine apologetically. "I promised him I wouldn't tell you. Please don't make me," Jeff implored.

Blaine sat back in his seat, looking over at Kurt who caught his eye. "Are you ok?" he mouthed. A flash of something crossed Kurt's face but quickly vanished. "I'm fine," Kurt mouthed back. Blaine nodded, not believing him at all, and Kurt quickly turned back to his lab.

Blaine was out of his seat before the bell even rang dismissing the class. "Follow me," he whispered sharply in Kurt's ear before walking out. Kurt threw Jeff an accusatory look that made the blond shrink back before gathering his books and walking out, turning his glare to Blaine. He didn't like being ordered about like an Anderson underling, but he followed him to the boys' restroom at the end of the hallway nonetheless. Blaine made sure that it was empty before locking the door and turning to Kurt. "What happened?" he demanded.

"Nothing happened," Kurt insisted. "I don't know what you're talking-"

"Stop lying to me!" Blaine snapped.

"Stop treating me like I'm one of your Crew," Kurt warned him just as harshly.

Blaine took a deep breath and hung his head for a moment. When he raised it his eyes had softened. "You're right. I'm sorry," he sighed. He closed the space between them and gingerly placed his hands on Kurt's hips. Kurt's tension melted away and he rested his hands on Blaine's chest. "I'm going through hell and back just to be friends with you but this will only work if you tell me the
"truth," he said softly. "And don't say there's nothing wrong. Jeff already told me that you made him promise not to say anything. Please just tell me what happened."

"I…it's nothing really," Kurt said, his voice gentle. "Someone left a note in my locker but it's nothing. I'm fine."

"What did they write?" Blaine questioned, his thumb lightly grazing Kurt's hip.

Kurt shook his head. "It doesn't matter."

"Of course it matters!" Blaine argued.

"No, it doesn't," Kurt said in a firm but soothing voice, as he wrapped his arms around Blaine's neck. "I'm not going to let anyone else tell us who or what we are. I told you, these idiots can say and think whatever the hell they want and none of it will matter to me. The only thing that matters is us."

Blaine rested his forehead on Kurt's, closing his eyes and inhaling Kurt's scent. "Why do they have to make it so hard?" he whispered.

"Because they're scared," Kurt whispered. "And jealous. I know everything feels like it's going to shit right now but we just have to hang in there. Everyone will eventually get used to it and they'll move on to the next piece of gossip. We're going to be fine, Blaine. We just have to hold on."

Blaine tipped his head back to look into Kurt's eyes. They were so strong and sure and he wished that he could just soak it in and feel the same. "How are you so brave?" Blaine asked in wonder.

Kurt bit his lip. "I'm a Hummel," he shrugged with a smirk. "And no one messes with a Hummel."

It wasn't the whole truth, but it was the truth nonetheless. Blaine offered a small smile before leaning in. Kurt met him half way, their lips barely touching in a sweet kiss before parting. "Come on. We gotta get to class." Blaine huffed and nodded, reluctantly letting Kurt go and walking out of the bathroom.

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Wednesday began relatively calmer. There were no notes, no arguments amongst the Crew and some of the whispers had died down. Maybe that was why they let their guard down just a touch more than they probably should have. Lunch was half over when Kurt left his friends at their table in the cafeteria and went to get another drink from the lunch line. As he made his way up, Blaine was suddenly at his side.

"You know, Britt's been really sad that you haven't eaten with us," Blaine commented, reaching out slightly to brush their fingertips while keeping his eyes open for any foul play.

"Yes well, I haven't exactly been invited back," Kurt said with a raised brow. Kurt pulled his hand from Blaine's and grabbed himself an orange juice. He smiled at the cafeteria lady as she rang it up then headed back to his table. Blaine followed, placing a hand on Kurt's arm.

"You're always invited to have lunch with us," he said much more tenderly than he'd intended.

"I told you he was Anderson's new cockslut."

Kurt froze first, the echo of the note in his locker sending a chill down his spine. His eyes flashed to Blaine nervously. He watched the transformation as Blaine softly reassured him with a glance, then grew hard, balling his fists and turning a menacing glare to the football player who had muttered the words. "What the hell did you just say?" Blaine glowered.
The jock turned haughtily to Blaine. "Seems like you heard me just fine Anderson," he taunted, a sinister grin on his face. "What are ya gonna do about it? One more fight on school property and you're expelled. Plus your little goody two shoes boytoy seems to have you whipped." The jocks around them all laughed while the rest of the crowd watched fascinated.

A month ago Blaine would have punched him. He would have taken the kid's lunch and shoved it in his face. He would have slammed him to the ground and never let him up again and if he was expelled so be it, he would at least still have his power and his dignity. But now the feel of Kurt's gaze behind him and the sight of the Crew slipping into the cafeteria in front of him were like the angel and the devil on his shoulders. He caught Nick's eye. Nick gave an almost imperceptible shake of his head. Jeff, Santana, and Brittany though spread out quickly over to the cafeteria aides and distracted them.

Blaine refocused and stepped forward getting in the jock's face. "You want a fight? I'm more than happy to name a place and a time. The only one whipped here will be you," he hissed. Blaine took a step back then raised his chin and his voice to address the whole cafeteria. "You all heard it through the grapevine but let me say it nice and clear! Anybody got a problem with Kurt Hummel has a problem with me. Get the fuck over yourselves and keep your mouths shut before I shut them for you. Is that clear?" the cafeteria remained silent. "Excellent." Blaine turned his attention to Kurt who was gaping at him. "Let's go, Kurt," he commanded.

There was a part of Kurt that really wanted to argue with Blaine's tone, and with following him back out to the Crew. He didn't want to sit with them, not even for a few minutes, for a million different reasons. But Blaine had once again defended him, defended them, to the entire school and there was no way he was going to do anything but stand by his side. With a quick nod, Kurt packed up his lunch and grabbed his things from the table.

"Kurt, what are you doing?" Chandler asked frantically. "Are you seriously just going to let him talk to you like that?"

"I'll see you guys tomorrow," was all Kurt said before walking off to the quad with Blaine, leaving his friends in a gape-mouthed shock. Marley was the only exception and she gave him a small but encouraging smile.

The Crew had returned to the courtyard as soon as the argument was over and the moment Kurt and Blaine walked outside, Puck grunted in aggravation. "Oh you have got to be fucking kidding me!" His eyes were squarely on Kurt.

"Get over it or get out, Puckerman," Blaine said as he sat down. "I'm not dealing with your bullshit today."

Puck shook his head. "I choose get out," he snapped before walking off.

"I'm not talking about this with you, Chandler," Kurt said tiredly as he walked to his Navigator. Chandler was desperately trying to get him to stay away from Blaine and after the cafeteria incident, Chandler was convinced that Blaine was dangerous.

"But don't you see what he's doing?!" Chandler asked frantically. "All he wants is to sleep with you and then he'll leave you on your own to deal with the mess!"

"You have no idea what you're talking about," Kurt snipped.

"He's turning the entire school against you!" Chandler whined. "Why can't you see that he's no
good for you! He's not your friend, Kurt! I'm your friend!"

Kurt abruptly turned on his heel. "Is that so? You're my friend?" he asked, continuing before Chandler could get a word in. "If you were really my friend then you'd accept the fact that I'm also friends with Blaine. You'd accept the fact that I don't have feelings for you and you'd accept the fact that, like it or not, the Crew is a part of my life now. But you won't accept it, no matter how much I try. You refuse to back off. Well, here is your final warning, Chandler. Stay out of this or our friendship is through."

"But Kurt!" Chandler exclaimed. Kurt ignored him though, got into his Navigator, and drove out of the parking lot.

"Mr. Williams!" Quinn cried as she raced into the Principal's office at the end of the day. "The girls' bathroom in the East Wing is clogged and overflowing and the girls are freaking out! We need your help quickly!"

She nearly pulled him out of his chair insistently and Principal Williams had very little choice but to go with her, closing the door behind him. Quinn threw a quick wink to Puck and Jake hiding around the corner, and the two brothers slipped out as soon as they passed.

"You keep a lookout, I'll only be a minute," Puck ordered his brother.

"I don't like this," Jake said nervously, his eyes shifting.

"Nobody asked if you liked it Jake," Puck said roughly. "We do what we have to do and I'm not going to let Blaine take us all down with him."

Puck slinked into the Principal's office, closing the door behind him, and he immediately scanned the file cabinets. He found the one he was looking for and opened it, flipping through the names as fast as possible. He got a hold of the file he wanted, pulled out the paper, and quickly snapped a photo of it with his phone. He put it back, closed the drawer and slipped out of the office in less than five minutes.

"He'll hate you if you use it you know," Jake warned him as they walked nonchalantly out the front door to the parking lot.

Puck glanced sideways, a regretful, knowing look in his eyes. "Then he shouldn't make me use it," he answered gruffly before they got in their car and drove away.

Chandler sat outside the shop for a few minutes staking things out before making his move. He watched as Blaine carried out his duties behind the counter on the gas station side and came out to help an older woman at the pumps. He waited until there were no other cars then pulled into the pump on the near side and got out of the car. He pushed the button for aide and waited.

Blaine bounced out of his cocoon of the little store, always happy for a breath of gasoline fresh air, and came around between the car and the pump. "How can I help-" he started, but stopped when he saw Chandler, tension gripping him immediately.

"You can help me by staying the hell away from Kurt, Anderson," Chandler warned him immediately. Whether Kurt liked it or not, Blaine didn't deserve Kurt's affections and Kurt was bound to be hurt in Blaine's madness. Blaine didn't deserve to be Kurt's friend and since Kurt wouldn't listen to Chandler, then Chandler decided to go straight to the source.
Blaine folded his arms across his chest and turned an unimpressed glare on Chandler. "What did you just say to me?" he asked, taking a step closer to Chandler.

Chandler didn't back down though, crossing his own arms and stepping forward directly in Blaine's face. "You heard me. I know what you're doing and it needs to end. Stop manipulating Kurt into thinking that you actually care about him when you don't. Stop trying to get him in bed because he will never sleep with you. He has way too much respect for himself to stoop down to your level. Kurt is magnificent and you're nothing but a-

Chandler let out a loud, high pitched squeal when Blaine's hand was suddenly fisting his shirt. They both threw a quick glance to the shop but the view of them was shielded by Chandler's car. With that security, Blaine fistled Chandler's collar with his free hand, and lifted him slightly off the ground against the car door.

"Have you lost your fucking mind?" Blaine glowered. "What makes you think that you have the fucking right to come talk to me? At my job? At Kurt's father's place of business no less!" Blaine shook Chandler's body roughly. He kept it small and quiet so no one looking on would be the wiser, but his intent was perfectly clear to Chandler. "You must be smoking some fucked up shit if you think you can come at me without repercussions." Chandler whimpered but said nothing.

"Listen closely Chadwick because I'm only going to say this once. What happens between Kurt and me is none of your damn business and if you think that your scrawny nerdy little ass is going to come between us than you're even dumber than you look. Get it through your fucking head. Kurt's never gonna look at you the way he looks at me. He's never gonna want you the way he wants me. You and Kurt are never going to happen. And tonight, it'll be my name he's screaming, not yours. Now take your sorry ass and get the fuck out of here before the siren of the ambulance coming to save your ass alerts Kurt to the fact that you even came here."

"Too late," Kurt said with a glare as he rounded the corner behind Chandler's car. Blaine immediately put Chandler down and put his hands up. Chandler shrunk back into his car. "Get the hell out of here Chandler." Kurt's voice was so angry, so cold, Chandler didn't even hesitate to comply.

When the car was gone, Blaine's tension released and he looked embarrassingly guilty at Kurt. Kurt though did not break his stern gaze. "Break room, Anderson. Now."

"He came here Kurt. He confronted me. I didn't do anything but defend myself. Defend us! Like you wanted me to," Blaine argued the instant Kurt closed the door behind them.

"And you think it's defending us by implying that we're sleeping together when we're not?" Kurt yelled, the hurt evident in his eyes.

Blaine opened his mouth to respond then shut it. He looked away, his cheeks reddening with shame as his eyes landed on the floor. Kurt was absolutely right. "I'm sorry," he whispered, shoving his hands in the pockets of his jeans. "I hadn't meant...I was just angry. It's gonna take time for me to get this right, Kurt."

Kurt sighed softly as he threaded his arms through Blaine's, wrapping them around his waist, a small smile on his lips. "For both of us," he conceded. "I should've warned you that Chandler might try something stupid. But you can't go shaking him like some ragdoll, Blaine. Even if maybe he deserved it."

Blaine lifted his eyes to Kurt who looked down on him with a mix of amusement and hope. "What can I do to make it up to you?" Blaine teased, nipping at Kurt's lips.
Kurt allowed him one quick kiss and smiled slyly. "Other than coming to my audition Friday?"
Blaine rolled his eyes and Kurt stepped away, placing his hands on his hips. "Have lunch with me
tomorrow in the cafeteria. With my friends."

Blaine stopped and looked at him. He didn't think Kurt could possibly be serious, but his face
assured Blaine that he was. He grimaced uneasily. "Oh Kurt, I don't know."

"It's not enough for me to try and fit into your world Blaine," he said stepping closer, taking
Blaine's hand and linking their fingers. "My friends need to see you for who you really are too."

"It's exactly what the Crew is afraid of," Blaine told him.

Kurt nodded and took hold of Blaine's other hand. "Well maybe they should have more courage.
Like you."

Blaine glanced through the glass doors into the courtyard on Thursday as he and Kurt passed by
on their way to the cafeteria. Puck's back was to him, but Quinn glanced up just in time to see him and
her glare was deadly. As his heart raced in his chest he wished he could take Kurt's hand for
reassurance, but the calm in his blue eyes would have to be enough for now. "You can do this,"
Kurt said encouragingly. Blaine gave a small nod and followed Kurt inside.

They entered the cafeteria and Kurt led them to his usual table. A dozen eyes turned to them and
opened wide in shock. Kurt smiled confidently and put his things down. "Hey everyone. You all
know Blaine Anderson. Blaine these are
my girls, Marley and Harmony. And you know Chandler,"
he said with warning glances to both boys.

Chandler said nothing, his eyes turning away from Blaine and down to his food. Kurt had already
warned him that morning that if he wanted any chance of reconciling their friendship, he would
have to accept the way things were now. One more negative word about Blaine and Kurt would
never speak to him again. Marley smiled shyly and waved. She knew Kurt better than anyone at
Shaker Hills and she trusted his judgment. If Kurt believed that Blaine wasn't a bad guy then she
would too. Harmony however, kept a strong eye on her boyfriend's leader, eager to finally get to
know him better and unwilling to let him intimidate her in any way. "Sit down Blaine," she said
assertively. "Kurt's been telling us a lot about you lately."

"All good I hope." Blaine smirked nervously as he and Kurt sat down. He glanced around to see
nearly every eye in the room on him, but Kurt nodded encouragingly and he focused on his friends.
There was no sign that Kurt knew about Harmony's previous confrontation with Blaine and Blaine
had no intention of letting that cat out of the bag.

"Considering he's a bit taken with you, you'll have to forgive me if I take what he says with a grain
of salt," Harmony said with a fake grin, her eyes narrowed. Kurt blushed as he hid his face in his
hands, but Blaine just chuckled to cover his discomfort.

"Well I."

"What the hell is this?" Puck demanded, marching in between Kurt and Blaine. Quinn and Jake
stood staunchly by his side.

This whispers and chatter that had surrounded them since Blaine sat down at lunch table instantly
silenced. A hundred eyes were on them, including the glares of their friends, waiting for a repeat of
the day before.

Blaine looked up at his best friend, the boy who'd been like a brother to him for the past four years,
his eyes daring. His voice was calm and steady despite the feeling that his whole body was shaking with trepidation and resentment. "This is lunch, Puck. I'm eating lunch. With my friend."

"You mean with your boyfriend," Quinn chimed in, loud and haughty, her eyes sending daggers are Kurt.

The whispers began again filling Blaine's ears and his eyes shifted between Puck and Quinn, his heart breaking. "Why are you doing this?" he whispered desperately.

"It's really easy, Anderson," Puck answered. "You can screw whoever you want, even if he is at the bottom of the food chain, but if you sit with the dweebs, you are a dweeb, and the Crew ain't led by a dweeb." He leaned in closely to Blaine, his breathe hot on Blaine's cheek. "I made you who you are Anderson, and I can take it away in a heartbeat." His voice was so soft that only Blaine and Kurt could hear, but the words sent shivers down Blaine's spine.

"We'll see you at lunch tomorrow Blaine," Quinn smirked dangerously. "Or the Crew's gonna be gettin' a new leader."

Puck turned and walked away, followed by Quinn and Jake on his heels. Jake looked back regretfully, his eyes falling on Blaine and Marley, and then followed his brother out the door.

---

From: Blaine
Tell your Dad I got sick at school and I'm not coming in today.

From: Kurt
Blaine, come on, don't let them get to you. Come to work and we can talk about it. Figure out a plan.

From: Blaine
I need some time Kurt. Please, just do this for me.

From: Kurt
Is Cooper there tonight?

From: Blaine
Cooper's never here.

I'm sorry.

It's better this way. I just need to be alone right now.

From: Kurt
You don't have to do anything alone, Blaine. I'm here.

From: Blaine
This thing between me and the Crew...it's not about you. I have to figure this out on my own.

From: Kurt
Ok.

See you tomorrow?
Blaine took Kurt's hand and led him to the courtyard Friday. Kurt wished he could smile at the gesture, but his heart was racing with nerves.

"I will absolutely come if you want me to, but I'm telling you Blaine, if I do it's going to make things worse," Kurt repeated for the third time.

"I don't care," Blaine said resolutely. His eyes were steel, prepared for a fight.

What he wasn't prepared for was outright war.

The scene was clearly tense already before he'd arrived. Puck and Quinn stood at the table, backs to the door. Jake sat on the end of the bench next to Quinn. Jeff sat angrily across from him, a look of disbelief crossing his face whenever he glanced at his girlfriend. Brittany was on the corner bench crying, Nick holding her tightly in his arms. Santana stood between her and the table, as if standing guard against the battle reaching her sweet, innocent girl.

Quinn and Puck turned as Blaine and Kurt entered the courtyard. "And there's our answer," Quinn snapped as her eyes fell on the boys' clasped hands.

"You don't have to do this," Jeff pleaded to his girlfriend, almost in tears.

"And you don't have to stay," she retorted, ignoring the look of devastation in his eyes.

Blaine and Kurt came around to the far side of the table next to Jeff. Blaine ignored the blatant tension and sat down casually next to his friend as if he had no cares in the world. He pulled out his lunch. Kurt remained on the defensive, standing behind Blaine. He wasn't hungry anyway even if he thought the others would eat as well.

Quinn took out an iPad from her bag and held it up across from Blaine, resting the bottom edge on the table. "What's that?" Blaine asked as if he couldn't care less. Inside though his heart was pounding and sweat began to dampen his hands.

"You want to be out and proud with your dweeb of a boyfriend?" Quinn snarled. "We just thought we'd help you out a bit."

Blaine swallowed his sandwich which dropped into his stomach like a log. Quinn turned the tablet on and played the video she had queued. As he saw the scene of himself and Kurt beneath the bleachers the other day unfold before him, his eyes widened and his face blanched. His resolve turned to fear. The image was a bit shaky and distant but, unfortunately, it was clear as day.

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Kurt ducked his head, but Blaine wouldn't let him hide, lifting his chin to look deeply into Kurt's eyes. With his hand under Kurt's chin, he gently brushed Kurt's lips with his thumb, then leaned in and gave him a soft kiss. It gave way quickly though to more, the ever present flame that refused to go out exploding once again as Blaine crashed his lips against Kurt's.

Blaine sat trembling as he watched himself trace his hands down Kurt's back, over his hips and lower, teasing Kurt's ass over his jeans, just for a moment. He remembered Kurt shuddering against him with arousal, feeling Kurt grow hard against him. Emotions flooded him as the wonder of that moment mixed with the horror of this one but he couldn't separate one from the other.

Kurt stood frozen behind Blaine, his face growing bright red in embarrassment and his stomach
growing sick with the sense of violation as he watched. He remembered how his jeans had
tightened, growing hard between Blaine's practiced fingers behind him and Blaine's own hardness
in front of him. He remembered being barely able to breathe when Blaine whispered in his ear:

"Someday, this will be mine."

Blaine squeezed his eyes shut against the rest of the scene, where he and Kurt had chuckled shyly
to one another, pulled away gently and clasped hands to head to the parking lot. He chuckled now,
nervous energy and disbelief flying through him as he shook his head. "What is it you want?" he
asked, not even looking in their direction.

"You end things with Kurt," Quinn declared dramatically. "Or this gets posted on Facebook,
Youtube, and Twitter. Everyone at Shaker Hills, everyone at McKinley High School, everyone at
Westerville High, they'll all see it."

Before Blaine could say anything, Kurt dared them. "Go ahead, Fabray, who cares? I'm not scared
of you or of that," he said pointing to the iPad that she was slipping back into her bag

"You may not be but Blaine is scared as hell of it," Quinn said smugly. "Aren't you Blaine?"

Blaine finally raised his eyes to stare at her. He'd only ever been so angry once before in his life.
That time he couldn't stand up to his bullies. This time, he could. "No," he said, his voice strained,
but he cleared his throat of the fear and let his fury fuel him. "I don't fucking care if every kid in
Ohio sees it. It's not a crime to fuck a guy under the bleachers," he seethed.

"Some people think that it is," Puck said grimly. He took a small piece of paper out of his jacket
pocket and unfolded it. He placed it on the table firmly and slid it over to Blaine. What was written
on it made his blood run cold.

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Blaine stared up at a face he didn't even recognize anymore. "Where did you get that?" His voice
was only a little above a whisper, but it was full of betrayal. The courtyard was so silent they could
hear a pin drop.

Puck shook his head. "It doesn't matter," he responded evenly.

"You wouldn't," Blaine said weakly. He couldn't. Puck knew. He knew what would happen if his
father saw this video.

Puck's coldness broke for a moment. "Don't make me," he answered softly. "Say goodbye to Kurt
and this video never sees the light of day." Puck's eyes were almost pleading. "You have to choose
Blaine. You can't have us both."

"That's bullshit," Kurt yelled, and seconds before Kurt grabbed his hand Blaine remembered he
was there. Kurt jerked him off the bench to standing and forced Blaine to look him in the eye,
refusing to let him go. "It's bullshit Blaine, and you know it. So what if your parents see it? So what
if the whole world sees it Blaine, it doesn't matter!"

Blaine started to cry, staring into eyes that he knew right then that he loved but couldn't have. Kurt
had no idea just how much it mattered. If his parents saw them he would be taken from Kurt
anyway. He would be taken from Cooper. He would be sent far away from everyone who
mattered. "I'm sorry, Kurt," he said breaking free of Kurt's grasp, looking away in shame. "I can't."

"Please, Blaine," Kurt begged, tears streaming down his face. "Please, don't do this. You don't need
to be one of them Blaine. Leave them and we can just be us. Please!"

Blaine turned to Kurt, heartbroken and eyes defeated. Every fiber of his being just wanted to reach out but his fear was immobilizing. "I'm sorry," he choked, his own tears falling. "I can't do it. I'm just not brave like you."

Blaine looked away and Kurt's tears froze. He nodded with resigned understanding. He steeled himself and pointedly looked every single person in the courtyard in the eye before walking toward the door. He went to leave, but with firm resolve he turned around once more to face Blaine. "If you ever cared about me, then meet me in the auditorium at 3 o'clock. Just one last time." Blaine made no acknowledgement, but Kurt was certain that he heard.

Kurt paced backstage before his audition a few minutes before 3. Harmony grabbed him by the shoulders and turned him roughly to her. "You have to stop worrying about Blaine," she instructed him, trying to pull his focus. "This is about the school show, it's not about him."

"And if it's meant to be then he'll come, right?" Marley added wishfully.

"Yeah," Kurt breathed, relaxing a little bit. "You're both right." He sighed, shaking his hands and bouncing on his toes to loosen up even more. When his back was turned though, the girls glanced at one another and pursed their lips in worry.

Blaine paced the empty choir room across the hall from the theater trying to decide what to do. He went there sometimes to play the piano when no one was around. Nick knew but as far as he was aware the others didn't and no one showed up to try to find them. He'd avoided everyone the rest of the day and now he just hoped they'd all left early as usual and were long gone from the building. He wanted to see Kurt. He needed to see him, one last time before he put an end to it all.

He took a deep breath and walked out to the upper side door of the auditorium, where he could slip inside unheard. He closed the door shut quietly behind him then slipped around the curtain halfway up the audience stairs. Kurt walked out on stage just at that moment and Blaine's breathe hitched. Kurt was breathtakingly beautiful. Kurt introduced himself to the auditioners, gave a nod to the accompanist, then centered himself. As the music started he looked up and scanned the audience. His eyes fell on Blaine and rested there.

\[
\text{Wake up, wake up, the sun cannot wait for long.}
\text{Reach out, reach out before it fades away.}
\text{You will find the warmth when you surrender.}
\text{Smile into the fear and let it play.}
\]

He sung the words straight to Blaine, meaning every single one of them even more than he had when he'd planned this song a week ago. He desperately wanted Blaine, but he wouldn't wait forever. He'd done that before and it had been the worst mistake of Kurt's life. But if Blaine surrendered to his feelings, and faced his fears, Kurt could love him. Kurt would love him.

\[
\text{You wanna run away, run away and you say that it can't be so.}
\text{You wanna look away, look away but you stay cause' it's all so close.}
\text{When you stand up and hold out your hand.}
\text{In the face of what I don't understand.}
\text{My reason to be brave.}
\]
Blaine listened to the song and as if pulled by the lyrics he forced his eyes from Kurt's. He wanted so desperately to make this work but he honestly had no idea how. In the name of protection he'd built himself into a prison from which he could not escape. Whether it was Puck or Kyle or Chandler or his parents, someone would tear him and Kurt apart and that would hurt even more than walking away. Still, he had no doubt he was falling in love with Kurt. Running away from him would break his heart, but he felt he had no choice. If he couldn't be with Kurt on his terms, he would at least end it that way.

Hold on, hold on, so strong, time just carries on.
And all that you thought was wrong is pure again.
You can't hide forever from the thunder.
Look into the storm and feel the rain.

Kurt watched as Blaine closed his eyes against his pleas, looking away from the truth he knew Kurt sang. Kurt didn't know what Blaine was running from or why. He didn't know what he was so afraid to face that he had to put up a wall to prevent himself from getting out as much as he feared letting others in. Kurt poured all his wants and his needs and his hopes for what he and Blaine could be into the music. He poured in his strength, begging Blaine to stop hiding and to start fighting, not just the kids at school and the Crew, but whatever it was that was so much bigger than them all.

You wanna run away, run away and you say that it can't be so.
You wanna look away, look away but you stay cause' it's all so close.
When you stand up and hold out your hand.
In the face of what I don't understand.
My reason to be brave.

Kurt knew that there wasn't anything special about him that made him brave. His only reason to be brave in the face of everything Shaker Hills could throw at him was because of Blaine. Because in a moment when Blaine could have run or hidden or denied Kurt, he instead embraced him. He announced their friendship, with pride, and then held out his hand to Kurt and shared with him one of his most intimate secrets. It was in those moments that Kurt knew that he could be as brave as Blaine had been. He didn't understand yet what haunted Blaine. But he knew that as long as Blaine let him, he'd do whatever it took, until Blaine offered him that gift too.

Go on, go on…

Blaine turned his gaze back to Kurt, his beautiful voice luring him in. And he wanted to go, desperate to race to the stage and take him in his arms and kiss him and say that yes, he would be brave with Kurt. He would fight them all, face it all, just to be with him. He wanted to be able to say that Kurt was reason enough for him to be brave. But as his face grew wet with the tears that fell, he knew he couldn't. He could touch and taste and feel everything that they could possibly be for one another except that it just could not be. Not in the world that they lived in.

You wanna run away, run away and you say that it can't be so.
You wanna look away, look away but you stay cause' it's all so close.
When you stand up and hold out your hand.
In the face of what I don't understand.
My reason to be brave.
Blaine turned around and raced out of the auditorium to find Puck and Kyle framing the front doors of the school in front of him. He hated them both and everything that they stood for and he just wanted to get away from everyone and everything at Shaker Hills. He ran out the door and back home, hopping on his motorcycle and speeding to the shop. He knew what he had to do.

Kurt watched Blaine leave, his heart breaking as those left in the house applauded Kurt's performance. He quickly thanked them and raced off the stage. He fell into Marley's arms and sobbed as Harmony gently rubbed his back, trying without hope to soothe him.

Chandler got up from his seat in the auditorium and made his way with a smug smile out the back doors. Puck was just heading out of the building following Blaine but Kyle remained. Chandler squared his shoulders and walked over to the guy who had spent far too much time bullying Kurt and himself. He had a proposition to make and he was pretty certain he wouldn't be getting no for an answer.

Chapter End Notes

Kurt's song was Brave by Josh Groban
Running Away

Instead of heading straight to the shop, Blaine took a detour and pulled into the hospital. His head was pounding from fighting back the tears while his mind raced between losing Kurt and losing everything else. He stormed into the building and swiftly made his way to the surgical suite. It took only a minute to find his brother and when he did he didn't give a surprised Cooper anytime to talk.

"Blaine what are you-"

"I'm quitting my job," Blaine blurted. He wasn't looking for advice, or permission, or for someone to talk him out of it. He merely thought it would be responsible of him to inform Cooper before he did it so Cooper didn't flip his lid.

Apparently his forethought didn't matter though. "Like hell you are," Cooper hissed, grabbing Blaine's arm and dragging him to an empty waiting room. "What happened? Did you and Kurt have a fight?" he asked with concern.

Blaine though glared at Cooper and pulled away harshly. "It's honestly none of your fucking business what happens between me and Kurt," Blaine snapped and turned to the door. But Cooper grabbed him and whirled him back around, his face tight as he clearly tried to keep his temper.

"You listen to me little brother," Cooper admonished, speaking under his breath so no one overheard. "Everything you do is my business because I love you and because you're my responsibility. And I am not going to allow you to quit a job because of something that happened with a guy you like who just happens to be the bosses' son and your coworker. That's not the way the Andersons take care of business. We keep our commitments and we stand by our obligations-"

Blaine scoffed loudly and rolled his eyes. "You tell that to Mom and Dad," he sneered.

"And that is precisely why you and I are different," Cooper answered firmly. "You made a commitment to Mr. Hummel when you took the job Blaine, so no. You are not quitting no matter what may or may not have happened with Kurt."

Blaine stared at him, wanting to tell him to go fuck himself while at the same time wanting to fall into his arms and tell him everything. But he wouldn't. He could handle this on his own. He didn't need his older brother going after Puck and Quinn or god forbid trying to be an adult and talk to his friends' parents. Telling Cooper would only make everything worse. Just like staying at the shop would. The wheels turned in his head. If he couldn't quit, there was only one thing left he could do.

"Fine," he said harshly, backing away a few steps. He threw up his arms. "You win." He backed out the door then nearly ran through the hospital back out onto the street.

"You're late," Burt said flatly as Blaine walked into the front office and took his place behind the cash register.

"Sorry," Blaine mumbled, not even looking at the man.

Burt raised a brow but decided against confronting Blaine when he was in this kind of mood. He suspected it would only make things worse. "Kurt won't be in today, he has his audition for the school cabaret."

Blaine closed his eyes without thought and nodded. "Yeah I know," he said. The image of Kurt
singing to him up on that stage flooded back to him. He pushed it away. "He asked me to stay and watch."

"Oh, how did it go?" Burt asked him with a smile that quickly faded at the emptiness in Blaine's eye when he looked up at Burt.

"He was amazing," Blaine choked, before he pushed past Burt and headed out to the pumps.

Burt watched him, confused, wanting desperately to know what the hell was going on. But instead he let the boy be. He fought back an incredible urge to call Kurt, realizing that would also not be the best move. Whatever had happened between them, they needed to figure it out on their own if they were going to have any hope of this thing between them working. He turned with the sigh of a father letting go and returned to his office.

Blaine sucked in the cool fresh air the moment he crossed the threshold, falling back against the brick of the gas station wall as he tried to prevent himself from hyperventilating. He stared into the sun, allowing the tears to pool and fall until a car drove into the station. He quickly wiped the wetness from his face and ducked back inside, praying that they didn't help. He couldn't deal with people today. He couldn't deal with anyone or anything, least of all being here with Kurt's father, dreading tomorrow when he and Kurt would be together again. School he could handle. He'd spent a year not paying any attention to the smart-mouthed dweeb, he could do it again. But here, it was impossible. Blaine shut his eyes and took a breath, knowing exactly what he had to do.

Four hours later he clocked out. He straddled his bike and put on his helmet. He zipped up his leather coat, the six mini bottles of tequila and the three packets of cigarettes he'd stolen tucked safely inside. Burt would do inventory tonight. And by tomorrow morning, he'd be fired.

Blaine waited all morning for the axe to fall. He'd hoped that Burt would call him into the office first thing, scream at him and send him on his way. But no. He'd been trapped in the front office avoiding Kurt's pained gazes through the glass for three hours, and now it was nearing on lunch. There'd be no way to completely avoid him then.

At noon Blaine rushed into the employee room and grabbed his sandwich from his locker, trying to get out before Kurt came in. But when he turned around he nearly ran directly into exactly who he was trying to avoid.

"Sorry," Blaine mumbled, dodging Kurt's gaze as he sidestepped him.

"Hey," Kurt said softly, placing just a finger on Blaine's hand to stop him, but Blaine pulled away like it had burned him. Kurt swallowed hard and tried again. "I'm going to get some coffee from next door. Would you like one?"

Blaine looked up at him. He wished Kurt would just stop trying so hard. He wished his hopeful blue eyes weren't so beautiful. He wished his heart would stop fluttering at the very sight of the boy he loved. "No thank you Kurt," he whispered with regret that went way beyond the coffee. Kurt lowered his eyes in defeat and Blaine scurried away back to the register. He'd eat by himself in there.

It was an hour before closing time when Burt finally approached him, Kurt a few steps behind. "Blaine I'd like to see you in my office," he said as sternly as Blaine had ever heard him. The tone surprised Kurt, who was quite familiar with what it meant, and he looked up in confusion, his eyes questioning Blaine. Blaine though looked away and simply followed Mr. Hummel out the door as if he'd been expecting the call all day. Burt knew for certain that he had been.
"Have a seat," Burt ordered once they were inside and closed the door behind them. He walked to his chair and sat down. Blaine hung back by the door.

"I think I'll just stand," Blaine said, ready to bolt as soon as the words were spoken.

"I don't remember giving that as an option," Burt said firmly with an eyebrow raised. Blaine stared at him for a moment, waiting to see if the man would give in, but finally, with a sigh, Blaine took a seat across from him.

Burt relaxed into his chair and absentmindedly took a pen in his hand twirling it between his fingers. "Do you remember what I told you the first day you came in here?"

Blaine pursed his lips but said nothing. He didn't want to talk. He didn't want a lecture. He didn't want this bullshit of Burt trying to understand him and help him and make him change his ways. He just wanted Burt to fire him so he could get the fuck out of here and away from Kurt before he lost his mind.

"Okay," Burt conceded, turning to the ledger on his desk and starting to make some notes. "I've got a lot of work here, so I'm happy to just let you think about it for a while. Off the books of course. You're a smart kid, I'm sure it will come back to you soon."

Blaine gave a quick snarl which Burt either didn't see or happily ignored and Blaine sat restless in his chair. Of course he remembered exactly what Burt was talking about but this was not in any way part of his game plan. He glanced out the window, his gaze falling on Kurt as he helped a customer behind the counter. Part of him just wanted to sit here all day watching him, which is exactly why he needed to get out. He just needed to get away from Kurt, to forget about him so his chest would stop aching and his heart would stop breaking. His anger flared and he gripped the chair until his knuckles were white, furious that Cooper hadn't let him quit, and that Burt was just sitting there quietly instead of yelling or throwing him out, and that Puck and Quinn had put him in this position to have to choose between loneliness and being alone, and that Kurt could look so damn gorgeous just smiling at a little old man, and that his parents didn't love him or want him enough to embrace his happiness instead of always trying to destroy it in the first place. "You said that honesty would get me everywhere with you!" Blaine finally yelled, unable to control himself any longer.

Burt went on as if he hadn't just waited five minutes for Blaine to speak. "You know that Kurt..." Burt let the name fall heavy in the air, because he was what this was truly about after all. "...does all the inventory in both the store and the shop, except for two areas." Blaine scowled while Burt continued. "I decided long ago to do the alcohol and cigarettes myself because I didn't trust the regular employees and I wanted to know if my kid was gettin' into those things. I didn't want him to be able to get it past me."

"So?" Blaine raised a brow, challenging him.

"So Kurt didn't work yesterday," Burt reminded him pointedly. "And you did."

Blaine nearly laughed in relief. Finally it was out there and he could get the fuck out of here. Blaine shrugged, ready to bolt. "So I guess you caught me," he said easily, starting to get up. "I'll just get my things and get out."

Blaine crossed his arms across his chest, scowling again. "What?" he grumbled.

"I've been watching you and Kurt all day," Burt told him. "You two go from not being able to take your hands off each other one day to not even being able to look at each other the next. I don't know what happened, but whatever it is I'm not going to let you run away from it at the expense of my business. You have a responsibility to me and unless you quit, I'm not letting you out of it."

"Well what the fuck do I have to do to get out of here then because Cooper won't let me quit!" Blaine spat angrily, a hint of desperation slipping through. All he wanted was an out. A way to leave this job and never look back. He didn't even care that Cooper would no doubt punish him for stealing. It wasn't like he had anyone he really wanted to see anymore anyway. Hell, maybe he'd get a volunteer position at the hospital. At least he'd get to spend more time with his brother then.

Burt watched him for a minute and Blaine shifted his eyes angrily under the scrutiny. "I'll dock your paycheck for what you stole. Do you still have it or is it gone?"

Blaine reached into his pocket and took out one packet of unopened cigarettes and tossed it on the desk. "The rest is gone," he said.

Burt sighed. Blaine didn't say he drank it but he had to imagine that he had. He knew Cooper wasn't around as much as Blaine needed him to be. He may not know what was going on between Kurt and Blaine but he'd heard Kurt crying in his room half the night and mumbling into the phone with his girlfriends the other half. "You know, I know I'm not your father or your brother, but if you ever need to talk Blaine, about Kurt or anything else-"

"Yeah whatever," Blaine muttered flippantly getting up. "Are we all done here? Because it's pretty much closing time and I've got places to go, people to see…"

"You're not going to get me to fire you Blaine, so you can quit trying. For better or for worse for all of us, you're not just one of my other employees," Burt told him. "No matter what I wouldn't fire my own son and I'm not going to fire you."

"You'll change your mind, everyone does," Blaine spat, fighting back the feelings that were welling up inside him. No one gave this man the right to claim him as different, as special. He was none of those things. He was just a worthless, good for nothing, screw up who clearly didn't deserve to love anyone or have anyone love him. "I'm not your kid, and I'm not Kurt's boyfriend, or Kurt's anything, so don't think you have to keep me around for him."

"Don't think I don't know what you're doing. It's easier to run away and to not have to face whatever your demons are, but you shouldn't." Burt came around the desk and stood in front of Blaine, forcing their eyes to meet even though Blaine wanted nothing but to look away. "Don't run from love Blaine. Give it a chance. It may not be easy. Hell it may be the hardest thing you ever do in this world. But if it's love, it's worth it. Trust an old man on this one."

"And how would you know?" Blaine mumbled.

"Because I lost my first love and it took forever to find another. Plus I may be an old man now, but I used to be a hotheaded kid just like you." Burt smirked and patted him on the shoulder. Then, with a hand on his back, he guided Blaine out the door back to the front and to Kurt. "Kurt, Blaine here is gonna give you a ride home," he said cheerfully. Blaine's eyes snapped incredulously to Burt but the man ignored him. Kurt frowned, his heart beat with nerves and excitement. "I have some extra work to do but no reason for you two to stick around. Drive safe Blaine and I expect to see you here on Monday," he added before walking away.
Blaine furiously watched Burt go, his pulse racing at the thought of Kurt's arms wrapped around him on the bike. His gaze shifted to Kurt who watched him questioningly. "I'll meet you outside," he said, his voice clipped, and he stormed out to grab his things.

Kurt slid off Blaine's bike, reluctantly taking off the helmet and handing it to Blaine. They hadn't said a word to one another since leaving the shop. Their eyes met for only a moment before Blaine turned away and strapped the helmet down, ready to ride out of the driveway.

"Blaine, wait," Kurt said, grabbing Blaine's arm. "Come inside for a minute."

Blaine kept his gaze on the ground, refusing to allow himself to get lost in Kurt's stormy eyes. "I should head home," he said quietly.

Kurt knew he should let him go, but he couldn't. He stepped closer to Blaine and cautiously placed his hands on Blaine's helmet. When Blaine didn't pull away, Kurt took the helmet off and set it down. He forced Blaine's arms apart, placing his hands on Blaine's chest, and curled his fingers around Blaine's jacket collar. Blaine closed his eyes, willing himself to resist, but with Kurt so close to him, he had no choice but to rest his hands on Kurt's waist. He inhaled deeply as Kurt rested his forehead against his. Tears swelled behind his eyes.

"Please," Kurt said in a broken whisper. "Please come inside with me."

"Why?" Blaine asked, fighting against every instinct to just fall into Kurt's arms.

Kurt took a deep breath before answering. "I want…I'm tired of hiding from the thunder," he whispered, quoting his own song. "It's time to feel the rain. I want to tell you my story."

Blaine looked up at Kurt, whose blue eyes were as filled with unshed tears as his own. "Why now?" he pressed, his tone soft and full of wonder.

"Because I'm trusting you," Kurt said as a tear streamed down his cheek. "Because you came to the theater and you listened to me sing even though I know in your heart you were terrified."

"But I just ran," Blaine protested. "And then I tried to run again. I would have if your father had let me." He didn't understand. After everything he'd put Kurt through, after all the disappointment and anger, Kurt was still trying, still fighting. The fact that Kurt was trusting him when he'd already caused so much pain was something he couldn't fathom. "Why?" Blaine asked, his voice breaking. "Why are you still fighting?"

Kurt leaned forward, just barely brushing his lips against Blaine's. "Because I believe in you," he whispered. "Because you're worth fighting for."

Blaine shook his head fervently, unable to accept Kurt's words. "No. I'm not…you shouldn't…"

Kurt cupped Blaine's face, stilling his movements and looking deeply into his eyes. "You are and I am," he insisted. "And there's nothing you can say or do that will change that. I'm not letting you go. Not like this." Blaine closed his eyes as a hundred different reasons why this couldn't happen ran through his mind. Kurt threaded his fingers through Blaine's curls, kissing him gently, and every reason fled from his thoughts. "Come inside with me, Blaine. Please."

Blaine breathed deeply and conceded. "Ok," he said, sliding off his bike and allowing Kurt to take him inside.
Kurt closed his bedroom door behind him, his nerves making his hands nearly shake as he slowly crossed the room toward his bed. Blaine hung back with his hands balled up in the pockets of his leather jacket, leaning against the wall, his eyes downcast. Kurt sat gingerly on the edge of his bed, hands folded on his lap to steady them. Despite all Blaine had done, no matter what he would do, he needed Blaine to know what had brought him to Shaker Hills. Because if Blaine made him brave than maybe, just maybe, he could make Blaine brave too.

"I've always been bullied," Kurt started, staring at his hands. "I've always been really proud of who I am and I've always been vocal about my opinions so there was never really a point in my life where I wasn't pissing someone off, ya know?" He looked up to find Blaine watching him and he smiled softly. "You can even ask Britt. When we were in Kindergarten, she was the one that got me to stop talking back to the older boys who picked on me. She was the only one who was able to keep me level headed." Blaine offered a small smile at that. Brittany had always been the one member of the Crew who could calm him and keep him from making some of his stupider mistakes. "But once Britt moved away, I didn't have anyone by my side. For a long time the only friends I had were my mom and dad. And then my mom passed away so it was just me and Dad."

"I'm sorry," Blaine whispered. He wanted to go to him, to hold him and kiss away all the pain that Kurt had suffered so long before they had known each other. But he didn't. Instead he stayed firmly in place, and kept listening.

"Things got better once Dad and Carole met," Kurt continued. "Finn almost instantly took me under his wing. Even before our parents started dating when I was 13, Finn treated me like a little brother and tried protecting me from the bullies. But since he was two years older, there were things, people, he couldn't protect me from." Kurt took a deep breath. Shame had kept him from ever sharing the whole story with anyone before. The friends he had now, even his Dad, all knew different parts of what had happened. But this would be the first time he told one person everything. He felt extremely vulnerable, telling the whole truth, but it felt right for Blaine to know. He took a steadying breath. "One of those people was a boy named David Karofsky. Dave hated me. He transferred to my school in the fifth grade and from the moment we met he had it in for me."

Kurt shifted back into the corner of the bed, unconsciously grabbing a pillow to hug as if it could protect him from the difficult memories. He wished it was Blaine he was holding instead, but Blaine was listening and that was all that mattered. "Dave was a lot like Kyle but McKinley was different than Shaker Hills. No one was gay, or if they were they kept themselves deep in the closet because coming out, being out, was nearly a death sentence. Dave was the ringleader for most of the bullying. He'd beat the crap out of me and call me awful names but I never backed down. I'd always get in his face which of course only pissed him off more," Kurt scoffed, remembering. "When we were in ninth grade, things changed. I was so tired of him pushing me around and one day I just snapped. I cornered him in the locker room and I called him out on all his bullshit and I said some really mean things to him and he just...he kissed me."

Blaine looked over at Kurt with confusion and disgust. "What?"

Kurt sighed, nodding. "He kissed me. It turned out the reason he bullied me so badly was because he was gay. He was scared and confused and the easiest way for him to deal with it all was to torture the only openly gay kid he knew."

Barely thinking, Blaine shed his jacket and walked over to Kurt. He sat on the bed, all fear suddenly unimportant in the face of what Kurt was telling him. Instead he needed to be closer to him, wishing he could have somehow protected him back then as he could today. "What happened after that?" Blaine asked gently.
"I just stood there completely stunned. I remember thinking that I needed to run but I couldn't. I was in too much shock to move. He started freaking out and saying that I forced him to do it and that if I told anyone that he would beat the shit out of me. I can still to this day remember my exact words," Kurt admitted.

Blaine reached a hand out to Kurt. "Share them with me?" he asked hopefully.

Kurt's eyes fell to Blaine's hand, reaching out for him, and he placed his on top. Blaine threaded his fingers through Kurt's and squeezed tightly. Kurt sucked in a breath and closed his eyes at the rush of feelings that raced through him. Most of all, he felt safe. "I won't tell anyone. But not because you'll beat me up if I do. I won't tell because I understand what it's like to be afraid and confused. I will never out you Dave, I'm not that cruel."

Blaine looked at Kurt, amazement and pride shining in his eyes as Kurt opened his eyes and continued. "I expected him to deny it, to say that he wasn't gay and insist that I was at fault. But instead he started crying. He just fell to his knees right in front of me and started sobbing. It was the first time I'd ever seen the human side of him. It was also the first day of our friendship."

"Wait, you became friends with your bully? Just because he was gay?" Blaine questioned. He tried to imagine ever becoming friends with Kyle but there was no fucking way he'd ever give that bastard the time of day unless it was to beat the shit out of him.

Kurt shrugged. "Dad always says I'm too compassionate for my own good. I get it from my mom."

Blaine shook his head and moved up to Kurt's side, resting their intertwined arms over Kurt's knee. Blaine traced small circles into the soft skin on Kurt's hand. Kurt tentatively laid his head on Blaine's shoulder, letting him pull away if he wanted, but Blaine didn't move. Instead he squeezed Kurt's hand softly to let him know it was okay.

"So, then what happened?" Blaine asked cautiously. "After you two became friends."

Kurt lifted his head and took a deep breath, staring anywhere but Blaine's eyes. "Well, we uh…he promised to stop bullying me and I promised not to tell, and we became friends except…" Kurt trailed off, chewing his lip nervously.

Blaine waited for Kurt to finish, but he felt the tension rise and Kurt kept silent. "Except?" Blaine gently prodded him, searching out Kurt's gaze until Kurt finally looked at Blaine with scared, sad eyes.

"Except he said that no one could know about it," Kurt said quietly, his eyes locked with Blaine's. "We kept our friendship a secret from everyone, including his parents. The only ones who knew were Dad, Carole, and Finn."

Realization hit Blaine like freight train. He looked away from Kurt, shame and regret filling him. "And I made you do the same thing. You see Kurt, this is why we can't do this!" Blaine tried to move away but Kurt placed his hands on Blaine's cheeks, forcing him to look back up.

"Listen to me Blaine Anderson! You are nothing like him," Kurt insisted, his thumb grazing Blaine's jawline. "You've done more for me and our friendship, in the past two weeks than Dave did in two years. You stood up for me when I was nothing more than your boss' son. You told the whole school we were friends and didn't care at all what they said about it. Dave never did those things. He was, and probably still is, a very scared boy. But you…you're braver and stronger then he could ever hope to be."
Blaine wanted to argue and say that he was neither brave nor strong. Whatever he'd done didn't matter at all when he was still too scared to stand up to the people still trying to keep them apart. He didn't deserve Kurt and he so desperately knew that he should get up and walk out the door and never look back.

But instead, he turned his head into Kurt's hand, closing his eyes as he lightly kissed Kurt's fingers. Kurt smiled gently, biting his lip to stop himself from leaning in to kiss him. Instead he took his hands from Blaine's face and wrapped him up in his arms. Blaine sighed, feeling safe and cared for and full of regret. But he wasn't ready to let go yet. "So what happened that made you guys move here?" Blaine whispered, guiding Kurt's head gently to rest on his chest.

Kurt could hear Blaine's heart beating fast and he gulped at how intimate things between them suddenly felt, but the last thing he wanted to do was pull away. "As time passed, we became closer. It took Dave a little while to stop harassing me at school just to save face but by the end of freshman year, he stopped all together. When any of his buddies asked him about it he would just throw me a nasty glare and say that I wasn't worth the effort." Kurt sighed and Blaine held him closer. "It didn't bother me at first. It was almost fun even, having this little secret that no one else knew. It was nice being the only person who truly knew him for who he really was while everyone else saw only a façade. It made me feel special." His face reddened at the memories. He hated that he had once felt that way and even more so that a part of him felt the same way about Blaine. "But after a while, it really hurt. He wasn't just ashamed of himself, he was ashamed of me."

"I was never ashamed of you," Blaine whispered as if sensing Kurt's thoughts. "I need you to know that."

Kurt nodded into his chest, snuggling closer. "I know," he assured Blaine. "Dave and I argued about it so many times over the years but nothing ever changed. No matter how hard I tried, in school I was Kurt Hummel the fag and he was Karofsky, the ladies man football star, and that was that," Kurt said thickly as the memories rushed back. "But at my house, we were just Kurt and Dave, two best friends hanging out. I don't know why but I let myself trust him with everything. I had a few other friends but I didn't let any of them know me as well as Dave. I wouldn't share my secrets with them the way I had with him. I didn't talk about my hopes and dreams with them like I did with Dave. In a lot of ways, he was the only person who knew the real me."

"But…I don't understand why Kurt," Blaine asked, raising Kurt's chin with a finger. "Why would you trust him like that when all he did was hurt you?"

Kurt sat up a bit and shrugged. "When it was just him and me, he was so different. He was kind and protective and he apologized a lot for the way he acted in school. He was always doing things to make it up to me, buying me things or making me little gifts. That's how…" he swallowed hard and looked away from Blaine, his heart beating a little faster in his chest. "That's how things changed between us the beginning of sophomore year. We…we started experimenting with each other."


"It was after a particularly bad day at school and I was crying. He said he wanted to make it up to me, to make me feel good. I knew what he meant and he was my best friend, Blaine. I trusted him and it wasn't like I had any other prospects," Kurt said, defensively trying to explain. He took a deep breath and continued. "It started out slow. We just kissed for a while and it was kind of nice.
As time went on, we started touching more. Neither one of us could really talk to anyone about it so we'd look stuff up together and try out some of the things we were both okay with."

"How far did you guys go?" Blaine asked, dreading the answer. He didn't know why, he'd never cared before with any other guy, but imagining someone else's hands on Kurt, especially someone who had been so cruel, was making his blood boil.

Kurt could sense it and he quickly reassured Blaine. "Honestly, not that far," Kurt said truthfully. "He always wanted to do more than I did and one time I agreed. That's when I started to realize that he was really falling for me…and that it wasn't mutual. When we'd make out and…you know…" his face reddened, "I mean it felt good but it didn't feel right. I thought it would be good experience for me, maybe the only experience I'd ever have until college. But how could I really want to be with him when he wasn't even brave enough to tell people that we were friends? How could he expect me to want to be his boyfriend, ya know?"

"Would it be wrong for me to say that I'm glad things didn't go too far with him?" Blaine asked cautiously, knowing already that it was.

Kurt smiled, content but sad at the same time, and shook his head. "Not wrong at all," he promised. "But hold that thought. As sophomore year progressed, Dave got more intense about me. Things got to the point where I would make up excuses not to hang out with him because all he wanted to do was fool around and I really didn't want to anymore. About a month before school let out for the summer, my Dad got the call that my uncle wasn't doing well and he offered Dad the shop. Dad really didn't want to take me out of school, I never told him how bad things were for me there, but he was considering it enough that I needed someone to talk to about it. So I told Dave. But he didn't take it well," Kurt said as he wiped a few stray tears away.

At the sight of Kurt's tears Blaine grew tense and uneasy and he pulled them closer together. He softly caressed Kurt's back, comforting himself as much as was Kurt, who continued. "Dave and I got into this huge fight about it. He kept accusing me of abandoning him and using him and he even threw my lamp across the room. Dad had always been polite but he always had a bad feeling about Dave so he had no trouble kicking him out. I got mad and started defending him, telling my Dad that Dave was my best friend and he couldn't just kick him out. Dad told me I couldn't see him again. That night I went to bed hating them both."

"Why do I get the feeling like that's not the worst part?" Blaine asked cautiously, his heart racing.

"Because it's not," Kurt said, shaking his head. "The next morning my Dad told me he'd made a final decision and we were moving. I planned on telling Dave but I didn't even have to. That week at school, he tormented me. It was like middle school all over again but worse because he was bigger and stronger. I was so mad at him but I felt so guilty at the same time. If we didn't have to move then he never would've freaked out like that. He needed me and I was leaving him to fend for himself. I felt terrible. That's why I let him come over the week before school let out," he shared with a shaky breath. "I knew I shouldn't have. I knew my Dad would kill me if he found out. But he brought me flowers and he told me he just wanted to apologize for how awful he'd been treating me, so I let him in."

Blaine shifted on the bed, nearly lying down on top of Kurt's pillows and Kurt curled in next to him, resting his head on Blaine's chest, and a leg over Blaine's leg. Blaine held him close, brushing his lips against Kurt's hair, wanting to kiss away his pain but knowing he couldn't for so many reasons. Kurt absentmindedly ran his fingers up and down Blaine's chest as he finished his story.

"We talked for a little while and he cried more than I had ever seen before. I felt so bad for leaving but what choice did I have? We…we were sitting on my bed and I was holding him as he kept
muttering how sorry he was and how much he'd miss me and then…then his lips were on my neck, and his hand was grabbing my ass and the next thing I knew, he had me pinned down on the bed."

Kurt cried in Blaine's arms as he relived the memories for the first time in years, saying the words for the first time ever. Blaine held him close, hating Dave for everything he'd put Kurt through. "He was so strong and I was so scared. He kept saying that we were supposed to be together and if I just gave in one time I'd know he was right. I didn't want it and I tried to push him off but he just kept getting rougher. I screamed out even though no one was home and seconds later Finn was throwing him across the room. They fought for a minute until Dad came in and Dave ran off. That was the last time I ever saw him."

Blaine's heart broke, knowing how his sweet and beautiful Kurt had been so hurt by someone so callous. But his own guilt overwhelmed him, knowing how similar he and Dave were. He hadn't tormented Kurt or taken advantage of him. But he'd stood by and watched as others had. He'd played games with their friendship and with their feelings for one another and he made it all worse by not even explaining to Kurt why.

"I'm so sorry, Kurt," Blaine said, his voice heavy with guilt and shame. His eyes welled with tears. "I want so much to be different than him. You deserve so much better…"

Kurt pulled back abruptly, staring at Blaine in disbelief. "What? No, Blaine, you're nothing like him."

"God Kurt, I'm everything like him," Blaine insisted as the tears started to fall. "I may not have bullied you or forced myself on you, but I've asked you to hide, I've asked you to keep secrets. I've wanted you, desperately, but I've refused to let you in because everything about doing that terrifies me."

"Blaine, sweetheart, I didn't tell you all this so you could compare yourself to Dave or because I believe you're like him. I told you because…because I'm falling in love you," Kurt admitted softly. "I'm falling in love with you and I needed you to understand why it's so hard for me to let people in."

Blaine froze at Kurt's words. They couldn't be true. Kurt was amazing and beautiful and funny and perfect and Blaine was nothing but a complete screw up. "You…you love me?" he breathed, tears filling his eyes again.

Kurt leaned forward, his lips brushing against Blaine's. "I love you," he whispered, his fingers gripping Blaine's shirt as if he feared Blaine running away. "I loved you the minute you stood up for me, not once but twice. I loved you when you told the whole school that we were friends. I loved you when you kissed me under the bleachers and when your fingers made me shudder. I loved you when you told Quinn 'no' and I loved you when I saw you across the auditorium. But I realized just how much I loved you the moment you turned around and left-"

Kurt couldn't finish his thought though because Blaine leaned up and crashed their lips together, pulling him so close that Kurt was practically lying on top of him. Kurt loved him. Somehow, through all the bullshit in his life, he found someone that actually loved him. Blaine was terrified and exhilarated all at once. A voice in the back of his head tried to warn him that it was all just a trap and that Kurt would turn his back on him like everyone else. But he willed the echoes of the past and all those doubts and fears away. As Kurt's tongue swiped across his lips, a breathy moan escaping Kurt's mouth, nothing else in the world mattered but them.

Blaine flipped Kurt on his back, his pupils growing dark with need. Kurt gasped in surprise at the sudden movement, but looking into Blaine's eyes he saw a request for permission. He nodded, small but eager in response and licked his lips. He wrapped one leg around Blaine's and pulled
Blaine closer to him, breathing in his intoxicating scent. Kurt's growing erection pressed against Blaine's thigh and stilled his movements. Kurt didn't stop though. He kept his gaze on Blaine, his hand slowly traveling down Blaine's back, and he thrust upward.

Blaine moaned desperately, closing his eyes against the fire that raced through his body. "Kurt," he hissed. Kurt smirked, his hand teasingly moving down Blaine's hips. He cupped Blaine's ass and heat shot up Blaine's spine. "Fuck," Blaine growled as he thrust his cock against Kurt's thigh and pressed their lips together once more. He'd been with many other guys before but nothing had come even close to what he felt right now.

Blaine slipped easily between Kurt's legs, gripping Kurt's thigh with one hand as he wrapped the other around the back of his neck. Kurt fisted his fingers into Blaine's curls, moaning desperately into the kiss as the feel of Blaine between his legs, against his own erection, made his entire body shudder with delight. Feeling Blaine's fingers dig into his skin, tasting his lips and knowing that nothing he had ever done and no one he would ever be with could begin to compare was almost too much for Kurt to handle. Kurt threw his head back, moaning Blaine's name so loudly that had anyone been home they'd sure be heard. Blaine brought his lips to Kurt's milky smooth skin, sucking on his neck as they moved together in a steady rhythm.

Kurt moaned with every thrust, the feel of Blaine's lips against his skin making him shiver. "If you leave a hickey I swear to God I'm going to kick your ass," Kurt somehow managed to threaten in between groans.

Blaine chuckled against Kurt's skin, backing away to look at his handy work. "No you won't," he teased.

"No?" Kurt questioned with a raised brow.

Blaine shook his head, licking his lips before leaning in to whisper in Kurt's ear. "No. In fact, you love that I marked you. Don't you?" he asked seductively, leaving feathery kisses down Kurt's neck. Kurt tried to hold back a whine but it slipped out anyway. He hated that Blaine was right. "Don't you?" he asked again more forcefully. Kurt's entire body screamed with desire at Blaine's demanding eyes and he nodded obediently, glaring at Blaine's roguish grin. His glare quickly turned into a look of pure bliss when Blaine thrust even harder into him and began to create another.

"God, Fuck, Blaine," Kurt moaned, his eyes closing as his thighs tensed around Blaine.

Blaine could tell that Kurt was close but he wasn't ready yet for this to be over, possibly forever. He slowed their movements, looking down at Kurt until Kurt opened his eyes and met his gaze. Blaine's eyes were suddenly swimming, with desire and fear and sadness but most of all with the most intense and desperate longing that Kurt had ever seen. It was clear that Blaine wanted nothing more than to tell him why they couldn't be together but something deep within stopped him. Blaine wasn't ready and Kurt didn't need him to be. Blaine didn't need to tell Kurt how he felt. He didn't need to open up yet. Kurt knew that whatever haunted Blaine tortured him so terribly that it made it nearly impossible for Blaine to let anyone get close. And yet he'd let Kurt in, as much as he would anyone. And he'd tried so hard. And Kurt loved him for that.

Kurt pulled Blaine's head down to his. "You don't have to be afraid," Kurt whispered in his ear. "This won't be our last time. I love you. Just let go."

At Kurt's words, Blaine thrust hard against him, squeezing their bodies together as tightly as he could until his mind exploded only seconds before his stomach clenched and he came with a force that made his body shake. With one final thrust, Kurt threw his head back and his toes curled as he
came harder than he ever had before because this time it actually meant something and he absolutely loved the boy he was with.

Blaine's body went slack and Kurt slipped off him, but curled up beside him, his head resting on Blaine's chest, listening to his heart beat turn from frantic to relaxed. Their breathing slowed against one another and Kurt smiled. But the smile quickly faded as he felt Blaine tense again.

"I should go," Blaine said low, regret filling him as he slipped out of the bed. Tonight had been amazing, more than he ever could have dreamed, but that was all it was, a dream. The world would never let them be together. They would pull and pull and every time he and Kurt would push through they'd pull them apart again even further. He wished it could just be like this – hidden from the world, their love secret from the hate and the stupidity and the fear that would suffocate him without the walls he'd built to protect himself. But maybe the world did what it did because they were right. Maybe Kurt would only hurt him in the end. And he wasn't sure he could survive that again. "I'll be right back," he mumbled heading toward the bathroom.

Kurt watched Blaine walk towards the door as if the weight of the world was on his shoulders. "I'll be waiting," Kurt said softly and as soon as the words slipped out, he knew that he meant it in so many more ways than one.

Blaine stopped and turned around to see the love and the worry in Kurt's gaze. "Promise?" he found himself asking, his voice small and unsure.

Kurt took a deep breath and nodded. "I promise."

A brief smile flit across Blaine's face and he left the room, closing the door behind him.

Kurt sighed and wiped the tears from his eyes. He wanted to be with Blaine more than anything he'd ever wanted in his life and he hated that he couldn't have it. But the worst part was not even understanding why he couldn't have it. He tried to imagine what could be so terrible about Blaine's parents finding out about them but he couldn't. He sighed and picked Blaine's jacket up off the floor where it had landed by the bed. Blaine's cellphone fell out and Kurt picked it up and froze. He stared at it. One swipe could be all it would take to maybe figure out the mystery.

"What are you doing?" Blaine asked, seeing Kurt with his phone as he walked through the door.

Kurt's eyes snapped to his. "It fell out when I picked up your jacket." Kurt held it out to him and Blaine grabbed it and slipped it in his back pocket. "Here," Kurt said, gently holding the coat out to him.

Blaine took it and slipped it on. His eyes immediately fell to the floor. "I need to go," he said, his voice little more than a whisper. "You shouldn't, ya know. Wait for me I mean." He looked up, their eyes met, both full of sorrow. "I wish I could Kurt, with all my heart I do, but I can't do this. I can't be what you deserve."

Kurt walked over and took Blaine's hands in his. "Blaine, if you didn't want this I would walk away," Kurt told him. "But you're letting something I don't understand get in the way of us. So all I can do is leave my cards on the table and stay strong for both of us while I wait for you to play the next hand. I love you. I know sometimes that's not enough, but I hope for you someday it will be."

Blaine bit back the words on the tip of his tongue and swallowed them down. It wouldn't do any good saying them. He didn't want to give Kurt false hope. It didn't matter that Blaine loved him too, with all his heart, because his heart had been broken into too many pieces by the world around him. So instead he leaned in and kissed Kurt, so tenderly that he wondered if maybe it was just his
imagination. He pulled away and let go of Kurt's hands. "Goodbye," he whispered, before turning around and walking out for what felt like the last time.

Blaine slept fitfully Saturday night but made up for it on Sunday. He ignored the clinking of breakfast dishes and the invite to join Cooper out shopping. He stayed in his bed, shielded from the light of day by a pillow over his head and he slept. He didn't reach out to anyone, more content to wallow in his misery and the unfairness of life. When he woke he'd stay curled up under the covers crying for his loss until his exhaustion overtook him and sleep hit again. Only the sound of his phone beeping with a text message around 4pm woke him with a start, and his heart immediately started beating frantically. He grasped it in a panic, not understanding how he knew but knowing there was something terribly wrong.

To: Blaine
From: Kurt

Kyle took me to Horseshoe Lake. He beat me up. Help me pls Im so scared!
This chapter goes backward in time, starting after Kurt slams the door on the Crew in the lunch courtyard. We've seen Blaine and Kurt's journey that weekend. Now we see the Crew's.

Marimar is a Spanish soap opera Britt watches with Lord Tubbington.

Kurt went to leave, but with firm resolve he turned around once more to face Blaine. "If you ever cared about me, then meet me in the auditorium at 3 o'clock. Just one last time." Blaine made no acknowledgement, but Kurt was certain that he heard.

Friday

The door slammed shut. Jeff's gaze followed Kurt as he walked out of the courtyard, then fell on Blaine. His heart ached for both of them. The life that had been shining from Blaine's eyes ever since he'd truly met Kurt were now gone, and replaced by the emptiness that had haunted him for so long. Blaine lifted his eyes from the ground and looked toward the door, maybe hoping that Kurt would reappear, maybe hoping that he would be locked away inside forever. Jeff wasn't sure which. Silence filled the air, broken only by Brittany's soft sobs in the corner.

"I have to get to class," Blaine mumbled, grabbing the trash of his uneaten lunch, and storming out the door in the opposite direction of Kurt, without a second glance back.

No one looked at one another. No one said a word. Jeff had learned about the video only moments before Kurt and Blaine had walked in and still he hated himself for not doing more to stop it from being shown. Jeff had known that Quinn and Puck were reaching a breaking point but he couldn't believe that they'd gone so far as to threaten Blaine with bringing his parents into it. Jeff didn't know the whole story or how truly bad things between Blaine and his parents were, that was something that Blaine kept very close to the cuff. But he was certain that Puck knew. And Jeff understood enough to know that if the Andersons saw the video, neither Kurt nor the Crew would very likely ever see Blaine again.

He glanced at his friends, the people that were supposed to stick together no matter what, and shook his head with disgust. Not a single one of them had stood up to Puck and Quinn, and he had not done enough. None of them had swallowed their fear and defended their leader like they were supposed to. Instead they had just sat in stunned silence, watching everything unfold. Kurt alone had been strong enough to stand up for Blaine. And for the first time in a long time, Jeff remembered where he had come from and where he truly belonged. And it wasn't here with the Crew. He stood up abruptly, grabbing his things from the table.

"And where the hell do you think you're going, Sterling?" Puck asked with a sneer. "Gonna go comfort your little loser boyfriend now that Blaine is done with him? Nicky you got competition," Puck snarled angrily, glancing at his brother for approval. Jake just shook his head and dropped his forehead into his hands.
Jeff ignored him and turned to Quinn, his heart breaking at the decision he just made. "I thought I knew you, Quinn, I really did. I thought we had something special, something real. But I was wrong. You're not the girl I thought you were."

Quinn's eyes widened in shock. "Are you being serious right now?" She asked angrily, her voice breaking.

"The girl I love would never have done this," Jeff answered sadly. Quinn's eyes clouded over and Jeff had to look away, turning a disgusted glare on Puck. "You should be so proud of yourself, Puckerman. Not everyone has the ability to turn other people's lives to shit but look around! Somehow you've managed to make everyone around you miserable." Jeff's eyes fell to Santana, who found herself still caught between Brittany and the Crew. "You better watch out, Tana. Puckerman might decide next that Britt's too sweet for a badass like you. After all, she is friends with Kurt, maybe she's really just a dweeb like him. What are you gonna do when he forces you to break up with her, just stand there staring as Brittany walks out the door?"

"F**k no, Puckerman," Santana yelled turning an accusatory glare on Puck. "Imma gonna kick your ass is what I'd do if you even try that shit!"

Puck glared at Santana incredulously. "You know I'm not going to do that, Satan. Don't be fucking stupid."

"Who you callin stupid, Puckerman?" Santana glowered, taking a step forward. "You best get it through that thick skull of yours that if you even think of kicking Britt out, I will ends you. Britt is off limits."

"Kurt was off limits," Brittany said so quietly over on the bench that the Crew barely heard her. She looked up at Puck and Quinn, and the entire Crew was surprised by the pure anger in her eyes. No one had ever seen her like that. "You had no right to do that! He is my friend. I love him, and you two had no right to take him away from any of us!"

"Britt," Nick tried to comfort but she pushed him away. "NO!" Brittany shouted, getting up to pull away from him. "I hate you! I'll never forgive you for this!" she yelled at Puck and Quinn before running out the doors.

Santana shot Nick a look asking him to go after Britt. She needed some time alone to sort some things out in her own head. But she trusted Nick to take care of Brittany and she offered a small smile of thanks as he nodded and grabbed his things running out after her.

Jeff grabbed his own things and instinctually took Santana's hand turning back to Puck. "The crazy thing is you think you're keeping us together, but the truth is you've just torn us apart. And all because you are nothing but a sad, scared little boy. Well congratulations, Puckerman. At least you still have your ex and your brother by your side. Gold medal for you," Jeff said as he started to walk toward the door.

"Jeff," Quinn called, her voice soft and breaking, but her eyes hard. Jeff shook his head. He needed time. With a sorrowful look, Jeff turned around and walked out of the courtyard with Santana.

Nick found Brittany curled up in the corner of the art room, crying into her arms as the world around her collapsed. Without a word, he walked over to her and sat down next to her, draping his arm over her shoulders. Brittany lifted her head, her eyes as lost as his own.

"How could they do that to him, Nick?" she asked through the tears. "How could they be so cruel?
I know they don't accept Kurt but how could they threaten Blaine with his parents? I just don't understand."

Nick pulled Brittany closer, her head snuggling into his chest, his resting on top of hers. He kissed the top of her head gently and brushed his fingers through her hair soothingly, holding back his own tears that wanted to spill. He needed to be strong for her. "Sometimes when someone is too lost in their own fears and insecurities, they do or say things that they don't mean in order to protect themselves."

"Kurt was never a threat," Brittany defended, staring up at him.

Nick shushed her, rubbing her back comfortingly to calm her. "I know sweetie. I know." He began to sing softly in her ear, trying to lull her into a place of calm.

The lunch bell rang but neither moved to leave, knowing that the room would be empty next period. Brittany looked up at Nick, fear evident in her eyes. "What if Blaine doesn't let me be Kurt's friend anymore?"

"Blaine wouldn't do that," Nick tried to assure her but at the moment, even he couldn't be sure.

Brittany shook her head. "You don't know that Nick. What if it's too hard for him to see us together and he forbids me from ever talking to Kurt again? I've already lost him once. I can't lose him again! But I can't lose Blaine either! What am I supposed to do?" she asked desperately.

"We'll figure something out, ok?" Nick said gently. "I'm not going to let you lose Blaine or Kurt and neither will Tana. I promise."

Brittany nodded, wiping her tears away. "You know you're my best friend too, right?"

Nick smiled softly. "I know. But Kurt and Blaine are your unicorns. They're special and we are not letting them get away, alright?" Brittany offered a small smile and nodded. "Come on. Let's go find Blaine. He could use a special friend right now." Brittany pushed her own heartache aside and, as if a switch flipped inside her, quickly stood up. Nick was right. She knew Blaine's heart was broken and she needed to find her unicorn before darkness consumed him and stole his magic.

Santana drove Brittany home, her heart aching as it tore in all directions. Britt had been quiet the entire drive, staring vacantly out the window. The brightness that constantly emanated from her was completely dulled. She and Nick had searched everywhere for Blaine, skipping class to try to find him. But he was nowhere to be found and neither dared go to the auditorium for Kurt's audition at the end of the day. As soon as they saw Puck standing guard by the door they'd turned around.

Nick found Santana in the parking lot after dismissal and filled her in on what he and Brittany discussed. Santana was at a loss as to how to make her girlfriend feel better since she still felt awful about the whole situation. She knew she should have stood up for Blaine, even gone after Puck and Quinn herself. But she was frozen to the spot, unable to intervene, and she still didn't understand why.

She couldn't promise Brittany that Blaine would be ok with her continuing her friendship with Kurt but she couldn't deny Brittany's request to do so either. She couldn't explain to her why Quinn and Puck were being so cruel, but she couldn't leave her scared and confused. The fact was though, she was scared and confused as well.

"Family is a place where everybody loves you no matter what. And they accept you for who you
are," Brittany spoke just above a whisper, breaking the silence in the car. Santana looked over at her girlfriend with sad eyes, remembering the exact moment Blaine had said those words. It was shortly after Jeff joined the Crew, a night that was filled with drunken confessions, silly antics, and a pact that they would always stick together. "Do you think he'll still feel that way about us? That we're his family?" she asked, looking up at Santana with emotionless eyes that increased Santana's worry tenfold.

"I think the only thing Blaine can feel right now is hurt and angry that he's been forced to choose the Crew over Kurt," Santana answered, reaching over to grab hold of Brittany's hand.

Brittany didn't pull away but she didn't return the gentle squeeze either. "Do you agree with them? That Kurt's no good for him?"

Santana shook her head. "No, I don't."

"Then why didn't you stand up for them?" Brittany asked with a hint of anger.

"I…I don't know. But I wish I had," Santana replied regretfully, bringing Brittany's fingers up to her lips to kiss.

Brittany nodded and looked away. "That's something I guess," she shrugged. "I should head inside. Lord Tubbington doesn't like it when I'm not home in time to watch Marimar."

Santana smiled softly and nodded. "Ok. Let me know what happens later. I'm going to go take care of some things."

Brittany nodded and grabbed her bag. She leaned over to Santana, giving her a quick kiss. "Love you, Tana."

"Love you too, Britt," Santana replied, watching Brittany walk toward the house, her anger and sadness blending together until the tears just streamed down her face.

A loud banging, like someone pounding their fist against the wood, sounded at the front door then stopped. Puck barely looked up from where he was staring blankly at the television, so with an exasperated sigh Jake got up and walked to the door. He looked out the window to find a small figure, crouched on the curb outside facing away from the house. Jake turned back to Puck. "It's Blaine," he called.

Puck drew himself up out of his seat and grabbed his coat from the rack, throwing it on as he opened the door and slammed it shut behind him without a word to his brother.

Blaine sat, closed in on himself on the curb, smoking a cigarette. Puck sat down, leaving a few feet between them and Blaine silently tossed him a pack of cigarettes. Puck opened it up and took one out, grabbing a lighter from his pocket to set it ablaze. Blaine pulled out a tequila nip from his coat and placed it on the curb at arm's length to his left. "Just drink," he ordered, never glancing to the boy at his side. "Don't say a fucking word to me." Puck took the bottle and swallowed the liquid heat it one gulp. Blaine took another one out for himself and did the same.

They sat in silence, letting the alcohol settle in their blood and the nicotine settle in their nerves. The moon shone bright overhead, but the clouds were too thick to see any stars. A car drove by every once in a while. Puck and Blaine sat, both lost in their thoughts and the tension that hung between them. They'd spent so many nights like this, shootin' the breeze as only guys could do, talking about nothing and everything, sharing the secrets of their families in a way they couldn't do with their true brothers. Now Puck was using all he knew against Blaine.
Blaine took out two more bottles, passing one to Puck and drinking the other himself. It had been less than a day, a few hours really, and he already missed Puck nearly as much as he missed Kurt. He missed the Puck that accepted and protected him when he was terrified that no one ever would again. He missed the boy who had trusted him with his own secrets, his and Quinn’s, when they'd been too afraid to let anyone else in. And more than anything he missed the laughter, the jokes, the gentle ribbing that meant that he truly belonged.

How had loving Kurt threaten all of that?

Blaine stood up to stomp out the cigarette butt and pulled another out of his carton, lighting it and pressing it between his lips. He pulled out the last two tequilas and tossed one to Puck, who caught it safely in his hands and looked up at him. Blaine met his gaze for the first time that night. "I hate you for what you're doing. You know that, right?" Blaine's voice was a dark mix of bitterness and grief.

"You'll get over him Blaine," Puck said, a shadow of desperation in his eyes and voice. Blaine was too lost in whatever it was that was pulling him toward Kurt but while Blaine seemed to have forgotten the consequences, Puck had not. "Kurt is just like Andrew was. You may not see it but I do and I'm not letting you go through that again. You'll find another guy to fuck and you'll get over him."

Blaine's blood boiled at Puck's words and glass shattered as he sent the last bottle of alcohol crashing on the curb next to Puck. "I love him, you asshole," Blaine shouted. "You don't just get over that! You of all people should know that, better than anyone!"

Puck's face hardened. He got up slowly and stepped carefully back onto the sidewalk before he did something he'd regret. "I do," he said, his voice clipped. "And I also know that sometimes we aren't meant to be able to keep the things we love."

Puck turned and walked back to the house, leaving Blaine alone outside. He leaned heavily against the door, taking a deep breath.

"What happened?" Jake asked cautiously.

"None of your damn business," Puck snapped, heading to his bedroom and falling on his bed. "Why don't you just get the fuck out? I'm sure daddy dearest will be wondering where you are, since he actually gives a crap about you."

Jake started to answer, but instead he turned around and walked out. Puck wouldn't believe him anyway. He may be the brother of Puck's blood, but he knew that Blaine was the brother of his heart. And if Puck wasn't going to listen to him, he sure as hell wouldn't listen to Jake.

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**Saturday**

Jake got up early the next morning, giving a quick wave to his Mom and Dad who were deftly ignoring one another as usual. Puck thought Jake was better off because he had both of them at home. But most days all he wanted to do was get out of the house before the yelling started.

Jake walked down the sidewalk to the park near his house sullenly, unable to believe Puck's stupidity. It was bad enough that Puck had adopted Blaine as his brother while he left Jake doing anything for just a bit of his brother's affection. But now he was throwing Blaine under the bus like some stranger who wasn't worth his time. And all to save face. Puck's pride was his best and worst asset and Jake was certain that it would eventually end up destroying him. He shuddered at the
thought. For someone who insisted they were nothing like their father, Puck was becoming more and more like him each day.

Jake found the park empty so he walked over to the swing set and took a seat, kicking his feet to slowly swing. He closed his eyes as the breeze came in, wishing that life could just be simple again.

"Jake?"

He opened his eyes to find Marley staring at him warily, arm wrapped around the pole of the swing set. He ignored the immediate butterflies he felt. "Hey Marley," he greeted, though it lacked its usual enthusiasm whenever he did have the nerve to greet her in class.

Marley picked up on his demeanor and instantly worried. "What are you doing here by yourself?" she asked, cautiously sitting in the swing next to him.

"Wishing I could be 8 years old again when the world made sense," Jake grumbled, digging his feet into the sand. He squinted as he stared up at the bright sky, so full of promise and possibility.

Marley smiled softly at the adorableness, turning away before Jake could see. "We can pretend we're 8 if you want," she suggested as she began to swing.

Jake raised an amused brow, a smirk playing at his lips. "And how exactly do we do that?" he asked, a hint of flirtation slipping through.

Marley shrugged a little, a small blush creeping up her cheeks. "Well, what did you do on the swings when you were 8?" she asked as she swung higher, almost as if to challenge him.

Jake watched her for a moment, a sly smile gracing his face before he kicked off the ground hard. For the next few minutes, Jake forgot about the problems with the Crew and his problems at home, and just let himself enjoy the way Marley laughed as they went higher and higher. Marley wrapped her arms around the outside of the chains, glancing at Jake before jumping off her swing, landing on her feet expertly.

"Yes!" Marley exclaimed, throwing her hands in the air victoriously. "Beat that, Puckerman!" she challenged, feeling exhilarated from both the jump and how easy it felt to joke around with the boy she'd been crushing on for years.

Jake smirked, wrapping his arms on the outside of the chains before taking a leap. He jumped wrong, making sure to tuck and roll before falling hard on the ground and groaning out in pain.

"Jake!" Marley rushed over to him and knelt by his side, looking for any visible signs of injury. "Are you ok?" she asked worriedly. Jake groaned a moment longer before turning a mischievous glance at her. Marley's jaw dropped when she realized that he'd tricked her. "You jerk," she said, smacking his arm playfully. "I thought you were hurt."

Jake sat up, grinning widely at Marley's adorable pout. "Sorry. Couldn't help it. You asked what I used to do when I was 8. Best way to get your mom's attention is to act hurt." Marley sat back, turning away so Jake wouldn't see the flush of her cheeks. She understood what Kurt meant when he said that he often forgot himself whenever he was around Blaine because Jake had the same effect on her. "Hey," Jake said, his voice suddenly somber. "I'm sorry about Kurt."

Marley turned back to him, seeing genuine sincerity in his eyes. She offered a small smile. "It's not your fault your brother is an idiot Jake," she said then opened her eyes wide, immediately back tracking. "Not that he's an idiot! I just mean-"
"That he's an idiot?" Jake cut in with a smirk. Marley bit her lip but said nothing. "Marley, it's fine. Puck is in idiot. In more ways than you can fathom," he said in a clipped tone, earning him a curious look. Jake sighed, turning away. "But then I'm an idiot too," he muttered.

"What?" she said incredulous. "No, Jake, what are you talking about?"

Jake hung his head. The last person he wanted to admit it to was Marley, but he couldn't let her think he was something he wasn't. "I know what he's like, but I've been looking for his approval my whole life," he said quietly. "I helped him. I kept watch while Quinn distracted the principal and Puck broke into his office to get the email address for Blaine's dad," he admitted. He looked up to see if Marley hated him, but her eyes glowed more with pity than anything else. "I didn't want to, I swear. But when Puck tells you to do something, unless Blaine says otherwise you do it."

"But Blaine would have said otherwise," Marley reasoned.

Jake lowered his eyes to the ground. "I know he would have. I'm just so sick of being controlled by both of them." He glanced back at Marley, nervously chewing on his lip. "Are you going to tell on us?"

Marley laughed softly and shook her head. "No. Kurt doesn't want anyone to get in trouble over this."

Jake chuckled ironically and shook his head. "You see…this is why I can't hang out with you, why Blaine can't be with Kurt. You guys are too nice, too wholesome," Jake said with a sad smile. "Not that it's a bad thing. I like how nice and sweet you are." Marley blushed at the compliment which didn't go unnoticed. "Just like Blaine likes how nice Kurt is. But that doesn't exactly go with the badboy image, ya know?" Marley nodded, her heart fluttering wildly at the fact that Jake kind of admitted to liking her. "But it's whatever. It is what it is."

"It shouldn't have to be," Marley said shyly. "And hey, Puck and Blaine will be gone next year so you don't have to worry about them telling you what to do or who you can or can't hang out with."

Jake cocked his head to the side, a surprised smirk on his lips. "You'd wait until next year to be friends with me?"

Marley looked away, her cheeks flushing a bright red. "I've waited to be your friend since the 7th grade," she admitted softly. "I think I can wait a little while longer."

Jake held back a grin, resisting the urge to lean forward and kiss Marley's adorably flushed nose. Puck would harass him relentlessly at the sentiment but Jake was finding it harder to care. Just then, a gust of wind blew through, making both shiver.

"It's getting cold. We should probably go," Jake said standing up from the ground and holding his hand out to help Marley. Marley took it shyly and stood up. "Thanks. For talking to me."

"Yeah, of course," Marley said, her hand still in Jake's. "I'm around, you know, if you ever wanted to talk some more."

Jake smiled. "I'll let you know," he said, deciding to be bold and bringing Marley's hand up to his lips to kiss. "I'll see ya in class," he said before reluctantly letting her hand go and walking away.

"Yeah. See ya," Marley replied so quietly that Jake almost didn't hear it. He turned around, gave her a little wave, and hurried off.
Nick was home alone Saturday afternoon when the doorbell rang. He paused the video game he was playing and tossed the remote aside to answer it. It was probably just some kid from around the block selling Girl Scout cookies or wrapping paper for the holidays. He pulled the door open without checking out the window first and was taken aback to find Harmony standing there.

"Hey," he said, his eyes brightening with a smile. "Come on in."

"I'm not staying," she said definitively, her arms crossed in front of her. Her eyes were hard and angry, with no hint of her usual warm glow. "I'm breaking up with you," she declared.

Nick's heart fell to the ground and he closed the door behind him as he joined her on the porch. "What? Why?" He reached for her hand, anything to just feel her skin on his, but she pulled away.

"I warned you Nick," she glowered. "I told you I would hold you responsible if this thing with Blaine hurt Kurt."

"But I didn't do anything," Nick pleaded.

"Precisely," Harmony snapped. "You didn't do anything at all. Why didn't you do anything Nick? Why didn't you stop them from showing the video or threatening Blaine? Why didn't you stand up for either of them when they were clearly in so much pain?"

Nick lowered his head in shame. He'd been asking himself the same question all day, but he still didn't have a good answer. "I don't know," he whispered honestly.

"I stayed up on the phone with Kurt all night last night! Marley and I both did! He was sobbing, Nick. He's already lost so much, gone through more than anyone needs to! Why should he have to go through this to?" she demanded.

But Nick didn't have an answer for that either. He didn't understand why Puck and Quinn had done what they did. He didn't understand the horrible caste system at this school that aimed to keep people separated instead of together. He didn't understand why it had been easier to hold on to Brittany as she cried with pain instead of standing up and doing something to stop it for her and his best friend. He didn't understand how he was losing the beautiful girl he loved that was standing right in front of him desperate for an answer he just couldn't give. "I'm sorry," he muttered. It was the only thing he could offer her.

She stared at him, incredulous, wondering who this boy standing before her was, because he wasn't the strong and courageous boy she'd fallen in love with over the summer. "Well I'm sorry too. But this is over," she said.

Nick watched her turn and walk away to her car, out of his life. He'd messed up. They had all messed up and it went way beyond Kurt and Blaine at this point. Half the Crew was heartbroken and the other half was just lost, wondering how things had gotten to this point. As he watched Harmony drive away he knew that he couldn't just sit by any longer. Someone had to do something, and there was no reason why that someone couldn't be him.

Jeff had texted her just after dinner Saturday evening. Quinn had been waiting all day for him to call and apologize, knowing that in all likelihood his only phone call would be to get her to do the same. But when he asked her to meet him at their spot behind the equipment shed at school, she left immediately, prepared for another fight. There was no way she was backing down.

Kurt Hummel was nothing but a troublesome dweeb that would no doubt attempt to turn the Crew into a sorry group of do-gooders that would plunge them down into the abyss of oblivion if they
allowed him into their circle. But Quinn had worked much too hard to keep the reputation she had, to keep herself safe, and she was not about to let some stupid dweeb throw it all away just because Blaine couldn't keep it in his pants.

Jeff leaned against the shed, twirling the small plastic ring between his fingers as memories of him and Quinn flooded him. He thought about their first kiss and how in that moment he knew that no one would ever come close to the perfection that was Quinn Fabray. He thought back to their first dance, how he had picked a song on his phone and twirled her around in that very spot, loving the lighthearted laugh that she shared only with him. He smiled sadly to himself as he recalled their first real date. How he'd spent a quarter buying her a cute toy ring, promising to always be there for her. In turn she did the same, promising to always try her best for him. Jeff hadn't gone a single day without wearing that ring and now it felt too heavy to bear.

He hadn't wanted to do anything rash, so he took the time to think about it. He'd left school on Friday without a word to her and he spent the whole day locked in his room, trying to find in the girl who had betrayed one of his best friends, the girl he remembered. The girl who would always try her best for him. But what she and Puck had done, was not even close to her best and he couldn't do it anymore. He hated the decision he'd made. But he knew he had no choice. In a matter of weeks he lost the girl he'd fallen in love with and he couldn't take the pain anymore.

"If you asked me here to try and make me apologize to Hummel then you can just forget it," Quinn started, her tone a striking indication of just how little she understood how much she had hurt so many people. It only made Jeff's decision ever the more final. "This is for Blaine's own good."

Jeff looked up at her, disappointment written all over his face. "I'm breaking up with you," he said, his voice wavering.

Quinn raised a brow, her heartbeat suddenly racing. "What?"

Jeff took a deep breath as he leaned off the shed, walking over to Quinn with his head down. "I can't be with you anymore," he whispered brokenly.

"You're breaking up with me?" Quinn asked in disbelief, her voice going an octave higher. "Because I don't want Hummel messing with the Crew? Are you fucking kidding me right now?"

Jeff laughed humorlessly, shaking his head. His eyes met Quinn's, anger and sadness pouring through. "This has nothing to do with Kurt. This has to do with the fact that you're a backstabbing bitch," he spat, hating himself for the words as soon as he'd said them, but unable to control his anger.

"Jeff," Quinn gasped, unable to believe what he'd just said.

"How could you?" Jeff shouted, making Quinn flinch a step back. "How could you bring Blaine's parents into this? You know what would happen if they found out! You know they'd take him away and send him to some boarding school! Or worse, to one of those fucked up places that turns people straight! How dare you threaten him like that just for loving someone?!!"

"Oh for god's sake, Jeff, Blaine doesn't love Hummel! And we wouldn't have actually sent it!" Quinn argued, though she knew it was a lie as soon as the words were spoken. Had Blaine chosen Kurt, they would have indeed sent the video. She ignored the sudden pang of guilt. "I can't believe you think I'd stoop that low."

"You already did stoop that low! And why? Because you don't want to accept the fact that for once in his fucking life Blaine was actually happy?" Jeff asked, tears welling up in his eyes.
"Hummel's just some stupid dweeb! He's no good for Blaine!" Quinn shouted back.

"Says who? You? Puckerman? The idiots at this school?" Jeff asked, continuing before Quinn could get a word in. "You can't help who you fall in love with, Quinn. You had no right to invade their privacy and take that video! You had no right to take away the one person that made him feel whole!"

Quinn scoffed, crossing her arms in attempts to hold herself together. "Oh please. You can't honestly believe someone like Kurt fucking Hummel could offer Blaine anything? He's nothing, Jeff. A nobody."

"I was a nobody!" Jeff argued, taking a step forward. "Remember? I transferred here and became friends with Nick, but was still immediately put into the nerd category because guess what? I'm a damn nerd! Yet somehow, you saw past that and started dating me anyway! And when Puckerman tried to get me out of the way, it was Blaine who bought me my first leather jacket and who stuck up for me and invited me into the Crew because he knew how much you liked me and Blaine cared more about your happiness than anything else!" Quinn looked away in silence, because she knew he was right. "But the only fucking reason the others accepted me was because I was hanging with Nick when the football team tried to jump Puckerman and Blaine freshman year and we helped them out. Then all of a sudden, I was cool enough to hang. Well, Kurt may not be willing to physically defend himself but he's never let that stop him from sticking up for himself. He's braver than any of us, braver than Blaine, and he made Blaine happy! Happier than I'd ever seen him. And you two had to go and ruin it!"

Quinn opened her mouth to argue but Jeff cut her off. "And don't even give me that crap that allowing Kurt into our circle would ruin our image because if we had just given Blaine our support and had his back in the first place then the school would've gotten over it and you know it!" Quinn's eyes welled with tears as she realized how truly serious Jeff was being, but she still didn't apologize for what they'd done. She didn't say a single word, just stood there watching Jeff as he broke her heart. "Well I'm done, Quinn. I'm done with Puck's bullshit. I'm done with the Crew. And I am done with you."

"Jeff, let's just talk about this," Quinn said as calmly as she could, though her voice wavered nonetheless. She reached out to him, trying to grasp at his hand or his shoulders or anything that would just let her hold him, but he stepped away.

"We're done talking," Jeff said shaking his head. "I hope you realize that you're not just losing me, you're losing Blaine too. He may have chosen the Crew over Kurt but he will never forgive you for this. He will never trust you." Jeff's heart shattered as he pulled the ring off his finger, tears streaming down his face. "And neither will I."

Quinn shook her head when Jeff tried to hand it to her, refusing to take it. "No."

Their rings represented their love, their relationship. From the moment they'd bought them they hadn't taken them off, no matter how badly they had fought. Fighting and making up was what they did. And this was just another dumb fight. They weren't over. They couldn't be. When Quinn didn't take it, Jeff let it go, walking past her before it even hit the ground. Quinn fell to her knees, gingerly picking up the ring Jeff cherished so much. Before she could stop herself, she started to cry. For the first time in a very long time, Quinn felt completely and utterly broken.

Sunday

Santana drove around Sunday afternoon, not sure where she was going. She drove by Blaine's,
stopping at the curb. Cooper's car was gone but Blaine's motorcycle was there. She should go ring the doorbell, check on him, but her fear stopped her. She hadn't stood up for him when she should have. She hadn't said anything until Brittany was threatened. What could she possibly say to Blaine to make this better now? Nothing.

But there was something she could do and she stepped on the gas, driving ten blocks down the road through the invisible line that separated the good section of town from the bad.

Kurt didn't know why he'd agreed to hang out with Chandler, but there he was at the mall, going from store to store with Chandler at his side and absolutely no desire to do any kind of shopping. Maybe he had just needed the distraction, something to get his mind off the feel of Blaine between his legs, thrusting deliciously against him, coming hard above him just from the force of their desperate need for one another.

"Kurt, are you listening to anything I'm saying?" Chandler nearly yelled.

"What?" Kurt stammered, knowing his face was bright red and hoping that his tightening pants weren't too visible. He closed his coat around him just to make sure. "Yeah, you were talking about that blue Henley we saw back in the last store."

Chandler looked at him funny, but was apparently satisfied and kept yammering away about god only knows what. Kurt nodded and pretended to care, all the while consistently checking his phone to see if Blaine had texted him. Kurt had sent him a single text early that morning, but Blaine never replied so Kurt had gone to the shop, wordlessly working until his father sent him home.

Kurt knew the only reason Burt sent him home was because his sadness and anxiety was written all over his face, but he didn't argue. He simply nodded, got into his Navigator and drove home. He regretted not staying as soon as he pulled up to his house though. Chandler had been waiting for him on the porch and somehow through Chandler's babbling, had convinced Kurt to go out when all he really wanted to do was go home and curl up in bed alone with his favorite romantic comedy.

"Seriously Kurt if you check that phone one more time," Chandler snapped.

Kurt looked away from his cell, which was devoid of any sign of Blaine since yesterday anyway. "What?"

Chandler sighed in exasperation. He hated how distant Kurt was being and he knew it was all Blaine's fault. Blaine had ruined a perfect friendship and any possibility for more and Chandler was so sick of coming in second. Well no more. The decision had been made, the plan was in motion, and there was no going back. In just a few hours, Blaine would be out of the picture for good.

Santana pulled up to Puck's house and pounded on the door.

"Blaine you can't keep pounding on my-" Puck swung the door and Santana stared at him, hands on her hips. "Oh. Tana."

"Has Blaine been here?" Santana asked confused. If Blaine had been here had they already settled things?

"No," Puck answered sullenly, turning around to walk into the house. Santana followed him through the open door and closed it behind her. "I mean, he was here Friday night, but not since then. My guess would be he won't be back any time soon either," he grumbled with a sigh.
"You fucked up," Santana said bluntly, not moving from the front hallway. "Big time."

Puck whirled around, his fists clenched. "You think I don't know that?"

"I swear to god Puck, if Blaine's parents find out about that video, or anything else for that matter, I will kick your sorry ass and I will have no qualms about kicking Quinn's as well."

"I just wanted to protect him Santana!" Puck argued back. "That's all I wanted!"

"Protect him from what exactly?" Santana challenged. "Bowties and show tunes?"

Puck scoffed and turned around walked into the living room. He dropped onto the couch, his head in his hands. "You don't understand Santana," Puck told her.

She softened slightly, and followed him, sitting beside him. "Then explain it to me," she said.

Chandler checked the time and glanced around. "Do you want to grab a bite to eat in the food court before we head back? I'm hungry."

Kurt hesitated, reluctant to say yes so Chandler threw in a pout for good measure. Kurt sighed and nodded, too tired to argue. "Sure."

"Great!" Chandler beamed, grabbing Kurt's hand and leading him away.

They grabbed their snacks, a frozen yogurt for Chandler and a cheesecake for Kurt, and headed toward a table in the center of the court. Their conversation was extremely one-sided and Kurt's mind and eyes wandered around the mall. He watched the kids riding on the carousel and couples holding hands as they walked by and his heart grew heavy, wondering if he'd ever be lucky enough to have those things. Suddenly the hairs on his neck stood on end as he felt the familiar sense of someone watching him. He turned around to see Kyle and his buddies staring at them. Chandler followed Kurt's gaze and exchanged a nearly imperceptible glance with Kyle, before grabbing Kurt's hand. "Come on, let's get out of here," Chandler urged and Kurt had no problem agreeing.

He didn't see Kyle and his gang following them out.

Nick, Jeff, Brittany and Jake huddled together in the living room of Brittany's house. They hadn't planned the gathering really, but somehow they gravitated toward one another in their sadness and confusion over everything that had happened with the Crew. Their losses were heavy in the air as they tried to console each other, hold on to what they had, and come up with a plan to make things right again.

"So what exactly are we supposed to do here?" Nick asked sullenly, his knees brought up to his chest.

"What can we do?" Jake questioned. "Puck and Quinn are not going to back down."

"And Blaine's completely ignoring us so we can't even tell him that we support his decision to be with Kurt," Jeff said, his gaze glued to the floor.

"We need to get them to talk things out," Brittany said as she pet Lord Tubbington who was on her lap. "All of them, Puck, Quinn, Blaine, and Kurt. If they would just really talk, get whatever issues they have out in the open, then maybe…"
"Maybe they'll come to some understanding," Nick said, a hopeful glint in his eyes.

Jeff scoffed. "Yeah, like that'll happen," he said bitterly. "Quinn and Puck are never going to let this go and Blaine... Blaine's never going to trust what they say anyway."

Jake glanced at his friends and sighed. "Well, we have to think of something. We can't let Blaine wallow in his misery and we can't let Puck and Quinn get away with this." Brittany, Jeff, and Nick all nodded. At least the four of them were on the same page.

Kurt practically jumped out of the car when he and Chandler arrived back at his house. He wanted desperately to get away from Chandler, but Chandler quickly stepped out of his car and followed.

"Do you want to watch Moulin Rouge?" Chandler asked, walking step by step with Kurt.

Inwardly Kurt screamed. "I'm really tired, Chandler. Maybe another day," Kurt said with his best regretful smile.

"Oh come on, Kurt. You were mopey the entire time at the mall and we haven't hung out in so long and I miss you! You're my best friend and I just want to spend some real time with you! Is that so bad? It's not even like we'll be doing anything other than watching a movie so it's not like you'll be doing anything to tire yourself out and-"

"Fine!" Kurt snapped, raising his hands in defeat. "Let's go watch a movie. But not Moulin Rouge. I can't take anything that's going to make me think of Blaine right now," he said unintentionally but not caring because it was true.

Chandler gaped for a moment, shocked that their favorite movie would remind Kurt of him. "Fine. We'll watch something else," he said, his tone clipped. Kurt ignored it though and walked inside.

Quinn walked the serene path carrying the small bouquet of white-stargazer lilies and baby's breath tightly in her hand. She could walk the path with her eyes closed, and for a few moments she did, taking in the smell of earth, trees, and flowers, with the gentle chirping of birds in the distance. The sun shined down on her and it all seemed such a contrast to the storm in her heart.

She knelt before the grave, picking some weeds from the base of the headstone, and she wiped off the dirt that had built up since her last visit. She placed the flowers on the ground beneath the words she traced with her fingers.

She'd promised him to be better. But she'd also promised her.

So she closed her eyes and for the first time in a very long time, she prayed.

Once in Kurt's room, Chandler became anxious. He knew what he had to do but he still didn't know how to go about it just yet. Kurt had set his phone down on his bedside table, so close to Chandler yet so far. Kurt went through the movies and anything Kurt wanted to watch Chandler vetoed. Finally Kurt grumbled about not having anything they could agree on and walked off to Finn's to look at his DVD's. The moment he was gone, Chandler grabbed Kurt's phone and went straight to his text messages. He clicked on Blaine's name and found himself reading through their messages. Anger and jealousy boiled in him at the freely flowing conversation between them filled with the flirting and sexual innuendos. If he thought reading it would change his mind, it instead completely solidified the plan. Chandler quickly sent the text, put Kurt's phone on silent, and hid it in between the mattress and the headboard.
"Ok, our options are-"

"You know, I actually have to go," Chandler said scrambling off the bed. "I forgot I was supposed to be meeting Harmony for coffee. We'll do this next weekend though. A complete movie marathon!"

Kurt raised a suspicious brow but Chandler was racing out of his room before he could question him. Kurt hurried after him, stopping at the kitchen and watching him from the window as he got in his car. Chandler looked scared. And guilty. On pure instinct alone, Kurt made a quick decision and grabbed his keys and jacket and quickly darted out the front door to follow Chandler, his phone forgotten in his rush.

Santana sighed as she held Puck in her arms. "You have to tell Blaine everything you just told me," she said softly as his breathing finally slowed back to normal. "You know that, right?"

Puck shook his head. "He's not going to listen to me Tana, not anymore. I completely blew it."

"No, you didn't," she said, taking his face in her hands. "Blaine is one of the most forgiving guys I know. Tell him you made a mistake. Tell him why and he'll forgive you."

Puck raised an eyebrow at her. "Do you really think so?" he said hopefully.

"Have you ever known Santana Lopez to be wrong about anything Puckerman?" she said with a smirk.

Puck chuckled, but he didn't get a chance to answer because his phone beeped with a text message. He pulled out his cell and his eyes went dark. "I'm going to kill him," Puck yelled immediately, throwing his phone on the couch and darting into the front hall to grab his jacket and keys.

"Who?" Santana asked, swiping the phone and checking the text.

To: Puck
From: Kyle

Got your boy Anderson here at Horseshoe Park. All bets are off now that he's gone soft. So let's find out what side you're really on Puckerman.

"Shit," she swore, flying off the couch, but Puck was already on his motorcycle and halfway down the street. She stood there frozen for a minute, not sure what to do. Typically she'd call Blaine in this kind of situation, but if Blaine was already in trouble…

She pocketed Puck's phone and grabbed her own, dialing the first number that came to mind.

"Brittany?" she said frantically in the phone. "We've got a problem!"

Blaine shoved his phone in his pocket and threw on his coat, climbing aboard his motorcycle without even a thought, racing as fast as he could to Horseshoe Lake. It was only once he'd hit the open road that he'd let his mind calm down a minute to think things through. The text hadn't sounded like Kurt, but that didn't mean that Kurt wasn't in trouble. Kyle or one of his idiotic friends could have texted it while they kicked Kurt into the ground and laughed.

But what if Kurt had sent it? What if it was just a trap? A big, nasty setup just like…
No. Blaine pushed that thought from his mind. Kurt wasn't like that. Puck was wrong. This time it was different.

His motorcycle screeched to a halt in the parking lot of Horseshoe Lake and he barely turned it off before bolting through the trees.

"Kurt!" Blaine screamed, over and over.

The sun was setting and with the tree cover it was getting dark but he found them quickly down by the lake. He stood frozen as soon as he saw Kyle and three other letterman jackets standing there waiting.

"Well it's about time Anderson. Good thing Kurt isn't really here," Kyle laughed. "We'd have had him beaten to a pulp by now. Stupid dweeb probably wouldn't have even fought back."

Blaine stopped himself from rushing them as his hands tightened into fists. "How the hell did you get his phone?" he sneered.

"Oh, well we had some help from one of his little friends," Kyle smirked. "But don't you worry. Your precious Kurt is totally fine and completely oblivious to the fact that we're about to beat the shit out of you."

His relief that Kurt wasn't involved settled his nerves and gave fuel to his confidence. "You wanna piece of me?" he taunted holding his arms out. "How the hell did you get his phone?" he sneered.

"Oh, well we had some help from one of his little friends," Kyle smirked. "But don't you worry. Your precious Kurt is totally fine and completely oblivious to the fact that we're about to beat the shit out of you."

His relief that Kurt wasn't involved settled his nerves and gave fuel to his confidence. "You wanna piece of me?" Blaine taunted holding his arms out. "Well come at me! Hell I've got nothing else to lose here so have it."

"Can't quite yet Blainey boy," Kyle smiled deviously looking at his friends. "We're still missing our second guest."

"Not anymore," called a voice in the woods and Blaine turned around to see Puck stepping through the thicket.

Blaine's eyes narrowed, confusion drawing over his face. "What the hell?" Blaine looked back and forth between Puck and Kyle.

"Word on the street is that Puckerman here is gonna take over the Crew. Now that you've gone soft and joined the dweebs." Blaine shot a look at both of them but Kyle continued. "Yeah, that's right. We know that you were over at Kurt's last night. And we just wanted to make sure that Pucky here knew that too so he could kick your ass."

Blaine turned to look at Puck, realization settling in quickly that this was the end. Puck would beat the crap out of him then send the video to his parents and then that would be it. He'd be sent away for good. His heart should have been racing but instead it slowed, resignation washing over him. "Go ahead," he told the boy he had once called brother. His voice low but strong. "Do what you have to do."

Puck's face was hard as rock, his eyes dark as the night sky. "I will," Puck said and he nodded in the direction of Kyle. "Hold him," he ordered.

Kyle and his friends all laughed and Kyle grabbed Blaine around the torso, holding him for Puck. Puck took off his coat and threw it to the ground, rolling up his sleeves. He took a step up to Blaine and flexed his hands together. He looked Blaine square in the eye. "Do you remember what you told me? That day in the hospital?"

Blaine's eyes flashed with remembrance and then understanding. He gave Puck a quick nod. "I
remember," he answered.

"Well, it's still true," Puck said.

Puck pulled back, his hand balled in a fist and he swung hard toward Blaine's face. But Blaine quickly ducked, using his years of boxing skill to easily get out of Kyle's grasp, and the punch landed directly on Kyle's chin. Kyle yelled in surprise and pain, but the boys didn't stop as Blaine's old words rang in both their ears. 'From now on brother, it's you and me against the world.' Blaine and Puck both laid into Kyle, landing punch after punch first on Kyle then the other boys who had joined in to help their leader. The shouting was loud and drowned out the noise around them until a voice rang out loudly behind him.

"Police, hands up!"

Blaine and Puck immediately froze, throwing their hands in the air and turning. The cops wasted no time in cuffing them and dragging them to the cars in the parking lot. As they were walked through the woods a figure moved and drew their attention. Chandler was watching, a haughty smirk on his lips. Blaine seethed with hatred.

They were walked to the squad cars and pushed up against them while the officers ready them their rights. They answered yes when asked if they understood, but neither had been listening, too focused on the shadows standing in the dim light of the parking lot.

Puck looked at Santana, surrounded by Nick, Jeff, Britt and Jake. "Call Dad," he mouthed to Jake and his brother nodded emphatically.

Blaine only had eyes for Kurt, standing on the other side of the lot away from the rest. He was crying, fear and anger and sadness wracking through his body. Blaine wanted to hold him, to make it all better, but he couldn't. The walls that had been built around his heart had been entirely in his control. He could have kept them up or torn them down in whatever way he had seen fit. Even the walls that Shaker Hills had put up were really his to break through whenever he had wanted.

He understood that now. Too little too late.

Because the cuffs on his wrists were real. The walls that were about to surround him were not of his own design. And the person to soon decide his future was not himself.

This time the prison would be real.
Kurt stood in the darkness, the red and white lights of the squad car flashing over and over again across his face, reflecting wildly off the tears in his eyes as he helplessly watched the police place Blaine and Puck inside. His body shook with fear and sadness, the haunted look in Blaine's eyes staying with him long after his face was gone. Until a rustle in the branches and a whirl in the shadows stole his attention behind him and Chandler's car started and drove off. The chill of the air suddenly hit him and his breath froze in the exhale of his realization that somehow Chandler had been a part of this. Hot anger quickly replaced his cold fear and burned through him.

Chandler had used him. Deliberately kept him from Blaine all day. The look to Kyle in the mall. Distracting him with movies, only to get up and disappear, to here. He had trusted Chandler, told Blaine not to worry, yelled at him for attacking Chandler only to be completely betrayed by him. As the police car drove away with Blaine in the backseat, Kurt's knees gave way beneath him and he fell to the ground. Kurt had let this happen. He had let his naïveté steer Blaine away from his more streetwise instincts and now it was Blaine that was going to pay. The darkness of the night caved in on him as he tried to figure out where to go and what to do. He didn't know how much time had passed, nor could he even find it in himself to care. He didn't even know that he was crying. He'd told Blaine to be brave and stand up for them, but Kurt had been the one too afraid to stop the world from tearing them apart. If he had only told Chandler no…

Brittany was the first to notice Kurt on the other side of the parking lot, gasping when she saw his broken state. "Jeff," she whispered, pointing behind him. Jeff turned around, cursing under his breath before running to Kurt's side, the others close behind.

Kurt heard footsteps approaching him. He looked up, not sure what to expect, when he saw the Crew. Jeff and Brittany knelt down next to him though, both wrapping their arms around him as they tried to console him. "I don't even understand," he cried, not wanting to believe what he'd seen as Jeff held him close. "How could this happen?"

"Well obviously it was a trap," Santana said, her eyes narrowed on Kurt.

He'd figured out that much. "But how?" Kurt breathed out, looking up at her.

"Don't act like you don't know," Santana snapped, taking an angry step forward and prompting Brittany to hurry to her side. Kurt shot up in defense but Jeff kept a supportive grasp on his arm. "Puckerman got a text from Kyle saying he had Blaine, so idiot of course shows up here to beat Kyle's ass. By the time we get here, he and Blaine are handcuffed and dragged away. So someone," she said, all suspicions aimed at Kurt, "called the police on them. So tell me Hummel, why the fuck are you here exactly?"

Kurt turned a glare on Santana and her accusatory tone. "You think I had something to do with this?" he asked incredulous.

"Did you?" Santana asked, taking a menacing step forward, stopped only by Brittany's firm hold on her waist. "Blaine hasn't talked to us all weekend and I get the feeling that he has talked to you. But Blaine's motorcycle is right over there," she said cocking her head to her left, "While your car is right here. So clearly you didn't come here together to bump and grind. So I'm only asking one more time, what the hell are you doing here?"

"I followed Chandler," Kurt snapped, pulling his arm out of Jeff's grasp and stepping closer to Santana. "He practically begged me to spend the day with him and I thought…" Kurt shook his
head, not knowing anymore what he had been thinking. "Then he was acting really weird when he
left my house. Something told me to follow him and I ended up here. I had nothing to do with this.
I love Blaine! I would never do anything to hurt him."

Santana glared at him suspiciously, looking him over top to bottom for any signs of deceit, but
found none. She slid her hand down Brittany's arm to link their fingers and squeezed while she
thought. "Ok," she said accepting his explanation. "Did Blaine text you at all today? Maybe when
he was on his way here?" she asked, trying to piece it all together.

Kurt shook his head, knowing he'd never miss a text from Blaine, but he reached into his pocket
just to make sure. When his cell wasn't there he quickly opened the door of the truck and searched
for his phone, then realized he must have forgotten it in his hurry to follow Chandler. "I don't…I
don't have it on me. I must have left it at home somehow."

"What if Chandler texted Blaine with it?" Brittany asked quietly. "If he thought you were in
trouble... Blaine would do anything to find you."

Kurt's heart broke as the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. Santana started murmuring in Spanish
and Kurt quickly turned around to his car.

"Kurt, where are you going?" Jeff called out after him.

"Home," Kurt yelled back. "I need to find my phone."

"We're coming with you!" Santana shouted out to him. "Jeff, drive his car. We'll follow you. Jake,
go home and talk to your Dad. Keep us posted."

The Crew quickly dispersed, Santana and Brittany getting in Santana's car, Nick getting into his,
Jake hopping on his motorcycle, and Jeff taking over the driver's seat of Kurt's Navigator. Kurt
climbed into the passenger seat, his mind racing. He understood that somehow he'd let this happen
and now Blaine was all alone and probably terrified and hating himself. Kurt knew one thing for
certain though. He'd do whatever it took to get Blaine home, and for the two of them to be back
together again where they belonged.

As soon as Kurt's Navigator pulled into the driveway, Burt rushed out of the house, relief replacing
worry. "Where the hell have you been?" he demanded as soon as Kurt stepped out of the passenger
side of his truck. Burt's eyes darted back and forth between his son and the unknown blond boy
who'd driven him home. "And why is this kid driving your truck? You better explain what's going
on right now, young man, I've been calling you for over an hour," he yelled as worry mixed in with
his anger.

"I'm sorry, Dad. I don't have my phone," Kurt said, a bit frantically. Jeff closed the driver's side
doors and came around to Kurt's side. "This is Jeff, he's a friend from school."

"Nice meeting you, Mr. Hummel," Jeff said with a nod as he handed Kurt his keys.

Burt eyed him for a moment before he took the keys from Kurt's hand with a glare. His vision
shifted to Santana and Brittany who were walking up the driveway, and then to Nick who was
leaning against his car parked at the curb. Their somber faces along with Kurt's disheveled
appearance were starting to seriously worry him. "Kurt. Answers. Now," Burt demanded again.

"I'll explain as soon as I can Dad, I just really need to find my phone first," Kurt pleaded. "The girls
are gonna help me and then they'll be gone."
"And who are these girls exactly?" Burt asked, not budging from his spot.

"Santana Lopez," Santana introduced herself, her tone strong. "This is my girlfriend, Brittany. We're friends of Blaine."

Brittany walked straight over to Burt, her innocent eyes wide, her voice soft. "Do you remember me, Mr. Burtie Bear? I used to be friends with Kurt in kindergarten."

Burt's brows shot up because he did remember. His mind flashed to an adorable blonde haired little 6 year old that Kurt had begged to have over for a playdate. "I remember, little girl with the pigtails?" Burt asked.

Brittany nodded, a small smile on her lips. "That's me. I know you're upset with Kurt right now but Tana and I really need to help him find his cell phone. It's very important."

Burt looked over at Kurt, his eyes begging his father to let things go for now. With a reluctant sigh, Burt nodded. "You owe me an explanation, Kurt," he said, waving his finger.

"You'll get one, I swear," Kurt said before he hurried inside, Santana and Brittany close behind.

Burt turned a questioning glare on Jeff. "You one of Blaine's friends too?"

Jeff nodded. "Yes sir, but I'm Kurt's friend also. So are the girls and Nick," he said gesturing to Nick.

"Uh, huh," Burt said with a nod. "Part of this Crew I keep hearing so much about?" he asked with a raised brow.

"Yes sir," Jeff confirmed.

"And you care to share with me exactly what is going on since my son is too busy?" he asked in a demanding tone.

Jeff shrunk back a bit, not wanting to cause any problems for Kurt, but feeling an obligation to explain. "Blaine's in some trouble. We think Chandler may have something to do with it. Maybe used Kurt's phone to trick him."

Burt sighed deeply, surprised by Jeff's honesty and waved at Nick to come over. "I never did like that Chandler kid," he muttered to himself and shivered. "Why don't you two come inside while you wait. It's getting cold out here."

Jeff gulped and turned to Nick, who nodded. "Ok."

Jake flew into his house, not even closing the door behind him. "Dad!" he bellowed out as he raced through the small home. "Dad!"

"Your Dad's not here," his mother grumbled as she peeked out from her bedroom at the top of the stairs. He couldn't tell if she was drunk or tired, or maybe a little bit of both.

"Well where is he?" Jake demanded, staring up at her.

"I dunno," she shrugged, quite used to not having a clue where that man was. "Check the bar," she suggested before slipping back into her room.
Kurt burst through his bedroom door, his eyes quickly scanning the room before he walked over to his bedside table. "This is the only place I would have left it," he said thickly before frantically searching through the drawers. "He must have moved it."

"Do you think he would have hidden it?" Santana asked, glancing around Kurt's room.

"Either that or he has it with him," Kurt said, turning to his bed. He grabbed his pillows and threw them off before grabbing the blankets. "Call it."

They all stood still and silent as Santana dialed Kurt's number, but there was no sound.

"He could have just turned it off," Brittany suggested.

"Well, if we're doing this, let's do it right," Santana said, walking over to Kurt's dresser and throwing the clothes out onto the floor.

When all the drawers were empty and nothing turned up, Kurt growled in frustration, falling onto the bed. "Where the hell is it?" he cried.

Santana turned to look at Kurt, then her eyes fell to the bed for only a second. "Move," she said before grabbing hold of his mattress and flipping it.

"Found it!" Santana yelled, holding it up with smug triumph.

Kurt snatched his phone from Santana's hand, quickly turning it on and unlocking it. He frowned when he found several missed calls from Blaine and a few no doubt increasingly angry voicemails from his dad. He'd listen to those later, he thought. Or better yet, maybe he'd just delete them. He went into his text messages, scanning his recent conversation with Blaine, his eyes going wide when he saw the last text. A text that he most certainly had not sent.

"I don't believe it," Kurt breathed, looking up at Brittany with angry tears in his eyes. Santana grabbed the phone from his hand. "Chandler tricked him. He texted Blaine using me as bait! I can't believe he did that! I know he hated Blaine, but I can't believe he would stoop so low!" He fell, disbeliefing, to the floor.

Brittany stepped over the mess they had made and knelt down next to Kurt, wrapping him in his arms. Santana set Kurt's phone down on the dresser before joining them and taking Kurt's face into her hands. "You listen to me, Pretty Pony," Santana said, making him focus his eyes on her. "We are not letting him get away with this. As soon as you are ready, Britt and I will have your back. The three of us are going straight to that little dweeb and you are going to give him a piece of your mind and rip him a new one. Understood?"

Kurt nodded, the betrayal and anger from earlier nearly bursting at the seams. "You should go before my dad comes up here," he said, his voice gruff.

"Ok," Santana nodded, letting go of Kurt's face. "You're not alone Kurt. Until Blaine's back, you can be sure none of us will let Kyle or any of his goons come near you. You are part of this Crew now, every single person here with you today agrees with me, and we are not letting those assholes anywhere near you," she promised him. Kurt nodded but said nothing, too worried about Blaine and too angry at Chandler to do much of anything. Santana understood and pulled him into a hug.

"And don't worry about Blaine. He's tough, and Cooper will get him the best attorney money can buy. He'll be out in no time." She gave him one last squeeze before turning and walking out of the room. Brittany gave him a quick hug and a kiss on the check and followed her out.

Burt stood at the top of the stairs, watching the girls climb down, Brittany waving as she passed, to
grab the boys in the living room and go. He turned, hands in his pockets, and walked down the hall to find Kurt in his room trying to set his mattress right again.

"Need a hand with that son?" he asked, though he knew Kurt wouldn't let him lift a thing. Kurt shook his head without looking in the eye and Burt leaned against the wall watching him.

"Wanna explain then why Blaine needs an attorney?"

Kurt looked up at him and froze. He couldn't lie to his Dad but he didn't want him to know anything about Kyle having beaten him up before. And what if he forbid Kurt from ever seeing Blaine again when he knew what happened? No, he told himself. His dad would never do that. With a shaky breath, Kurt looked down at his hands and mumbled. "Blaine's been arrested."

Burt stepped further into Kurt's room, crossing his arms across his chest. "Come again."

"Blaine. He got arrested," Kurt said with a humorless laugh as he sat on his bed, overwhelmed to the point of tears. "He and his best friend Puck got into a fight with a few of the football players and they got arrested." Kurt closed his eyes and told him the rest, how Chandler had made sure he'd stayed away from Blaine for the day, how he'd texted Blaine from his phone, telling him that the jocks had him. He held out his phone to his Dad and Burt took it, shaking his head at what he saw.

Burt sat down next to his son, draping a comforting arm over his shoulders. "Why would Chandler do that? I thought you two were friends."

"So did I," Kurt said, wiping the tears away. "But he hated Blaine. He was jealous that we were getting so close and I guess he thought that if Blaine was no longer around, everything would go back to way things were before." Kurt shrugged. "I don't know."

"And the football players? This kid Puck, how do they fit into all this?" Burt asked, needing to know as much as possible before calling Cooper.

"The Crew and the jocks are constantly butting heads. It's not just the guys but the girls too, they're always fighting with the cheerleaders over something. When Blaine and I started being friends, the football team, hell the whole student body had a problem with it. No one understood why or how it happened and they started questioning Blaine, doubting him and calling him a loser. Santana said that Puck got a text from one of the football players telling him they had Blaine and were going to beat the crap out of him because he was going soft and that's how he got there. Honestly the whole thing was probably just a setup to get Blaine and Puck out of school," Kurt said, chancing a glance at his father.

Burt sensed there was more to the story than Kurt was telling him, but what he'd heard had been enough. He stood up, placing his hands on his waist and took some deep breaths to calm himself. "Here's what we're going to do. You are going to clean this mess up while I run over to shop to grab Dr. Anderson's number. And then we are going to call him and you will tell him exactly what you just told me. Ok?" Kurt nodded, inhaling deeply. "And you will not go after Chandler. I know you're angry and hurt, and I know you're going to end up saying something to him anyway, but you will not stoop down to his level and do something for revenge. Do you understand?"

"I understand," Kurt said quietly.

"Good. Now clean this up. I'll be back soon."

Quinn walked up her driveway, too lost in her own mind to notice the person sitting on the steps in
front of her house until the moment she reached them. "Jeff," she breathed, shocked to see him there. "What are you doing here?"

Jeff stood up, slipping his hands in his pockets, his face stoic. "Blaine and Puckerman got arrested."

"What?!" Quinn gasped. "When?"

"A little while ago," Jeff said, looking away from the girl that broke his heart, the girl he wished he didn't still love. "Got in a fight with Kyle and his idiot friends. Chandler set them up."

"Hummel's dweeby little boyfriend?" Quinn asked in surprise. "Why?"

Jeff turned a hard glare on her. "I don't know. Maybe for the same reason you and Puckerman blackmailed Blaine," he said angrily.

"Jeff," Quinn said quietly, taking a step closer.

Jeff side stepped and walked past her though. "Don't. I just came here to tell you that you and Puckerman probably got your way. Can't imagine Blaine's parents will let him stay now." Quinn recoiled like he'd slapped her but he continued. "And just wanted to let you know that Kurt's going to be hanging with us from now on. Everyone's cool with him, even Tana and Jake, so you can either get over yourself or hang with someone else. Kurt's got enough shit to deal with without adding your bullshit to it too," he said, swiftly turning around and walking away.

"I thought you said you were done with the Crew," Quinn called out after him.

"Things change," Jeff yelled back, continuing down the sidewalk without so much as glance back.

"And some things don't," Quinn said to herself, watching the boy she loved walk away a second time, only heading inside when he was no longer in view.

Blaine and Puck sat side by side in hard plastic chairs just inside the station doors, and thankfully just outside the jail cells. The handcuffs around their wrists continued to chafe. Their cell phones had been confiscated and were being held by the officer at the nearby desk who was keeping half an eye on them. They hadn't said a word to one another since they'd been arrested. "And just wanted to let you know that Kurt's going to be hanging with us from now on. Everyone's cool with him, even Tana and Jake, so you can either get over yourself or hang with someone else. Kurt's got enough shit to deal with without adding your bullshit to it too," he said, swiftly turning around and walking away.

"Thank you," Blaine murmured in Puck's general direction. He had a million things to say to people who weren't here – Kurt, Cooper, his parents who were bound to show up to take him away the minute he was set free, Burt, the crew. But none of them were here now and he tried not to focus on them, it hurt too much. Only Puck was here, by his side. Brothers against the world once again.

"It's the least I could do," Puck shrugged noncommittally and Blaine accepted it. Puck's armor was as tough as it could be right now and Blaine wouldn't get any real emotion out of him. "No matter what, ain't gonna let Kyle get the best of you," he added with a smirk.

Blaine let his own smirk escape his lips. He knew that's what brotherhood meant. You could beat the shit out of each other, make life a living hell for one another. But no one else had the right to do the same. "So what happens now?" Blaine asked, and he didn't mean between them.
Puck glanced at their guard and gave an exaggerated sigh, earning him a glare back. "Now, we wait," he said more loudly than he needed to. "And soon a van will pull up and take us away to the wonderful world of Cuyahoga Hills which is almost like Disneyland minus all the rides and castles and happiness."

"Talk too loudly there Puckerman and we'll have the judge haul you away to Grafton. I'm sure the men there would love to get their hands on a pup like you," the officer chuckled.

Blaine shivered at the possibility of them being separated or of either of them going to adult prison. The fear built again inside him and he felt nauseas. "Please shut up Puck," he whispered. "Don't make this any worse."

Puck glared at Blaine, but kept quiet, and they waited once again in silence another fifteen minutes or so until the van did indeed pull up.

Their legs were shackled along with the cuffs around their wrists. Their phones were handed over to their new jailers, and they were shuffled off to the van, Blaine seated in front, Puck in the back. The trip to Cuyahoga was short and in no time, the van was let into the facility, barbed wire gates closing in behind them. They entered the building through metal detectors and locked gates, and were each taken into separate offices with individual case workers to complete their intake and process their paperwork. Their cuffs were finally removed. When all was said and done, their parents and guardians were finally notified. Blaine got to talk to Cooper for a whole two minutes. He thought it would have made him feel better, but instead it broke him further.

They spent their night in seclusion awaiting arraignment in the morning. Blaine didn't see Puck again as he was led to the cell he'd call home for the next 12 hours. As the door slammed shut behind him, the white brick walls immediately closed in on him. He took in his surroundings. A brick bed built into the wall was topped with a thin green mattress. A stainless steel toilet and sink were in the corner. He quickly ate the dinner that was left for him and slid the tray outside. He wasn't that hungry anyway. He curled up on the bed and closed his eyes, hopelessness and despair creeping in on him. Cooper's voice echoed in his head. Kurt's face swam beneath his eyelids. He drowned them both with tears all night long, until finally he cried himself to sleep.

Jake got to Puck's house just as his mother got the phone call. It wasn't the first time, and she didn't think it would be the last. Her only concern was that this time he'd be moved to adult court. Jake didn't really worry about it. The Puckerman's had a reputation there, his brother would be fine. But he did worry about Blaine.

Blaine would be eaten alive in adult prison. Anyone who knew anything about what went on there knew that, and his father had certainly told them enough stories. He shook the thought away. Puck would get a public defender, but Blaine would have the real deal, a lawyer who knew how to work the system and get the best for his client.

Jake stayed long enough for Puck's mom to stop crying, then he went back out in search of his father. The least he could do was show up for Puck tomorrow in court.

Cooper had arrived home late Sunday afternoon, hoping that the few hours alone he'd given Blaine would pull him out of whatever teenage melancholy he had gotten himself into. If it hadn't, he had plans. Plans of games and dinner and a movie and maybe tickling if he had to dig deep toward the last resort. But he pulled up in the driveway and saw Blaine's motorcycle gone and smiled. He was no doubt out with the Crew or at the shop with Kurt, and had picked himself up out of his funk as usual. Whatever trouble he was getting himself into was better in Cooper's mind then a day spent
depressed in bed.

His thoughts began to change though to worry when his texts and phone calls went unanswered. Blaine was a punk, but he always answered Cooper even if it was to tell him to fuck off. Cooper considered calling Burt to find out if he knew where Blaine was, but it felt somewhat like breaking a bro code and he sighed. Walking the line was the worst part of caring for Blaine and it was only getting harder as he grew older. Frankly he couldn't wait until Blaine turned 18 and they could just go back to being brothers. He settled in front of the television, watching some reality show involving hot girls lusting after a hot guy, something he'd never be allowed to watch if Blaine were here.

When curfew came and went though and he was still getting no answer from Blaine, Cooper truly started to panic. He should have called the shop while he had the chance, realizing too late that he didn't have Burt or Kurt's cell phone. He had Puck's number, but he wasn't answering either. A call to Nick's parents' home yielded no results. Then his phone rang. The number merely said State of Ohio and normally he wouldn't answer but today he tapped the screen faster than he could even think.

"Hello?" he answered in alarm.

"Is this Mr. Cooper Anderson?" a voice of authority asked.

"Dr. Cooper Anderson, yes," he said nervously.

"Dr. Anderson, my name is Lynda Flaherty I am with the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correction Facility." Cooper's breath hitched and his heart fell to the floor. His head immediately fell into his hands as he slumped into the couch. It was his worst nightmare for Blaine, other than a late night call from a hospital, and he felt the tears coming to his eyes already. "Blaine was arrested earlier this evening for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon and he's being held here. His arraignment is scheduled for the morning."

"Can I talk to him?" was all he could manage to say.

"Just for a minute," he was told and Cooper squeezed his eyes shut, taking a deep breath. He needed to be strong for Blaine. He knew all that was coming. And he needed to put everything brotherly aside.

"Coop?"

Cooper moved the phone aside so Blaine didn't hear the sob that escaped his lips hearing his brother sound so small, so broken. He could hear Blaine's tears, his fear, and his overwhelming regret. It was the same tone that he always heard just after he announced to the world what a fuck up he was, what a disappointment. Cooper swallowed hard and moved the phone back.

"What the hell did you do, Blaine?" Cooper demanded, knowing Blaine needed him to take control of the situation and not let him wallow.

"It was Kyle and his gang," Blaine stammered, his voice so frail and childlike. "They made me think they had Kurt…" Blaine trailed off as his emotions got the better of him.

"Ok, Blaine, don't say anything else," Cooper warned him not sure who was listening. "Our attorney will meet you at court in the morning. Everything's going to be okay," he added soothingly. "We'll get you out."

"They called Dad, Coop," Blaine choked out.
"Don't worry about Dad, Squirt," Cooper assured him, holding his ragged breath together for just a few more minutes, his mind racing with everything he needed to do. "You just keep your head down and do what you need to do. Stay safe and follow the rules. I'll handle the rest." He heard the woman in the background tell Blaine it was time. "I love you Squirt, I'll see you in the morning."

"Love you," Blaine whispered then quickly added. "Make sure Kurt's okay?"

"I will Blaine, I promise."

The phone was handed back to Lynda who provided Cooper with a few more details about the arraignment the next morning. He was informed that his mother and father did plan to attend. Cooper argued with her that they should not have been called, but she stated that as long as they still had parental rights that she had an obligation to inform them. He shook his head and said nothing else, thanking her for her time.

He didn't allow himself to worry, just did what he needed to do. He called their attorney. He packed a bag for Blaine just in case. He pulled out his guardianship papers to take to court in the morning. And he came up with a plan. A plan he knew Blaine wouldn't like at all.

Kurt hung up the phone and collapsed on the couch. "Cooper says that Blaine has court in the morning. I'm going."

Burt shook his head. "Kurt, you have school."

"Do you really think I'm going to be able to concentrate while Blaine is locked up for who knows how long?" Kurt snapped, then bowed his head apologetically. "Cooper didn't sound optimistic that he'd get out."

Burt sat next to him, staring at the floor, and rested a hand on Kurt's knee. "This certainly wasn't something I ever wanted you to have to deal with. I'll admit, I'm not sure what to do here."

"Well I am," Kurt said with certainty. He looked up at his dad, his eyes glistening. I need to be there for Blaine. Even if he doesn't even see me. I need to know I was there. I need him to know I was there."

Burt studied him as if he was seeing his son for the first time. Yesterday Kurt was his little boy. Today he was a man. "You love him," Burt said, and it wasn't a question. Nothing had ever been so obvious before in Kurt's life.

"With all my heart," Kurt answered.

"Then we'll both go," Burt decided.

Blaine sat in the small cold cell in the basement of the courthouse awaiting his arraignment. He'd seen Puck on the bus over, but neither boy had much to say, their nerves too shot from their night in seclusion and the worry over what was going to happen today. Blaine had every hope of being bailed out and sent home. This was his first arrest, the charges were minor considering, it could even be argued that he was acting in self-defense, though he honestly knew he wasn't. Still, he couldn't shake the feeling that it was all wishful thinking and he would be going back to Cuyahoga to stay.

The metal clanked and the lock turned and the bailiff's face appeared in the doorway. "Your attorney is here to meet with you. Come on."
Blaine stood warily, unsure of what he was supposed to do, but the bailiff reached an arm out and he walked toward him. The officer guided him with a hand to his shoulder and Blaine shuffled out, the cuffs around his ankles making it difficult to walk. He was led down the hallway and into a small room where a man he didn't recognize in a suit sat waiting for him. Blaine was let in, the door was closed behind them and Cooper stepped out from behind the corner where he'd been pacing.

"Blaine," he breathed.

Blaine fell like a little boy against Cooper's chest. Cooper wrapped his arms around him, but Blaine's hands were cuffed uncomfortably between them, preventing him from hugging back. Though Cooper clutched him closer when he realized, the distance between them felt like miles and Blaine couldn't help but break down.

Cooper had his chin in his hand in seconds. "Hey, none of that," he said wiping Blaine's tears away swiftly. "You've been pretending to be tough for years, well now you have to do it for real."

"Why?" Blaine said his eyes wide as his heart fell in his chest. He'd known. He'd known all along but he hadn't wanted to believe it. He still didn't. "You're going to get me out of here, right?" He glanced frantically back and forth between his brother and the ridiculously high priced lawyer who was supposed to be able to work magic.

"Have a seat Blaine," the attorney directed with gentle authority. Blaine looked back distrustfully at Cooper, but he sat and Cooper took the seat next to him. "Your parents went to probate court this morning," the man explained.

Blaine shook his head, which felt like it was in a fog. "I don't understand," Blaine murmured.

"They've filed to rescind their consent to the guardianship," Cooper said, reaching out for Blaine's hand and squeezing it tightly. Blaine started to panic immediately and Cooper quickly continued, his voice far stronger than he felt. "Blaine, I am not going to let that happen. If you had trusted me with everything from the beginning you would have known that and maybe you wouldn't be in this mess right now."

Blaine lowered his head and traced the circles in the wood on the table. "Kurt told you?" he asked, his voice low.

"Yes, Kurt told me," Cooper answered. "But you should have told me," he added pointedly. Blaine looked up at him through his lashes, shame reddening his cheeks. "And since you didn't, now there are consequences."

Blaine nodded. He'd completely fucked up and he'd had all night to think about it. "So what happens now?" Cooper looked up at the attorney. Blaine took in his brother's nervous eyes and his own whipped over to the other man. His eyes narrowed. "What aren't you telling me?"

Cooper nodded and the attorney explained. "With your parents vying for custody, the safest thing is for Cooper to ask for you to be held and evaluated."

Blaine pulled his hand out of Coopers as if it was burning him. He tried to get away, flying out of his chair but stumbling backwards, caught up in the restraints until Cooper rushed over to grab his arm. Blaine found his balance and then ripped his arm away. "How could you do this to me?" Blaine shouted with anger and fear, tears blurring his vision.

Cooper looked like he could cry himself. It broke his heart. It was the last thing he wanted to do, he
just wanted Blaine home, but that was all at risk if they just asked for bail. "If we ask for your release Mom and Dad are going to ask for you to go to them. They'll say I've been too easy on you, that I've let you get out of control. This may be your first arrest, but you're known up there. Your reports from school are terrible. If I don't put my foot down here then I just prove them right!"

"So you're throwing me away," Blaine said, nodding with resentful understanding. "I fucked up enough and so now you're just letting me go."

"No, Blaine, never," Cooper said, grabbing hold of him and not letting him go no matter how much Blaine fought against him. "This is how I hold on to you. This is how I know for sure I can keep you safe. I am not letting you go with them, I am not going to let them destroy you the way they want to. And if that means locking you up for 45 days so that I know you are okay for the rest of your life than that's what I'm going to do."

"What about me?" Blaine cried, though his resolve was weakening. "What about what I want?" He turned to the attorney. "Does what I want matter at all?"

"Yes," his attorney assured him. "If you don't want this, we won't do it. If you want to go for bail we will. Just know that I think it's a huge risk. It may mean you going with them."

Blaine stood quietly by himself, mulling it all over in his head. "Have Mom and Dad said what they'll do with me?" he asked, his voice tiny.

Cooper's bright blue eyes were suddenly dark and hard and his voice followed suit. "Yes."

It was only one word, but it was the only one Blaine needed. He sucked in his lips and rolled them between his teeth, nodding with a deep breath of acceptance. Cooper was right. This was their only choice and Blaine could be strong enough endure it. "Ok," he said and he stood up straighter. The tears were locked away. The fear was gone. He let his anger fuel him as he had for years before Kurt came in and made him vulnerable again. He could hold onto the wall for just a little bit longer. "45 days?" Blaine asked making sure.

Cooper nodded. "45 days."

Blaine climbed the staircase from the cells beneath the adult courtroom with great difficulty, his shorter legs held even tighter by the shackles around his ankles. The bailiff helped him up with a hand on his arm, then guided him through the packed courtroom and out the doors into the lobby. Blaine tried to hide his embarrassment as he quickly scanned the crowd. His eyes landed on Kurt, sitting right by the door next to Burt and he nearly lost his footing and fell weakly to his knees. Kurt shot him a look though, a reminder to hold his head high and to be brave and Blaine let it wash over him and settle in his heart.

He flashed Kurt a wink and a smirk and disappeared inside the courtroom.

His hands shook the moment he saw his parents in the gallery, but Cooper flashed his smile and his attorney ushered him over to the defense table. He looked around as the judge read through something in front of her and the court officer announced the case for the record. The ceiling was an intricate pattern of wood blocks that Blaine thought under different circumstances he could stare at for hours. The probation officer he'd met with when he'd first arrived that morning was sitting beside the judge, and the bailiff at the door was glancing between the court in session and the newspaper at his desk.
"Well well, seems I finally get to meet the infamous Mr. Anderson," the judge said, peering down at him from her bench as he stood beside his attorney. "This may be your first time before me, but your reputation precedes you." Blaine gripped the wooden chair in front of him, biting back the snarky response that would most likely ruin any and all plans that they had. Instead he focused on acting as contrite as possible. "The assistant district attorney is going to be reading the charges against you."

The woman standing at the other table picked up a folder with his name on it and began reading the police accounts of the events at Horseshoe Park. There were things that were correct and things that weren't and Blaine turned to his attorney to comment, but the man just placed a gentle hand on his to silence him.

"Thank you Attorney Jameson," the judge said when the ADA was done. "Mr. Anderson, I will not be making any decision today about your guilt or innocence. My only task today is to determine whether or not to set bail and send you home or hold you at the DYS facility for evaluation."

"Your honor, if you will, Mr. Anderson has something he wants to say," Blaine's attorney addressed the court.

"Very well," the judge answered, sitting back to listen.

Blaine looked back into the gallery. Cooper sat on one side of the aisle. His parents sat, faces stern and unyielding, on the other. The sight of them sent a fresh chill up his spine, but Cooper gave him an encouraging smile and he turned back around to the judge. "Your honor, I know that I've done some things in the past that haven't been good, but..." His thoughts turned to Kurt waiting outside for him and Blaine remembered everything he wanted to be for him. He thought of Cooper and hated how much he'd disappointed him. "But I don't want to be like that anymore. My brother, he's done everything for me and all I've done is take it for granted and thrown it away. Your honor, I want another chance to make things right with him, but I think..." he looked down, embarrassed to be saying this in front of his parents and a roomful of strangers. It was a speech meant to manipulate, but in truth he meant every word. "I think I need some time. Away from school. Away from home. To think. To get it right."

The judge looked at him, mildly impressed. "Thank you Mr. Anderson, I appreciate your thoughts." She looked up and over at Blaine's parents. "Mom and Dad, do you have anything you want to say?"

Blaine's head dropped, squeezing his eyes shut as his father's deep and commanding voice filled the courtroom. "Yes, your honor, thank you. My son," he said, placing heavy emphasis on the title, "is a good kid, but misguided. His brother means well, but Blaine needs a firmer hand than what Cooper can manage. We offered them a chance to make a go at this arrangement, but clearly it's not working. Blaine needs..." he paused, Blaine knew, searching for the right words, "more guidance." Fearful tears escaped Blaine's eyes and he quickly wiped them away, not wanting to give his father that kind of power. "His mother and I can pay whatever bail if the court will allows us to take him home. Where he belongs."

"Your Honor," Cooper interjected, tentatively standing.

"Yes, Dr. Anderson?" the judged said with a certain degree of familiarity that indicated the youngest Anderson may not have been the only one whose reputation preceded him.

"Your Honor, my brother came to live with my five years ago for reasons that I don't think need to be discussed today, but trust me, there were reasons. And they still exist today," he said with a glare to his parents. "But my father is right about one thing. Blaine is a good kid. He has a good
heart that has been broken too many times to count and he's just starting to put it back together. If he's forced to go with them, it will shatter beyond recognition." The judge's gaze pulled from Cooper and fell on Blaine. Blaine looked back, pleading with his eyes. If she believed nothing else, he begged her to believe this. Cooper continued. "Blaine and I both have some things to learn. He needs to understand there are consequences to his actions in the real world that I can't protect him from. I agree that we need some time apart for now. But please don't take him from me forever, because my heart would shatter as well."

Cooper sat, wiping away the wetness from his eyes and his parents sat as well. Everyone watched the judge as she sat back and silently mulled over her decision. After a minute's reflection, she sat forward and addressed the family. "I think I need time too," she told them all. "I'm ordering Mr. Anderson to DYS custody for a 45 day evaluation. I am aware that papers have been filed in probate court and my hope is that will be resolved by the end of Blaine's time."

The court clerk, the judge and the attorneys bounced around dates to bring him back and they were all dismissed from the court room. Cooper was ordered to go down and talk with probation.

Cooper came over and gave him a hug before he was escorted out. "I love you, Squirt, I'll see you in a few days, okay?"

Blaine nodded against his chest, leaving a trail of tears on Cooper's shirt.

His parents approached. "Blaine," his father said.

Blaine looked up at him, their eyes locked for just a moment and all Blaine felt was hate. He turned and started toward the door without a word, the bailiff following him.

He didn't glance at Kurt as he walked by, he couldn't. His eyes were fixed on the door ahead as his heart nearly beat out of his chest. He heard Kurt yelling behind him but he ignored everyone around him as he was walked back to his cell where he finally breathed a sigh of relief. 45 days started now.

"Blaine?" Kurt breathed in shock at seeing him still in cuffs exiting the courtroom. Blaine ignored him and Kurt turned to Cooper in a panic. "No," he shook his head, understanding what this means. "No!" Kurt cried.

Cooper grabbed him and pulled him in, just as he had his brother. "It's okay Kurt," Cooper soothed him, keeping his voice steady. "He's going to be okay."

"He'll be okay when we get him out of this town," Mr. Anderson spat behind them. They all turned to find him staring at Kurt, a look of disgust on his face. "This Blaine's latest twink?"

Cooper immediately saw Burt's chest rise and he placed a hand on the older man's shoulder, keeping his other protectively around Kurt, but he had eyes only for his father. "You can fight me all you want," Cooper told him, his voice strong and calm. "But I am never letting you take Blaine from me just to completely tear him apart. I'll do whatever it takes to keep him safe. So turn around, and go home, and I'll see you in court."
Kurt spent a restless night imagining where Blaine was sleeping, wondering if he was okay, if he was safe. Every time he closed his eyes and drifted off he dreamed of breaking through the walls and wrapping Blaine in his arms. It jarred him awake each time and Kurt would reach over to his phone, slowly scrolling through their history of text messages to one another. The third time, at 4am, Kurt sent Marley a quick text telling her he would be home sick from school on Tuesday. He also asked her to quietly slip into conversation that his phone was missing and promised to explain later. Finally at 5 in the morning, he fell asleep.

Burt tried desperately to wake him in the morning, but Kurt moaned and groaned into his pillow, begging to just be left alone to sleep. After seeing how red his eyes were, how pale his skin seemed in the morning light, he agreed. Burt knew Kurt wasn't ready to face the kids at school and if he were honest, Burt worried about him confronting Chandler while he was still so angry. The last thing he wanted was Kurt being suspended from school or worse, finding himself right next to Blaine and Puck. So while he wasn't keen on letting his son skip another day of school, he let Kurt sleep in a few more hours and picked him up at lunch to work in the shop.

Kurt dragged himself out of bed, his heart feeling as heavy as an anchor trying to keep him tied to his blankets and quickly dressed in sweats underneath his jumper. Blaine wasn't there, what he wore didn't matter. And he planned on getting dirty today anyway. He rode in silence next to his dad, his eyes drifting to the register where Blaine belonged one he got to the garage. He pulled himself away, shaking his head, and threw himself into the engine Burt assigned him to work on, his fury at Chandler's betrayal simmering steadily underneath the surface. His father had told him not to get revenge and while his heart said otherwise his head agreed. He wouldn't do anything. But only because he knew he wouldn't have to. Ending his friendship with Chandler, being a part of the Crew, and sticking firmly by Blaine's side when he got out of jail would be more than enough retribution.

On Wednesday Kurt decided that if he was going to do this, he was going to do it right. He dressed to kill, wearing skintight black jeans, calf-high black boots and a white long sleeved Henley shirt. He layered a black vest on top with silver chains hanging from his left top pocket, and snapped black leather cuffs onto his wrists. All that was missing was a black leather jacket and he'd be the picture perfect image by the side of Blaine Anderson. No one would doubt his commitment to the Crew and he wouldn't let anyone doubt their acceptance of him. He would hang with them, dress like them, and act like he owned the school with them, because he owed Blaine that much. At the end of the day he still might be one of the biggest dweebs at Shaker Hills, but the Crew had accepted him because Blaine had. Even if he felt like it was a façade, he was an actor. He would play the role if only to prove a point. Kurt Hummel was done being kicked around.

At Brittany's insistence, and much to Kurt's chagrin, she and Santana picked him up in the morning and together they strutted into the halls of Shaker Hills, sending deadly glares to anyone who passed. The rumors had been spread throughout the school, Santana and Brittany had told him, but it was mostly the jocks' side of the story. Whatever the gossip had been, everyone knew that Anderson and Puckerman were locked up and they knew that Kurt had something to do with it. The popular assumption seemed to be that Kurt had somehow set him up and the Crew would destroy him for what had happened to their leader and right hand man. So when Kurt walked in, arm in arm with Santana, the halls of Shaker Hills were turned upside down and whispers and new rumors immediately began to fly.

The new rumor mill hadn't quite reached Chandler and Harmony yet as they talked by Chandler's
locker, when the metal door slammed shut with a crash. Chandler jumped back and Harmony turned a questioning look at the two girls staring them down in front of them. Santana and Brittany glared menacingly, making Harmony shrink back into herself. It was one thing for the brunette to be throwing a death glare, but she'd never seen Brittany so angry before.

Chandler brushed it off though, feeling more powerful than he ever had before, and crossed his arms across his chest with a smirk. "Can I help you?" he asked in his bitchiest tone. Santana and Brittany parted as Kurt revealed himself from just around the corner. If they thought the girls' looks could kill, they had nothing on the cold blue flames emanating from Kurt's eyes.

"Kurt?" Harmony asked with confusion. "What's going on?" But she quickly noticed how Chandler inched back away from Kurt guiltily. He was quite familiar with that look, and the fact that it was now directed at him for the first time made him gulp with fear. Kurt must have found his phone.

Kurt turned to her, his face hard. "I'm sure you've heard by now that Blaine and Puck were arrested on Sunday," he said, continuing before she could answer. "But you have no idea what actually happened yet, do you?" he asked turning his accusing glare back on Chandler. "Care to share with the class Chandler?"

"How would he…?" Harmony questioned, slowly backing away as Kurt took another step toward Chandler. "What's going on Kurt? You're starting to scare me."

"Oh, you haven't seen scary yet," Kurt said through gritted teeth as he stepped so close to Chandler that the boy's back was pressed against the lockers, his eyes open wide with terror. Though Kurt spoke to Harmony, his eyes remained locked with Chandler's, and he spoke slowly and deliberately. "You see Harm, our little friend here lied to me, and used me, and set everything in motion."

"What?" Harmony asked, glancing in-between Kurt and Chandler.

"That's not-"

Kurt slammed his fist into the locker, just beside Chandler's head, cutting him off. Harmony gasped, shocked by Kurt's anger. "That's exactly what happened," he shouted, all eyes in the hallway suddenly stopped and on him. Kurt felt Brittany's hand on his shoulder and he took a deep breath to remind himself of his promise to his father before continuing. "Chandler made a deal with Kyle to use me as bait to get Blaine and Puck arrested."

Harmony quickly turned to Chandler, her eyes narrowing. "You what?"

"I didn't," Chandler squeaked.

"You are a liar," Kurt said, his voice incredibly calm but his eyes blazing. "I don't know what you were thinking, not erasing the text message you sent to Blaine. Or did I come back too soon? Maybe you thought I wouldn't find my phone? Well, I did. And I saw how you told him that Kyle had me and beat me up. And I followed you to Horseshoe Park, just in time to see them get arrested."

"But I…I was just…"

"You were just what, Chandler? Being a jealous bitch? Acting like you had any right over who I spent time with?" Kurt asked, his voice breaking from all the anger he felt. "The worst part is that you had to know your plan would only work if Blaine truly loved me. If he cared enough about me to come running to save me. It's bad enough that you used me as bait but what you were really
"I was only trying to protect you!" Chandler said, his voice going an octave higher.

"From what? Falling in love with someone who wasn't you?!"

Chandler shook his head fervently, his eyes wide. "You're not in love with him!"

"Yes. I am," Kurt said with a smug smirk, not caring at all that his confession would hurt Chandler. "And even if I wasn't, after this, I would never be with you. I would never fall in love with a sniveling little back-stabbing bitch like you."

"Kurt," Chandler whispered brokenly.

"Do not ever speak to me again," Kurt said, his tone dark and he stepped back to grab Brittany's hand before his anger got the better of him. "We are no longer friends. And when Blaine and Puckerman get back and come after you, don't expect me to be here to call them off because I won't. All your hard work to get me to stay away from the Crew only shoved me right into their grasp. So don't expect me to hang out with our friends when you're around, don't wait for me at lunch, and don't think for a minute that once I calm down you'll be able to get back in my good graces. We are done." Kurt turned to Harmony, whose face was mixed with shock and grief. His voice softened with his eyes. "I'm never going to make you or Marley choose sides, Harmony, I won't do that like everyone tried to do to me. But know that if he's around, I'm gone. I don't believe in violence, but I will not hesitate to hit him if he doesn't leave me alone. I'll see you in class," he said, kissing her cheek lightly, before walking down the hall hand in hand with Brittany, leaving Santana behind.

Santana turned to Harmony who was gaping after Kurt. "Leave," she said firmly and Harmony scurried off with one brief glance behind her, feeling like she was in a daze. Santana turned to a terrified Chandler. "Here's the deal, dweeb. You even look my boy Hummel's way, and I will ends you. You're lucky Kurt insisted I let him take care of you cause had it been me, you would be well on your way to the hospital right now. Kurt's one of us now and trust me when I tell you that I will make your life a living hell if you come at him." Chandler whimpered, unable to control the tears of fear and pain that streamed down his cheeks. She raised her voice slightly for everyone to hear. "Just because Puckerman and Anderson are gone for now don't mean that Anderson's Crew is any less in charge. I'm running this shit now and we, Kurt included, will not for one moment hesitate to remind the school who runs this place. Nod if you understand Chachi," she said turning back to him. "Hearing you speak might push me over the edge and I really don't want to get blood on this dress." Chandler nodded frantically. "Peachy," Santana said before walking off. Chandler ran to the bathroom in tears as soon as she was gone.

Kurt let out the smallest sigh of relief when he stepped out into the courtyard. Finally he could get a little break from glaring angrily at the whispering students that passed him by. His outburst at Chandler combined with his new acceptance from the Crew set the rumor mill ablaze once more and Kurt was about ready to snap. He wished desperately that Blaine was there to hold his hand and help him learn how to make this strange transition from dweeb to Crew member. But since he wasn't, Kurt would have to hold on to the strength he had left and muddle through.

43 days. He could make it for 43 more days.
"Sup, Kitty Cat," Jeff greeted as Kurt sat down next to Brittany. Kurt sent him an exhausted smile, wordlessly opening up his lunch bag and pulling out his sandwich. "You hangin with us after school?"

"I have to work," Kurt said with a sigh. The shop felt so lonely without Blaine. "Besides, I don't hang."

"You do now," Jeff said, his mouth full of food. Kurt scoffed though a smirk crept up his lips. "You can't be in the Crew and not hang."

"He's right ya know," Santana said, looking at her fingernails as she filed them. "We skipped the bleachers this morning for reasons, but you bet yo ass is gon' be there tomorrow."

"He needs a leather jacket too," Jake said, smirking at the look of offence on Kurt's face.

"Oh hell no," Kurt snorted, but he was already mentally going through his closet picking out everything that would go with a leather jacket.

"Hell, yes!" Jeff quickly corrected him. "I'm taking you out to buy one this weekend!"

"After being locked up for 45 days, Blaine will explode the moment he sets eyes on you decked out in leather looking hotter than fuck," Santana smirked.

That image was one Kurt couldn't get out of his mind, and as he glanced at the Crew members, including Quinn who watched him silently, he let a smirk play at the corner of his lips. "Guess I don't have a choice then," he whined, but his eyes were shining with desire.

"No," the Crew answered simultaneously.

"My dad is going to hate you guys," Kurt said, shaking his head with a laugh. "He was already grilling me this morning over this outfit."

"Your dad is scary," Nick said. Jeff nodded in agreement with wide eyes.

Santana scoffed, setting her nail filer down to take a bite of food. "Please. I ain't scared of Papa Hummel. Your badboy gear is totally hot, Pretty Pony."

"Said the lesbian," Jake smirked and Santana turned to him with surprise.

"Well look at baby Puckerman stepping up to the plate," she said with great approval.

"And look at Blaine's girl, calling Kurt your Pretty Pony?" Jake asked with a raised brow. "What about Blaine?"

"He's sex on a stick. You know that," Santana said with a shrug. Kurt immediately looked down, unable to control the sudden blush. Santana was the first to notice, smiling mischievously as she leaned over the table. "I bet you and Blaine have all kinds if kinky sex, don't you?" Jeff snickered as Kurt's face turned a deeper red. "Wanky."

"I hate you all," Kurt grumbled, stabbing at his food as his new friends laughed at him.

No one heard the door to the courtyard open and close, but Jake felt the sudden presence and looked up from his lunch. His heart stilled when he saw who it was. "Kurt," he said, nodding behind him.

Kurt turned around, his face softening when he saw it was Marley. "I'll be right back, guys" he
said, getting up from the table and walking over to her.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Kurt asked with concern.

"I can't sit there anymore Kurt," Marley said quietly, her voice full of desperation. "I tried. Yesterday was bad enough, having to listen to them go on and on about how much better you were going to be now that Blaine was gone. But now? Listening to them badmouth you and defend Chandler like he's some saint? I can't. I won't." She looked at him bashfully. "I kinda told them off and stormed away. But I didn't really know where to go."

Kurt sighed, glancing at the Crew behind him before looping his arm through Marley's. "Come on," he said confidently. They walked to the table together, Kurt looking squarely at Santana while Marley kept her head down. "Marley's gonna sit with us," Kurt said, though his tone indicated that he was asking.

Santana eyed Marley up and down, taking a quick glance at Jake who was trying to appear nonchalant. Santana wasn't stupid. She knew Jake had a thing for Marley and it was time for everyone to stop dictating who the Crew was allowed to date. "By all means," Santana said, gesturing to the bench. She felt a hand reach out to hers, squeezing it with pride, and she smiled coyly over to Brittany. She knew for sure she'd done what Blaine would have wanted.

Marley smiled appreciatively while Jake did his best to hide his excitement. "Thanks. It's just for today. I'll find somewhere else to sit tomorrow," she said as they sat.

Santana shrugged. "Today, tomorrow. Whatever. I'm sure Jakey here doesn't mind. Do you?"

"Why are you asking me? You're the one who's in charge now," Jake said shifting under Santana's gaze.

"Your brother's the one who'd throw a fit," Santana said matter-of-factly.

"Well he's not here, and things are gonna be different went they get back," Jake said his voice clipped. He turned to Marley and offered a small smile. "I don't mind if you sit with us." Marley smiled back, looking away shyly. "We'll deal with Puck and Blaine when the time comes."

"I'll deal with Blaine," Kurt said unintentionally. All eyes were on him, Santana and Jeff wearing the same smirk. "Oh come on, I didn't mean it like that!"

"Uh, huh," Santana said, laughing at the embarrassed look on Kurt's face. Keeping him around was going to fun.

Quinn watched the Crew tease Kurt, feeling a sense of loss. They had barely acknowledged her presence since Monday, Jeff acting as if she wasn't there at all, and it hurt. But she didn't fight with them and she didn't try to talk to them. She guessed it was what she deserved. They could have easily told her to get lost but they hadn't and for that she was grateful. She didn't know where else she would go, they were all she had. In that way, she and Marley were alike. But she still didn't understand what the Crew saw in Kurt, especially now as they fully embraced him as one of them. The bell rang and they picked up their trash and belongings, and Quinn pulled Santana aside.

"Why are you letting him in like this Santana?" Quinn asked sincerely, truly needing to at least try to make sense of it. "After everything that's happened. I just don't understand."

"Because Blaine loves him," Santana said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world. "The kind of love where you would do anything and risk everything, to make sure they're safe. Maybe
you've never felt that kind of love—"

"I have," Quinn breathed, and she looked off reminiscently into the distance.

Santana smiled softly, not knowing, but believing her. "Then you do understand."

Harmony stood at the end of the hall, watching Kurt put his books away before he headed out. Earlier she had been torn in two, not sure who or what to believe. But a day with barely any contact from Kurt and a lot of hearing Chandler cry and lament over what he had lost made it easy for her to decide. She still didn't know the whole story. Well, maybe she did, and she just didn't want to believe that what Kurt said was true. But what she did know was she missed him, a lot more than she would have thought possible, and she needed him to stay in her life. With a deep breath, she swallowed her fear and walked over.

"Hey," she said tentatively as he was closing his locker.

Kurt glanced over her shoulder, no doubt searching for Chandler, before resting against the lockers with a small smile. "Hey there," he said softly.

"I missed you today," Harmony told him, her shoulders slumping.

Kurt sighed. "I know. I missed you too. But I can't be around you when he's around, Harm. I just can't."

"I know," Harmony nodded, leaning next to him. "That's why I was hoping that maybe we could have a sleepover at my place soon..." She trailed off as she caught a glimpse of Nick at the end of the hall. For a second their eyes met, then he turned and walked away. "Look, I know you don't want to get in the way of my or Marley's friendship with him, but honestly, if I had to choose you or him, it's you. I just need to know the truth."

Kurt inhaled deeply, taking in Harmony's pleading eyes before nodding. "Ok. We'll do a sleepover this weekend and I'll tell you everything. I need something to keep my mind off of Blaine anyway," he added with a frown.

"Are you going to be able to see him?" She asked.

Kurt shook his head as tears pricked his eyes. "No. No one under 18 can visit," he said softly.

Harmony grabbed his hand and squeezed it. "That sucks. Can you at least write?" she asked supportively. He nodded sadly and she offered a soft smile, but pulled away when Nick started walking toward them.

"Hey. You ready to go?" Nick asked him, his eyes lingering on Harmony's sparkling blue. Kurt quickly wiped away the tears from his eyes and Nick pretended he didn't see them. Just like Kurt pretended he didn't notice Nick's extra long look to Harmony and her reticent blush.

"Yeah, I'm ready," Kurt said glancing between the two.

"Where are you guys going? Some sort of secret Crew hangout?" Harmony asked jokingly, though her voice trembled slightly.

"Just giving him a ride to the shop," Nick said, wanting more than anything to pull Harmony into his arms.
"Oh," Harmony said, keeping her face down. She may have been the one to end things with Nick but that didn't mean she cared any less.

Kurt raised a brow at the awkward tension that filled the air, deciding that now was not the time. "I'll see you tomorrow, Harm," he said, pulling her in for a hug.

Harmony held him tightly before letting go and walking back the way she came. Kurt and Nick started the opposite direction, Nick glancing behind them to catch one final glimpse at Harmony. He needed to talk to her again and soon. He needed to win her back.

Nick was quiet in the car ride to the shop. Seeing Harmony without the secret thrill of sneaking around behind everyone's back, knowing that he wouldn't be seeing her at all, was too hard. Kurt clearly noticed.

"You okay?" Kurt asked, giving him a curious glance.

Nick glanced over, then turned back to the road. "I should be asking you that, don't ya think?" Kurt just shrugged and stared out the window. Nick frowned and decided broaching a subject that had been skirting in the back of his mind for a while now. "Can I ask you something? About Kyle?"

Kurt raised a brow. "You mean why does he hate me so much?"

"Yeah," Nick nodded. "I mean, he fucks with all the dweebs, but he seems to have it particularly out for you."

Kurt sighed and looked back out the window. "The second day of junior year, when he first harassed me, instead of taking it and disappearing like the rest, I told him off in front of everyone, in the middle of the hallway. I remember Chandler muttering behind me not to talk back, but I ignored him. I'd had plenty of experience with bullies like Kyle," he explained, recalling hours he'd spent with Dave, understanding why. "I know them better than they know themselves and the fact is, they don't scare me. I'm better than them and I know it, so why the hell should I take their crap?" Kurt said. He took a breath and continued. "Kyle kept trying after that, desperate to intimidate me, but I never backed down. As time went on, his hatred for me just kept growing."

"And you never told anyone?" Nick asked, his brows furrowed. "Not the principal or guidance?"

Kurt looked at him like he was crazy. "Did you and the Crew ever get an adult involved in any of your battles?" he scoffed. "Besides, he's the star of the football team. Been there, done that and I know how it goes. Those guys are untouchable. That's the only reason Blaine's in jail right now."

"What about your Dad?" Nick suggested. "He definitely doesn't seem the type of guy that would be intimidated by a high school football star. Or one to let his kid get beaten up."

Kurt went quiet, meeting Nick's eyes for a moment before looking down at his hands. "My dad… he has heart problems. I can't tell him what's going on. He worries about me enough as it is, I can't put that kind of strain on him."

"Oh." Nick nodded slowly. He wasn't sure he agreed with Kurt, but he didn't know the whole story. He could understand Kurt's fears.

"Yeah," Kurt said with a small shrug. "But it's fine. I'm a Hummel and I can handle whatever Kyle and his stupid goons have up their idiotic sleeves. They can throw at me whatever they want. After what they did to Blaine, I'm not letting any of them ever get the best of me." Nick smiled and pulled up to the shop. "Thanks for the ride," he said with a small smile.
"Sure thing. See ya under the bleachers tomorrow," Nick told him with a smirk.

Kurt rolled his eyes. "Do I really have to?"

"Yes," Nick said with a nod. "If you don't, Jeff will most likely toss you over his shoulder and bring you there himself."

"Oh God," Kurt groaned as he opened the door, not for a moment doubting Nick. "Fine. I'll be there. Dressed to the nines," he added with a wink before heading into the garage.

Nick chuckled, waving at Kurt and Burt, who was watching him, before driving off.

Being at school without Blaine was absolute hell and by Friday, Kurt was more than ready for an escape, not just from the gossiping student body, but from the Crew too. Though he'd grown to like many of them individually, he still felt strongly like an imposter. Even firmly by Blaine's side it had been hard, but without him it was exhausting to maintain the necessary façade. Still, he'd grown to accept the fact that he would be a part of them now for the rest of the year. He accepted the fact that his life at Shaker Hills was changed forever.

What he hadn't, and wouldn't, accept was that half his heart might as well be a million miles away, unable to hold him, see him, or even talk to him. And in the moments when it hit him hardest, he found himself walking in a daze, his mind in the cell he'd made up in his head instead of on the world around him.

Kurt pulled his keys out of his pocket, feeling the weight of the world on his shoulders as he walked out of the school building Friday afternoon to head to his truck. He felt tremendous guilt over his desire to just soak in the tub for a while before heading over to Harmony's for a sleepover. His thoughts always drifted to Blaine, unable to be with his friends, certainly not able to relax in a bath. He looked forward to going shopping with Jeff over the weekend to supplement his wardrobe with some more badboy-esque clothing and accessories, but he wished he was going with Blaine instead. He tried to make himself feel better by planning to get Blaine a few things for his homecoming.

His thoughts were interrupted by the strong grip of fingers twisting through his hair and a hand he recognized all too well that covered his mouth.

"Let's talk, Kurtie," Kyle whispered harshly in his ear.

Kurt struggled to get away, fear wracking through his body as he was dragged behind the school. Kyle was too strong though, despite his body still healing from the wounds inflicted by Blaine and Puck. He tossed Kurt against the fence, delivering a hard kick in the gut before Kurt even saw it coming.

"You just couldn't keep your cock-sucking mouth shut could you?" Kyle snarled with another hard kick. "You just had to tell everyone that we set up your pathetic little boyfriend." Kyle grabbed Kurt by the hair again, lifting him up as he bent forward so they were face to face. "Well now I'm going to make sure that you can't say shit about anything. I hope your daddy's heart doesn't give out when he finds you beaten to death at the hospital," he sneered, pulling back and punching Kurt square across the jaw. Kurt couldn't help but scream.

Quinn was walking behind the building, her head down, cigarette in hand. The Crew was supposed to be meeting under the bleachers but she wasn't sure if she would go. It wasn't like any of them
truly wanted her there anyway, at this point they were just putting up with her. But when she heard
the unmistakable sound of screaming, her vision instantly shifted from the ground to the sight of
Kyle pounding away at Kurt, curled up on the ground. Without a second thought, she grabbed her
keys from her pocket, ran up to the jock and pepper sprayed his eyes before landing an impressive
right hook, her keys firmly in hand.

"Fuck!" Kyle cried out and staggered back. He turned to slam his assailant but stepped back when
he saw it was Quinn. "This isn't over, Hummel," he warned Kurt before running off toward his
truck.

"Shit, Kurt," Quinn said as she knelt down next to him. Kurt spit out some blood, sitting back on
the fence before turning to look at her. He looked awful. "Kyle really does not like you."

Kurt laughed humorlessly, wincing at the sudden pain. "You're just now figuring that out?"

Quinn shook her head, her hand gingerly holding Kurt's face to examine it. "What the hell were you
doing out here by yourself anyway? I thought the Crew was escorting you everywhere."

"I wasn't," Kurt groaned as he started to stand, allowing Quinn to help him up. "I was walking out
of the building and he grabbed me, pulled me here."

"Come on," Quinn said, flinging Kurt's shoulder around her for support. "We gotta get you over to
the bleachers."

"Kurt!" Brittany cried, her hands flying to her mouth when Kurt and Quinn came into view.

Jeff and Nick ran to them, grabbing hold of Kurt from either side as Quinn stepped away. "What
the fuck happened?" Jeff asked, an accusing tone slipping through as he directed the question at
Quinn.

"It was Kyle," Kurt answered, not wanting Jeff to assume the worst. "Quinn found me and pepper
sprayed him." Jeff and Nick sat Kurt down, hovering over him to inventory his wounds while
Quinn stepped into the background. "That was a mean right hook too," Kurt told her with a smirk.

"Nice going, Fabray," Santana commended as she walked over, her focus on Kurt. "Lift your shirt."
Kurt did as he was told, the Crew inhaling sharply at the forming bruises.

"I'm going to fucking kill him," Jeff said through gritted teeth, pulling a plain white tee from his
bag and wiping the blood off Kurt's face.

"No," Kurt said, snatching the shirt away from Jeff so he could clean himself. "That's how Blaine
and Puck got arrested. I'm not going to let anyone else get in trouble too."

"And what? We're just supposed to sit back and let you get your ass beat?" Jeff asked angrily but
Nick placed a calming hand on his shoulder.

"He can't keep using you as a punching bag, Kurt," Nick said, his anger as strong but his wits
stronger. "I know you don't want to hear this, but I think you need to tell your dad."

"Absolutely not," Kurt said, sending daggers to Nick.

"Kurt, you have to tell someone if you won't let us take care of it," Quinn said quietly, all eyes
suddenly on her. "He's not going to stop coming after you, especially with Blaine gone."
"Not my Dad," Kurt said and his answer was final.

"What about Cooper?" Brittany suggested. "He's always taken care of Blaine. He's a doctor. He could look at your bruises and maybe he could help with Kyle."

"That's actually not a bad idea," Santana said proudly. "Don't he and Kyle's father work together? Maybe Cooper could talk to him, ya know, discretely."

"No," Kurt shook his head. "We are not getting any adults involved. If it gets back to my dad…"

"It's going to get back to your dad anyway when you're in the damn hospital," Nick said, kneeling down in front of him. "Jeff and I will go with you to talk to Cooper if you want, but you have to tell someone. Someone who's going to be on your side."

"Please, Kurt," Brittany said softly. "If Blaine had talked to Cooper in the first place, maybe we wouldn't be in this mess now."

Kurt looked at Brittany, always the wisest of them all when it really mattered. He looked at the others, his eyes landing lastly on Quinn. He was surprised by the worried look on her face. But Kurt knew that she had heard Kyle's threat. And while the last thing he wanted to do was get any adults involved, he was starting to realize he didn't have a choice. With a reluctant sigh, he nodded.

"Ok. I'll talk to Cooper. But I don't need a babysitter. I'm going myself."

Kurt accepted a ride to the hospital, once again letting Jeff drive him while Nick followed behind. But the boys only walked him so far as the main entrance, then Kurt forced them against their wills to leave. He appreciated their support, but this wasn't between the Crew and Cooper. This was between Kurt and his boyfriend's brother. Even if Blaine wasn't really his boyfriend yet.

He made his way to cardiology, getting some strange looks along the way, and Kurt realized he must look pretty banged up. He walked up to the front desk. "Excuse me, is Dr. Anderson here?"

"Do you have an appointment?" she asked and Kurt could see the nurse behind the counter eyeing him oddly as well.

"Uh, no, but my name's Kurt. If you could just tell him I'm here I'm sure-"

"Blaine's Kurt?" the nurse with the nametag Beth asked behind the counter. Kurt nodded shyly and she waved him back behind the door as she quickly went to meet him. "Are you okay, what happened?"

Kurt shook his head, wanting no one but Cooper to know and she understood. She took him to a small examining room. "He was called down to the ER on an emergency consultation, but he should be back up soon. I'll page him just to make sure."

"Thanks," he said quietly and he nervously wrung his hands as he waited for Cooper. He still didn't know what he was going to say. He had no idea how Cooper would react or if he could be trusted not to tell his father. But he also knew that not telling Cooper was what got Blaine into so much trouble in the first place. If he could avoid the same mistake, then he would, for all of their sakes.

"Kurt?" Kurt froze, his back to Cooper. "What's going on? What are you doing here?" Kurt took a shaky breath, slowly turning around. "Oh my God! What happened?" Cooper gasped, shifting into doctor mode immediately. He walked over to Kurt and took his face into his hands.
Kurt allowed Cooper to examine his face, wincing slightly at the pain. "It's ok. I'm fine."

"You most certainly are not fine," Cooper said, guiding him to the exam table. "Take a seat." Kurt did as he was told as Cooper pulled out some gauze and disinfectant from one of the drawers. He sanitized his hands and put on his gloves before pulling up his seat in front of Kurt. "What happened?" he asked, as he started treating the cut on his lip, his tone less friendly and more authoritative than Kurt had ever heard it before.

He tried to turn away, but Cooper had his face tight in his hands, so he merely lowered his eyes. He said he would do this and it was now or never. "It was Kyle Johnson," he confessed, his voice breaking.

Cooper stopped his ministrations and Kurt looked up. Cooper's eyes had gone cold, contrasting sharply with the gentleness of his voice. "Is this because of Blaine?"

Kurt nodded, the floodgates starting to open as he bit his lip to keep it from trembling. "It's my own fault. All of this, everything is my fault. If I hadn't gotten so close to Blaine or tried to force his hand at being open about us. If I hadn't let Chandler keep me from going to Blaine like I should have on Sunday. He'd be out, and maybe we'd be..." Kurt couldn't hold back the tears and Cooper took off his gloves and wrapped his arms around Kurt while he sobbed. Cooper understood. He'd done plenty of his own crying the last few days with no one there to hold him. He had wished there was, but Cooper had always been alone in all this. In caring for Blaine and now in fighting for him. Kurt shivered against him and wiped his eyes, pulling away. "Sorry-" he started, but Cooper shook his head.

"Kurt stop. None of this is your fault, and don't you ever be sorry for loving Blaine," Cooper told him, gripping his arms strongly. "He's never had anyone before who's loved him without betraying him, so don't you dare ever be sorry."

"He's had you," Kurt said looking up at him, and Cooper barely nodded. He'd never meant to betray Blaine. But somehow his brother had learned that even Cooper couldn't be trusted, so it felt the same.

"So what happened with you and Kyle," Cooper pressed, changing the subject, going back to Kurt's wounds.

"My dad was right," Kurt explained quietly. "I shouldn't have confronted Chandler. If I hadn't it would never have gotten around school that Kyle had teamed up with him to attack Blaine. But they did and he grabbed me after school today. Beat the crap out of me. He's been threatening me for months, guess he figured today was the day." Kurt shrugged. "Quinn found me, took me to the Crew. I've always just handled it on my own but..." Kurt looked up at Cooper, eyes shining anew with tears. "I don't think I can anymore."

"It's gonna be okay," Cooper assured him as he finished with all the visible wounds. "Alright, where else are you hurt?"

Kurt slowly pulled up his shirt, closing his eyes as pain shot through him. Cooper steeled his anger at the purple and blue bruises that were forming. "We need to get that x-rayed Kurt."

"No!" Kurt nearly shouted, then took a deep breath. "They'd bill the insurance and, I mean, my Dad can't find out about this. He has heart problems, he can't take the stress. Kyle knows that, he's been using it against me all year."

"That kid thinks the world belongs to him and he's going to be in for a rude awakening he finds out
he's not," Cooper snapped under his breath as he reached for a gown, then turned back to Kurt who seemed resolute. "Fine, here's what we're going to do. I need you to change into this gown so I can check these bruises. Then if I am certain nothing's broken, then we'll wrap you up. And then we are going to finish this conversation, ok?" Kurt nodded bashfully as he slipped his shirt off. "Ok. I'll be right back."

Cooper walked out, needing a moment to himself and a breath of fresh air. A hundred different questions ran through his mind as he grabbed the supplies he needed, quickly glancing at the time before walking back into the room, determined to get some answers. Kurt looked up at him when he walked in, a worried but appreciative smile on his lips.

"Lay down for me," Cooper instructed as he set everything down. Kurt took a deep breath but did as he was told. He winced in pain as Cooper pressed down on his torso but didn't complain, grateful for Cooper's help. Cooper sat him back up and checked his back, a small sigh of relief escaping his lips. "Okay, it doesn't seem like anything's broken so that's good. The bruises will take a while to heal." Cooper grabbed a tube of cream from the supplies. "I'm going to put some of this on, it'll help ease the swelling and inflammation and dull the pain a bit. Then we'll bandage you up."

"Thank you," Kurt said quietly, his gaze on the floor.

"It's no problem," Cooper said as he started applying the cream. "Now, tell me what's going on with your father. You said he has some heart problems?"

Kurt nodded. "Yeah. He had a heart attack a few years back. He insists he's fine, but I can tell he's not. He gets out breath easily. Sometimes when he thinks I'm not looking I can see him grabbing hold of something, like he's dizzy."

"And you said Kyle's using this against you? How does he even know about it?" Cooper asked.

Kurt frowned. "Dr. Johnson is my father's cardiologist. I don't know how, but Kyle said he read my Dad's chart and knows that he has a weak heart."

Cooper raised an eyebrow. "Kurt, that's a very serious offense. If Dr. Johnson knowingly let his son see your Dad's records, he could lose his license to practice and be fined thousands of dollars. He could even go to jail."

"Kyle didn't say how he got it, he just said that he did," Kurt said quietly.

Cooper's mind went into motion planning his next move, but he stopped himself as he remembered the boy in front of him, sitting emotionally and physically broken. "How long has Kyle been harassing you?" Cooper asked as he started wrapping Kurt's torso.

"Since the beginning of last year. I've been bullied since I was a kid, I've gotten pretty good at hiding it." Cooper nodded as he handed Kurt back his shirt. Blaine had been the same way, always trying to hide the truth from everyone around him. "My Dad really can't find out Cooper. He's worried about me enough as it is."

"Kurt, he's your dad. It's his job to worry," Cooper started.

"No, you don't understand," Kurt said quickly, his eyes sad. "I...something happened to me, at the end of my sophomore year, and he...he can't find out about this too Cooper. Please. I came to you because I trusted you. Blaine says..." Kurt stopped, knowing how his words might feel right now in the midst of everything, but he had to say it. "Blaine says you've always protected him. I don't
know from what, but I need that too right now. If my Dad finds out, I don't know if his heart can take it and I can't risk losing him too."

Cooper stepped back to take a good look at Kurt. Right now he was feeling helpless, unable to protect Blaine from anything. But he could do this. He'd promised Blaine he would make sure Kurt was okay. And maybe by protecting Kurt he could help Blaine as well. "I won't tell your dad Kurt. But if he ever asks me, I won't lie to him either."

Kurt took a deep breath and nodded. "I understand," he said quietly. "So what do I do now, about Kyle? The Crew said they would take care of him but that's just going to land them in jail like Blaine and Puck. I don't know what to do."

"I'll take care of it," Cooper promised without hesitation. "You stay as far away from Kyle as possible, stick with the Crew for protection, and I'll get him to leave you alone. Alright?" Cooper asked, placing a comforting hand on Kurt's shoulder.

Kurt nodded, offering him a small but relieved smile. "Thank you."

Cooper smiled back, praying that he would indeed be able to stop this nonsense once and for all. "Anytime."

Kurt got up and gathered his things but he turned back for a moment. "Are you going to visit Blaine soon?" he asked, wishing he could go himself.

"Tomorrow morning," Cooper told him. "Visiting hours are between 8-11."

"How's he doing," Kurt asked, biting his lip to keep from crying again.

"He's okay," Cooper said, knowing he wouldn't tell Kurt any differently no matter the truth.

Kurt shuffled his feet on the floor, then looked over at Cooper, eyes running over with sadness. "Tell him I love him. Okay?"

Cooper smiled softly and nodded. "Of course."

Kurt's lips offered a ghost of a smile, before he turned and started to head back home.
Locked Up

Kurt wrapped his arms around him. Blaine nuzzled into his neck breathing in his intoxicating scent of vanilla, sandalwood and a hint of morning mist that matched the tears in Blaine's eyes.

"I love you so much," Kurt whispered in his ear, and the feel of Kurt's skin, Kurt's everything, against his was the most perfect thing he had ever felt.

"I love you too Kurt. More than anything in the world," he breathed, but it got caught in the sparks of pleasure racing through his body. "Oh god," he groaned as Kurt slipped inside him and it was like the piece of the puzzle he'd been missing his entire life was finally found and he knew everything that he was and was meant to be. "Make love to me Kurt." Blaine shuddered and Kurt moved, so slow and sure that he didn't know how long he would be able to take the excruciatingly delicious dance. "God Kurt, I don't know how…I'm gonna-

Blaine was awoken from his dream too early for anyone to be roused from the blissful escape of sleep. The lights were snapped on, the boys around him in the dormitory style room were moaning and groaning at being so rudely awoken at 6am and Blaine lay in his top bunk, hard and sweating, his heart racing. The same as he had every morning since seeing Kurt in the courthouse lobby.

"Outta bed Anderson," the staff demanded, rattling the metal of the bed so that Blaine felt it in the coils that held the thin mattress beneath him.

It was a thing far easier said than done for Blaine Anderson.

His reputation preceded him not only in the courtroom but also at Cuyahoga where not everyone was nearly as tolerant as the kids at Shaker Hills. Most of the boys were happy to jerk off in their beds or at least in the bathroom where they were still monitored but some level of privacy remained. But most boys were not openly gay. And none of them wanted even the impression that they might be the object of Blaine's fantasies.

The last thing he wanted was to bring attention to himself so he willed his blood to flow where it belonged, took a deep breath, exhaled, and swung his feet out of bed, jumping down to the ground. He grabbed his toiletries bag, slipped on his flip flops and trudged off to the bathroom, holding his towel securely in front of him.

"Oh you have got to be joking," Blaine heard at the sinks while he brushed his teeth. "If my Mom came to visit me this weekend I'd eat an entire bucket of that shit they call food."

"Yo old lady hates you, ain't no way she gonna stop watchin Springer to sit down wit yo ass!" came the cackling response from Julian, a boy who Blaine had learned early on to stay away from.

"You have anyone visiting this weekend Anderson?" a red-headed kid named Bill asked, nudging him just a little harder than he needed to.

Blaine spit and rinsed, wiping his mouth on his towel. "Yeah, I think so," he answered warily, wishing he wasn't so nervous and out of sorts in this place. It reminded him too much of junior high school. "My brother's supposed to be here sometime."

"Too bad your little boyfriend can't come for a conjugal visit," smirked a wannabe gang-banger named Carlos. "Then maybe you'd stop staring at us all day."

Carlos' cruel laugh got caught in his throat as Blaine body slammed him into the tile wall, holding
his arm against the kid's neck. "First of all, my 'little boyfriend' is about the furthest thing from little that you could possibly imagine, and don't pretend you aren't imagining. And second of all, don't flatter yourself. I wouldn't look at a single one of you if you had the last cocks on the planet," Blaine hissed.

"Problem in here boys?" A voice came seconds before the staff's presence but by the time he stepped in the room there was no sign of an altercation.

"No problem at all," Blaine grinned with the charming smile he'd come to rely on at Shaker Hills, and he felt the surge of confidence that came with it. One mention of Kurt and every fighting instinct returned to his body. He could do this. He grabbed his toiletries from the shelf. "Just going off to take a shower. The boys wanted in on the action, but I told them I'm exclusive." Blaine winked and strutted off, feeling the groove back in his step after a week of tiptoeing around. He didn't have to be that scared and confused little kid anymore. He could and he would get through this with his head held high and he would earn the respect of staff and the other guys alike. After all, he was Blaine freaking Anderson and nobody messed with him and got away with it.

"That is enough Blaine, cut the shit now and sit your ass down!" Cooper slammed his hands down on the table and yelled.

Okay, Cooper could get away with it.

Blaine stopped his pacing and his posturing and sat down. If he were honest with himself, he would admit that seeing Cooper was hard, and knowing that Cooper would be walking out free as a bird in two hours while he would stay locked up for another 40 days was even harder. If he were honest he'd admit that turning the attitude on and off was something that was growing increasingly difficult to do. If he were honest, he would throw himself into Cooper's arms and cry about how much he missed him and Kurt and how much he just wanted to go home and back to his school and his friends.

But Blaine wasn't being honest with himself or anyone and Cooper knew it. Instead he'd hurled f-bombs and insults like they were water balloons since the moment his brother had entered the visiting room. Blaine hated himself for it, he knew Cooper hated him for it, and yet it wasn't until that moment that he could force himself to stop.

"Why can't you just trust me?" Cooper wished softly, leaning toward him.

Blaine stared at the cold white table that sat between them and flicked tiny pieces of plastic that were coming loose with his finger. The dull rumble of other visits going on around them penetrated the thin walls that offered a modicum of privacy. "It's not you I don't trust," Blaine admitted, his voice barely over a whisper. "It's everyone else. And myself. I know the papers say the guardianship is permanent, but nothing's permanent Cooper. Blaine looked up at his brother, his long lashes flicking up and down as he blinked. "Our parents could take me back in an instant and that…that terrifies me. That's why this all happened, I couldn't let them take me."

Cooper furrowed his brow, trying to put together the puzzle pieces Blaine was giving him. "I would never let them. Why did you think there was even a chance of that before you were sent here?"

Blaine took a deep breath. He knew he had to stop trying to handle everything on his own, but giving up that control, even though he had none at all while he was locked up, was hard. "Kyle and Chandler weren't the only ones who didn't like that Kurt and I were getting close. Quinn and Puck…" he swallowed hard.
"Quinn and Puck what?" Cooper prompted him to continue.

"Kurt and I were under the bleachers one day. Together," he added with a blush at the memory then quickly clarified. "Kissing. We were just kissing. And maybe touching. A little. But I mean our clothes were on."

Cooper chuckled as his brother flustered just at the mention of kissing Kurt. "And…"

"And…" Blaine closed his eyes and Cooper's smile dropped. "Quinn took video of it. She threatened to post it on the internet and frankly we didn't care, it wasn't like we were doing anything wrong. But then Puck pulled out Dad's email address. They threatened to send it to him if Kurt and I didn't stop seeing each other."

"Shit Blaine!" Cooper shouted, his eyes wide with anger. "Why didn't you tell me when it happened?"

"I was scared!" Blaine yelled back. "I thought I could handle it! I thought if I didn't do what they said that Mom and Dad would come, just like they have, and there would be nothing you could do about it! And maybe I was right. Maybe there would have been nothing you could have done if you didn't have me locked up in here. What would you have done if they came back for me while I was home? They could have taken me first and asked questions later!"

Cooper stared at him in complete shock. "God, Blaine, I would have called the police, I would have called Child Protection, I would have fought them off with my bare hands Blaine, but I would never, ever, have let them take you!" Cooper swore as he stood and started pacing. "If you think for one second that I would ever let them take you to a place that would lock you up and abuse you and try to brainwash you and fuck you up in so many ways I would never get back the Blaine I love, well then, you really are a bigger idiot than I thought!"

Blaine ducked his head, clasping his hands over his frizzy curls, wondering how he had managed to get everything so wrong. "So what now?" he asked, his voice muffled beneath him.

Cooper stared at him in complete shock. "God, Blaine, I would have called the police, I would have called Child Protection, I would have fought them off with my bare hands Blaine, but I would never, ever, have let them take you!" Cooper swore as he stood and started pacing. "If you think for one second that I would ever let them take you to a place that would lock you up and abuse you and try to brainwash you and fuck you up in so many ways I would never get back the Blaine I love, well then, you really are a bigger idiot than I thought!"

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Cooper stopped and dropped his hands on his hips with an exasperated sigh. "We have a court date the end of the month, a few days before your hearing. I've contacted the place they were gonna send you last time and after sending over my guardianship papers they confirmed that Mom and Dad have started the registration process again."

"So there's a chance I'll go," Blaine said defeated.

"So I have evidence, Blaine! For fuck's sake listen to me!" he said, storming over to his brother and lifting his chin forcing their eyes to meet. "They are NOT taking you. No judge in their right mind is going to send you to a school for conversion therapy. I have some of the best psychologists in the nation prepared to testify on your behalf if necessary. I may not be as infamous as Blaine Anderson, but I do have a bit of a reputation myself around these parts." Blaine's eyes started to soften as a smile almost slipped from his lips. Cooper kneeled down on the floor beneath Blaine, placing one hand on his knee and grasping his brother's hand with the other. "Please tell me what I have to do to get you to trust me," Cooper begged. "Because you are all I have."

"I'm trying Coop. Really I am. You're all I have too," Blaine whispered as he wiped tears from his eyes.

"Well that's not true," Cooper said with a knowing grin. "You have Kurt too."

"Do I?" Blaine wondered aloud.
"He came to talk to me the other day," Cooper shared, though he'd promised Kurt he wouldn't say anything about Kyle while Blaine was still locked up and unable to do anything. "He loves you Blaine. He asked me to tell you that." For the first time Blaine smiled for real as his cheeks blushed. "But he blames himself for all this."

"What?" Blaine snapped. "That's insane."

"Well maybe you can convince him of that," Cooper said gently.

Blaine lowered his eyes. "I miss him so much. Nothing makes sense without him. He haunts my dreams every night but when I'm awake I had to try to forget him because I just couldn't, you know…" Cooper nodded and Blaine continued. "And then someone said something the other day, not even really about him, but it was and I just…I remembered who I was and who I need to be. Without him I was back in my old school, scared and alone. But with Kurt in my heart, well, I can be brave." Blaine flicked his eyes up to his smiling brother and he looked away bashfully. "It's so stupid."

"It's not stupid to be in love. And you've always been a songwriter, so I'm quite used to you waxing poetical," Cooper smirked. "Are you gonna tell him?"

Blaine nodded. He had to now. It was like he didn't have a choice. "Yeah. I am."

"Good," Cooper said. "Because I think he'd really like to hear it."

"Coo?"

"Yeah Blaine?"

"If I said that there wasn't another big brother in the world that could hold a candle to you would that be waxing poetical too?" Blaine said with a sly grin.

Cooper laughed. "Yes, it most certainly would be."

Blaine leaned back and drew a knee casually up to his chest. "Good. Maybe I'll write a song about you while I'm at it. After all, I have a little bit of free time over the next month or so."

Cooper stood up and settled back into the seat across from his brother, eyes shining. "Well I think I would like that very much."

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**Dear Kurt,**

As I sit in this cell of forced confinement, the walls closing in around me, all I can think about is how much I want to be in your arms. And then I wonder how I could have ever willingly built walls of my own design around my heart to block you out.

And then I remember. So I need to tell you why. I am imagining you sitting here next to me, your blue eyes shining with the understanding and acceptance that has overwhelmed me time and time again. I wish you were here, but then again, I know that if you were these words would not come out, so for that reason alone I am glad that you are there and I am here. That and the fact that you would detest the décor.

I knew in 6th grade that no matter how hard I tried to like girls like my parents wanted, that I wouldn't. Games like Spin the Bottle and 7 Minutes in Heaven took over every middle school party I went to and if you didn't know Kurt, I'm a pretty handsome boy in high demand. But no matter
how many girls I kissed, or breasts I touched, or how many times a girl touched me, I didn't feel anything except for wishing it was the boy who sat next to her. Until one day it was.

It was a game of Truth or Dare and I was terrified. And I don't want to say that there were fireworks because I never felt that until I kissed you, but something finally awoke inside me and for the first time I truly felt alive.

Of course we both brushed it off with the obligatory remarks and giggles of disgust, but he saw my eyes and I saw his and we knew.

His name was Andrew.

Everyone looked forward to the 7th grade Sadie Hawkins dance at the beginning of the year, but I was terrified. I hated the idea of going with a girl and breaking her heart but going with Andrew was out of the question. My parents were known for a lot of things. Tolerance was never one of them.

But when Andrew asked me to the dance, I said yes. Don't ask me even now why I did because I knew even then it would be the worst mistake of my life but something inside me told me it was the right mistake to make.

Maybe it was, because it brought me to you.

He picked me up at my house. We told my parents that we were meeting our dates at the dance and my parents took the few obligatory pictures of me and him together before we left. I promised them pictures of the girls from the photo booth at the dance. I figured I'd have no problem getting some of my girl friends to pose with us.

We had a good time. I was scared but for some reason I didn't understand then Andrew wasn't and we danced circles around the other couples and no one said a word. I was naïve then Kurt. I didn't know that no one had to.

Andrew brought me outside after the dance. He kissed me. I thought it was beautiful.

The jocks came out and jumped me after that kiss. There were three of them, and only one of me. Some part of my brain wondered why they were only attacking me and not Andrew. Until they egged Andrew on to join in and he did. I don't feel the punches on my skin any more. But sometimes when I close my eyes, I still hear their laughter. Andrew's laughter especially. He'd set me up from the beginning to get in good with them. To hide himself. His betrayal broke me forever while the physical injuries healed. I didn't trust anyone after that.

At first my parents wanted to send me away immediately. But then my dad thought maybe the beating and humiliation had been enough to turn me straight and he sent me back to school as soon as I was well enough. Of course you know how school can be. It was horrible, Kurt, and I had no one to turn to except for Cooper, and he was 140 miles away. But I called him one day, crying, not sure if I could keep going the way things were, and he came home immediately. He begged my parents to let him take me away. They told him no. They told him if I couldn't learn my lesson with them that they'd send me away to a school that would make sure I learned the error of my ways. Cooper let them get all the information. He let them enroll me. And then one day he took me out of school and before a judge and presented all his evidence. The judge granted him temporary guardianship of me two days before I was to leave. I'm sure you can imagine the rest. It wasn't pretty for either of us for a long time.

I hope you're still reading. I'm trying to envision what your face looks like right now. What it would
look like if you were sitting right here next to me. But I can't.

Cooper tells me you blame yourself for all this. Please don't. The best thing about you is how you see the good in people. It's what I love the most because if you didn't, then you never would have seen the good in me.

I had begun to forget that any good was there.

So please don't blame yourself for me being in here. It was my choice. If I was going to be apart from you anyway, I needed it to be on my terms. Can you imagine Blaine Anderson in a room full of straight porn trying to pretend that shit excites me? I'd be thinking of you the whole time.

I was scared to be with you Kurt. But now I'm even more scared to be without you. I don't care what anyone thinks or feels, screw them all.

I've had a change of heart. You changed my heart.

The only thing that matters is you and me. And I'm scared you don't feel that way anymore. Or that maybe you never did. But I have to believe while I'm in here that you do because it's the only thing getting me through the days.

I love you Kurt. And I promise to tell the world as soon as I get out of here, if you let me.

Please let me.

Love,
Blaine

Blaine sat at the table in the cafeteria, a hand on his plate, his head down, his eyes staring at his lunch. There was trouble brewing in the unit and he'd had enough problems last weekend when he'd been thrown in seclusion and denied his visits. He'd only been defending himself, the staff would vouch for him on that, but zero tolerance rules were exactly that. At least the staff had slipped him his journal to write to Kurt. But after that he'd vowed to stay out of the drama as much as possible. Luckily his reputation was fully established and most of the guys just let him be except for the occasional game of chess or one-on-one basketball.

He was shoveling whatever mush was in his lunch that afternoon, he couldn't decide if it was supposed to be meatloaf or sloppy joe, when a shadow fell over his plate and someone sat down across from him. Blaine lifted his eyes, saw Puck, and lowered them. Puck was placed in another unit, but he'd seen him around. Puck was never quiet. He didn't like to make waves but he had a knack for throwing a stone that rippled out into large circles. Then he'd watch from afar as all hell broke loose. Blaine had to believe that the staff was on to him, but somehow he seemed to use his incredible charm to stay out of seclusion. Blaine never knew whether to laugh or shake his head. Now he sat in silence.

"You still hate me?" Puck asked, his voice gruff.

"I'm still on the fence," Blaine said as he kept his eyes down. He'd been thinking about it ever since his conversation with Cooper. He knew that he absolutely should still hate Puck and Quinn for what they'd done and set in motion. In the end though, Blaine had handled it wrong and as much fault lied with him as with them. "But I'm leaning toward no," he admitted.

Puck raised an unconvinced brow. "Really? You don't hate me?"
"Do you want me to?" Blaine challenged him tearing off a piece of stale bread. "Because if it means that much to you, I can."

Puck shut up for a minute then tore his own piece of bread off Blaine's plate. Blaine smirked, the gesture so reminiscent of the old days that it made his muscles unclench for the moment. Puck was too caught up in his own thoughts to notice though. "It's just you've barely even looked my way since we got in this shit hole," he grumbled.

"Because I'm trying like hell to stay out of trouble," Blaine snapped, looking up and staring Puck square in the eyes. "And you like to fuck with people then sit back and watch all the shit that goes down and I don't want to get caught up in any of it. I just want to do my time and get the hell out of here and go home."

"You wanna go home?" Puck glowered. "Or you wanna go back to Hummel?"

"Both," Blaine answered, his voice level but his eyes almost daring Puck to question it.

Puck was never one to refuse a dare. "Do you really think he's going to be there? Waiting for you to get out? What if he's fucking that Chandler kid as we speak?"

Blaine knew he should be angry at Puck, but he wasn't. He couldn't be. In his darkest moments he'd asked himself the exact same questions. But Kurt had told Cooper that he loved Blaine. And Blaine was choosing to trust him. "I guarantee you the only contact Kurt's had with Chandler is to tell him to go to hell for all the horrible things he's done. I know he's going to be waiting for me when I get out of here and when I do, I'm going to make him mine. And there's nothing that you or Kyle or my fucking parents can do about it."

Puck sat back and stared at Blaine. "So, this is it? Five years together and you and I, we're done?"

"Why, Puck?" Blaine asked, returning his gaze "Why do we have to be done? Why can't you be my best friend and just accept that I love Kurt?"

"Because that's not the way it's supposed to be," Puck snapped. "It's supposed to be me and you against the world, not you and Hummel baking cookies and singing show tunes while I'm stuck dealing with all the bullshit by myself," he said, his voice breaking at the end.

"Puck," Blaine barely whispered. He knew how much hurt and pain sat just beneath the surface, and that in reality Kurt had absolutely nothing to do with it.

"Dude, don't," Puck grumbled, glancing around him to ensure there was no audience. He slipped his hands beneath the table before Blaine could reach out. "Not here."

But Puck hadn't walked away yet and Blaine knew that meant he didn't truly want to let it go. Puck wanted to talk, needed to get this out finally, so Blaine pushed him. "You're still my best friend, ya know. Having a boyfriend isn't going to change that." Puck scoffed. "Just tell me what the fuck's going on with you. What's really going on? Enough with the bullshit already," he said, his voice urging.

Puck was quiet for a moment and when he finally spoke, his tone was soft, pained. "You were by our side at the hospital. Held Quinn's hand as Beth came out, when they told us she wasn't breathing. You swore Blaine. You swore to me that no matter how much everything around us fell apart we'd be there for each other."

"I still am, Puck," Blaine insisted, leaning forward to make him hear. "Kurt doesn't change anything."
"It changes everything Blaine!" Puck raised his voice then lowered it. "It was bad enough when Quinn moved on with Jeff but now you with Hummel? Sometimes the only thing that kept me from falling apart was knowing that you were hurting just as much and we had to stay strong for each other. Who the fuck is gonna stay strong with me now Blaine if you're in fucking la la land with twinkle toes?"

"Staying strong doesn't mean hiding from the pain." Kurt had taught him that. "You and me, we put on masks, pretend to be people we're not, just to stay safe in the world. But what if we don't need them? What if the pain we're hiding from is exactly what we need to face to be safe?"

Puck shook his head watching the floor. "I'm not ready. I haven't even been to see her. I can't. Quinn goes, every once in a while, but I can't and it fucking hurts."

"Look at me," Blaine demanded, though his tone was soft. Puck slowly looked up and for the first time since they'd lowered Beth's tiny coffin into the ground, Blaine saw true vulnerability. "I know it feels like we're abandoning you. I know it hurts. But having Jeff doesn't mean Quinn's forgotten you or Beth or your pain. Having Kurt doesn't mean I don't still feel your pain and your loss. It just means we're dealing with it Puck, and it's time you did too. We're not kids anymore." Puck looked away, holding back the tears that wanted to spill. Crying in a place like this was a sure fire way to get his ass beat. "When we get out of here, you and I are going to that grave, together. And if you want to cry then cry. If you want to break some shit, then we'll go break some shit, as long as we don't get busted." Puck shuffled in his seat and smirked. Blaine lowered his voice. "And if you want to go to my place and cuddle while we watch some stupidly sappy movie then fuck it, we'll do that too. But I'm not going anywhere just because I love Kurt. I will always be strong with you Puck. You're my brother, as sure as Cooper is. We're family, you, me, Quinn, the Crew. That's never going to change."

"And if Hummel says he wants you to stay away from me? Then what?" Puck asked.

Blaine smiled a little. "He won't. He's much more understanding than you give him credit for. Give him a chance and he'll love you as much as I do."

Puck scoffed, though a smile played at his lips. "Yeah right. Like I'd let that dweeb get a chance at all this," he said, gesturing to himself. "Besides, I wouldn't want to steal him away from you. You know I'm irresistible."

Blaine laughed. "Please, Puckerman. I'm Blaine fucking Anderson. Ain't no way Kurt's leaving me. I got that shit on lock." Puck chuckled, shaking his head, until he felt a discreet nudge to his leg beneath the table. It was as close to hugging it out that they'd get in this place and Puck gave a soft smile. "I'm not letting this go," Blaine said gently. "I'm not letting you deal with this alone. You're my bro for life, dude. Nothing changes that. But you gotta meet me halfway here and you have to promise no more bullshit trying to pull me and Kurt apart."

Puck sighed overdramatically and nodded. He raised his fist to Blaine. "Bros for life."

Blaine smiled softly, pounding Puck's fist. "Bros for life."

Blaine followed staff nervously to the visiting room. He knew Cooper would be coming tomorrow, as he had been every Saturday, but he had no idea who could possibly be visiting on a Friday night. He feared the worst. He braced himself for the faces of his mother and father, taunting him, promising him that Cooper would lose, that he would go with them and they would set him straight so he would no longer be the horrible disgrace to the Anderson name that he was. His hands were balled into fists, his heart was racing and the tension in his muscles was so tight that it
was merely the force of will alone that allowed him to even walk down the dull and dreary hallway. He was set for battle, not sure if he would be the victim or aggressor but prepared either way, the instant staff opened the door for him to go inside the small room.

"Hey Kid!" Burt greeted, but his forehead creased with worry as soon as he saw Blaine's face.

For good or for bad, Blaine immediately transferred every emotion to the man standing before him. "Look, if you're here to tell me that I'm fired or I can't see Kurt anymore, than you're all set, you can go back home now and fuck yourself," Blaine sneered.

Burt looked at him, eyebrow raised, and a small smile twitched at the corners of his mouth. "Okay, I'm just gonna turn back around here, pretend I didn't hear any of that and try again." Burt turned back to the wall and gave the boy a minute to regroup. Then he turned back around again. "Hey Kid!"

Blaine blinked. And he stood dumbfounded. He peered into Burt's warm and friendly eyes, stared at the playful smirk on his lips, stared at the welcoming posture and he remembered the many days in the shop and the man that had been on his side from day one. What was it about the Hummel men and second chances? Blaine felt his nerves ease and the tension melt away, and he nearly fell into the seat from the release of it as he tried to casually sit down. "Hey Mr. Hummel," he managed to squeak out as he caught his breath. Burt smiled and sat across from him, waiting, as he often did, until Blaine was ready. "Sorry," Blaine apologized shamefully. "I'd had it worked up in my head that it was my parents who were here and when I saw you I just…"

But Burt just brushed it away. "Say no more," he said easily. "I totally understand."

"Thanks," Blaine said, ducking his head self-effacingly. "So what brings you here? Is Kurt okay?"

"Kurt's fine," Burt assured him with a smile, his eyes twinkling. "He misses you terribly, but he's fine."

"Misses me so much he hasn't written me back yet," Blaine mumbled.

Burt arched a brow. "Oh is that the masterpiece he's been working on in his room every night? And here I thought he was putting so much effort into his homework," he teased and Blaine looked up surprised. "You have to understand one thing about my son. When it comes to putting his feelings down on paper, he writes about ten different versions then throws them all out and goes with the first. But you have to give him some time to trust himself."

Blaine smiled with soft fondness as he felt his heart reach out for Kurt. "I'll have to keep that in mind," he mused.

"I'm sorry I didn't come sooner Blaine," Burt frowned. "I meant to, but…some things got in the way."

"That's okay," Blaine answered. "It's not like I expected you to come. No one else's boss comes visiting or anything," he laughed nervously.

"Look, Blaine," Burt said seriously. "I shouldn't like you. I mean you're rude, you smoke, you're a troublemaker, and now you're a juvenile delinquent to boot. And if all that weren't enough, you're trying to get in my kids' pants." Blaine frowned and looked at his hands that were slowly balling up into defensive fists. "But you also remind me of me at your age and at the risk of sounding a bit full of myself, I think I turned out of pretty okay," he smirked and Blaine lifted his eyes again once more. "And I think you will too. You've been given a rough deal. But you're starting to surround
yourself with good people. I'd like to be one of those people, if you'll let me."

"What, like another Dad?" Blaine asked suspiciously. "Because I think I've had my fill of those."

Burt chuckled. "No. Not like a dad," he smiled. "How about like a friend? A much older, wiser friend who will tell you when you're out of line, or be by your side when things are hard, or slap you on the back when you do something good, like get the hell out of here and graduate high school."

"You won't be the friend I go to talk to about my love life," Blaine smirked as he nervously brushed his fingertips back and forth on the table.

Burt threw his hands up in agreement. "That topic is off limits unless it's something I need to address as Kurt's Dad."

Blaine could admit to himself that he liked the idea. He liked Burt. And he knew that he needed another adult in his life, someone he could trust and he did trust Burt as much as his bruised heart allowed him to trust anyone. He looked up hopefully. "You helping Cooper too? I know he says he can handle all this on his own, but…"

Burt's face suddenly darkened and his eyes shifted through Blaine to the wall. "I hope Cooper and I can help each other, yes," he said, his voice almost haunting. But before Blaine could do more than furrow a brow, Burt's eyes lit back up and he slapped his hand down on top of Blaine's with a smile. "You've got a wonderful brother there Blaine and he's fighting for you tooth and nail. So no worries about that."

Blaine smiled softly. "Thanks for coming to visit Burt," he said. "It really means a lot."

"I only wish Kurt would come with me," Burt answered. "And I'll tell him you're anxiously awaiting his reply. I'm sure that will get him to mail it in the morning."

A knock on the door sounded and Blaine reluctantly stood. Burt did as well and they shook hands. "I'll come back again as soon as I can," Burt promised. "And in the meantime, feel free to call or write if you need anything."

"Thanks Burt," Blaine said, his eyes shining with grateful tears. "I'll see you soon."

"See ya kid," Burt said as he wiped the tears from his own eyes and watched Blaine walk out the door.

Blaine lay in his bed, twenty minutes before lights out, reading Kurt's letter for probably the tenth time. He'd have to be careful, it was already starting to look a little worn, but he couldn't help it. He needed to read those words over and over again until he could recite them by heart.

Dear Blaine,

There aren't enough words to describe how unbelievably relieved I was when I received your letter. I miss you so damn much and I've been worrying myself sick wondering if you were ok, hoping that you were safe. Time and time again I've imagined myself breaking you out of that prison and bringing you home where you belong. I'm not a rule breaker, you know that. But I would more than willingly break every single rule if it meant that I could get you out of there.

I'll admit when I first got your letter I was scared to read it. I was scared that you were going to say we couldn't be together, that you didn't want me anymore. I was prepared to yell at you for
giving up, to keep fighting. But you surprised me Anderson. You always do. Thank you for fighting for us, for believing in us. We are worth believing in Blaine and I'm not letting you go.

I'll never say goodbye to you.

I'm sorry that Andrew betrayed you and hurt you. I know apologizing for something I didn't do is kind of pointless, but I am sorry. He's nothing but a coward. If I were to ever see him, after knowing what he did to you, you'd have to hold me back from beating the shit out of him. It seems funny that I hate him so much more for what he did to you than I could ever hate Dave for what he did to me. But I guess that's what happens when we love someone. And I do love you Blaine, so much.

I understand now why you were so scared. I can only imagine how it must feel to live in fear of your own parents. I'm sorry about that too. But most of all I'm sorry I pushed you when you weren't ready. I promise I'll never do that again. I'll be patient and I'll wait for you to open up. Whenever you're ready Blaine, I'm here. You're worth the wait.

You should be really proud of Cooper Blaine. He has been incredible these past few weeks. I know he's doing everything in his power to keep you safe, and I hope you understand just how much he loves you. I think he blames himself for what's happened. I can see the guilt in his eyes. He misses you Blaine. Almost as much as I miss you. Maybe even more.

And I know you said that I shouldn't blame myself. But it's hard not to when I was the one that pushed for more. It's hard not to when it was my friend who set you up. Though he's not my friend anymore. I guess he never really was. I should've known something was up. I should've figured it sooner. Maybe if I had, you and I would be together right now. You would've been proud of the tongue lashing I gave him. I even made him cry. I wanted so badly to hit him but I promised my dad I wouldn't. Though if Britt hadn't been there to calm me down, I may not have been able to stop myself.

I love you Blaine, more than anything in this world. Be strong. Hold on and keep believing in us. What we have is real and nothing anyone says or does is going to change that. And I can't wait for you to tell the world.

You are not alone Blaine. Not anymore.

Love,
Kurt

He finished reading just as the lights snapped off. He gently folded the letter and placed it carefully beneath his pillow. Closing his eyes, he listened to the moan of the fans, the rustling of the boys in their beds, and the chatter of the staff whispering just loud enough to be heard but not understood. In the beginning it had kept him awake for hours until exhaustion and the feel of Kurt's ghost on his skin overtook him. But tonight he slept soundly, dreamlessly. Kurt loved him, believed in them, and would wait for him. He didn't need to haunt Blaine's dreams anymore, because in their hearts they were never alone.
Burt walked through the emergency room waiting area and approached the triage nurses on duty. "Is Dr. Anderson available?" he asked a pretty blonde. Burt had texted him earlier and Cooper had let him know that he'd be covering the ER most of the morning. "My name's Burt Hummel, he asked me to meet him here."

"Oh sure, Mr. Hummel," she said with a warm smile. "I'll just let him know you're here."

"Thanks," Burt responded as she headed off in the direction of the curtained rooms. Burt turned and leaned against the counter. He watched the hustle and bustle around him as doctors grabbed charts, spoke to family and consulted with one another. He listened to the sounds of the heart monitors and other machines all around him, the beeps and the chimes making the music of someone's life. He'd experienced it all between Kurt's mother and his own heart attack, and he dreaded his inevitable return to this world he knew too well. Yet some things couldn't be helped and it was better to fight than to give up.

"Burt!" Cooper called and Burt brought his thoughts back, shaking the hand of the grinning man before him. "Come on, walk with me, I'm all done here. We'll head back to my office."

"Sure," Burt agreed and they headed out a hallway and into the stairwell.

"Always better for the heart to take the stairs," Cooper joked lightheartedly and he started the short climb to the third floor, Burt following behind. "I'm glad you came to see me, Blaine told me you visited him this weekend and he seems to think I need your help with the guardianship hearing, but really I'm okay, our attorney is quite experienced," he babbled as he reached the second landing of the second floor and turned to Burt to assure him. Cooper stopped when he saw Burt paused at the door to the floor, breathing hard, clutching his chest with one hand and the wall with the other. He raced down the stairs and grabbed Burt by the arm.

"The stairs…aren't...always...better," Burt stammered, gulping to try and catch his breath.

"Come on, let's get you inside," Cooper ordered, his voice all business. Cooper led him through the door and into the elevator, where he brought him quickly back down the ER and grabbed a gurney to lay Burt down on. "I need a nurse in here," Cooper called and one came running. He quickly informed her of the concerns of a possible heart attack and had her prepare both an IV and an ECG. "What is it about you Hummel men?" Cooper murmured to himself as he wheeled Burt into a curtained off room and began hooking him up to the monitor.

"It's not a heart attack," Burt told him as soon as he got his breath back and was able to sit up a bit. He allowed her to attach the leads for the ECG but brushed off the IV. "Look at the monitor," he urged Cooper and Cooper looked up.

He studied it for a minute then gave a nod to the nurse. "Give us a minute?" he asked softly. She left the room and Cooper sat on the edge of the bed. "How advanced is the coronary disease?"

Burt looked away. If it had been easy to say the words he would have talked to Cooper about it months ago. He always meant to, ever since the Andersons had come into their lives. But saying the words meant that it was real and he wasn't sure he was ready to know the truth. Still, he'd told Kurt to take the risk with Blaine and he had to take his own risks. "I'm on the transplant list," Burt admitted.
"Jesus Christ," Cooper swore under his breath, and he grabbed Burt's hand. "Why didn't you tell me sooner?"

"Stubborn I guess," Burt shrugged.

"Who's doing your surgery?" Cooper asked, wondering why Burt hadn't asked him.

"I've been going to Dr. Johnson, but I'm not sure I can trust him and his team anymore after everything that's happened," Burt admitted.

"I'm doing it then," Cooper told him without hesitation.

"Cooper, I would like nothing more. But I'm self-employed. You and this hospital are not covered by my health insurance," he said regretfully.

"Doesn't matter," Cooper said definitively. "It's not up for argument, Mr. Hummel. My brother loves your son, there is no way that I'm putting your life in any other hands but my own."

"Isn't that a conflict of interest?" Burt said with a raised eyebrow, his spirits returning as he rested.

"It is the opposite of a conflict of interest," Cooper answered with a smile. "A harmony of interest. An accordance. A union of interests."

Burt chuckled and shook his head. "I think you better stick to cardiology and leave the writing to your brother."

Cooper nodded. "I think that is a very good idea."

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Dr. Johnson walked to Cooper's office, prepared for yet another discussion about Kyle and Blaine. Bill had been in his office one too many times already because of the boys and there was no way he was backing down this time. He bypassed the receptionist and knocked on the door, barely waiting until Cooper called out to come in before opening it. Cooper sat at his desk, an almost smug expression on his face.

"It's good to see you Bill," he greeted politely, though both men knew it was a lie. "You're looking well."

"What is this about Anderson?" Bill questioned. "I'm a very busy man so please get to the point." Cooper's smile didn't falter at Bill's unwelcoming tone. "If this is about dropping the charges then you're wasting your breath. Blaine went too far this time."

"Why don't you close the door and have a seat?" Cooper suggested, his tone cordial. "You're going to want to listen to what I have to say."

Bill didn't like the certainty in Cooper's voice, or the look in his eyes, as if he was in on a secret. He shut the office door and took a seat, folding his hands on his lap. "Well?" he said expectantly.

Cooper leaned forward on his desk, the smile on his face vanishing. "Since we're both busy men, I'm going to get straight to the point. You and I both know that Kyle and his friends set Blaine up."

Bill opened his mouth to say that he knew no such thing, though he did have his suspicions, but Cooper continued before he could get a word in. "But we're not here to talk about that. Not exactly. We're here to talk about how your son has been bullying Kurt Hummel and using his father's health against him." Bill stayed quiet, his body stiffening. He only knew of one Hummel and that was his sickest patient Burt. His eyes narrowed as he wondered where Cooper was going with this.
"You see, Kurt is what high school kids would call 'a dweeb.' And while Kurt doesn't believe in violence, he's got one hell of a mouth on him and stands up for himself, even when it means getting his ass beat for it."

"What's your point Anderson?" Bill asked roughly.

Cooper held up a finger. "Getting there," he promised. "Now, from my understanding, your son has read Kurt's father's medical file and has threatened Kurt multiple times, telling him he would beat him up so badly it would put him in the hospital. We both know, and though I cannot begin to understand how, apparently Kyle does too, Burt's weak heart would be unable to take that kind of emotion without serious risk of another heart attack. Now, I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt and assume that you are unaware of both the bullying and the fact that Kyle has had access to one of your patient's medical files. But would the Office of Civil Rights assume the same thing? Or would they think that you willingly ignored HIPAA regulations and allowed your son to read the file? I just don't know. But I'm sure they would investigate. That can't be good for business, can it?"

Bill shifted uncomfortably under Cooper's gaze. He certainly did not know that his son had read Burt's file or that he had been threatening another student with the information, though he couldn't say he was surprised. Kyle always acted as if he was more entitled than others because of his father's influence in the medical world. It was a trait Bill hated about his oldest. And while there was no actual proof, Bill did not need the hassle, or the risk, of a possible investigation.

"What do you want to make this go away?" Bill asked, already thinking of all the ways he would make Kyle pay for his indiscretions.

Cooper sat back, folding his hands on his desk. "Number one, drop the charges against Blaine and Noah Puckerman. Like I said earlier, you and I both know that Kyle and his friends set them up. They've already been locked up for over a month. They don't need to do any more time."

"Done," Bill said easily. "What else?"

"Two, you will talk with Kyle and you will get him to leave Kurt and Blaine alone for good. They aren't children anymore, Bill. They're going to be graduating soon and moving on with their lives. It's time to put an end to this ridiculous feud," Cooper urged.

"I agree," Bill nodded. "I'll speak with Kyle as soon as I get home. Is that all?"

Cooper shook his head. "No, there's one more thing." Bill raised a questioning brow. "You'll be receiving a release of information from Mr. Hummel to pass his file along to me. Don't give him a hard time."

"He can't afford you, Cooper. His insurance won't cover it," Bill said with simple honestly.

Cooper waved him off though. "Don't you worry about that. Look, I know you want this transplant to raise your numbers, but consider it a personal favor. Burt means a lot to me."

Bill thought it over for only a moment before nodding. "I'll have my assistant send it over as soon as we have the signed release."

Cooper offered him a small smile. "Thank you. I'm glad we could come to an equal understanding."

"Son, can we talk?" Burt peeked into Kurt's room as he stood hesitantly at his son's door. He'd
talked to Carole and they'd both agreed it was time to tell Kurt the truth, they'd held it back long enough.

Kurt looked up from his homework, his heart suddenly pounding at the worried look on his dad's face. "Yeah, of course," he set his books aside, turning in his swivel chair to face Burt as he took a seat on Kurt's bed. "What's wrong? Did you hear something about Blaine?"

"No, Kurt, it's not about Blaine," Burt told him as he fumbled for the words he wanted. "I um, I haven't been completely honest with you," Burt said cautiously, rubbing the back of his neck. "About my health."

Kurt felt his heart drop. "What are you talking about?" he asked thickly.

"Son, my heart…it's not doing as well as we'd hoped. I'm not doing as well I've led on," Burt confessed.

"What exactly does that mean, Dad?" Kurt questioned, his voice wavering.

"It means that I'm not getting better," Burt said gently. "Truth is, I'm getting worse."

"Worse," Kurt repeated, his eyes clouding over. "So you've been lying to me?"

"Kurt."

"You've been telling me for months that you were ok, that I had nothing to worry about," Kurt continued, his voice rising as he grew angrier. "And now you're telling me that you've been lying to me the entire time?" his voice cracked. "Why would you do that? Why wouldn't you tell me the truth?"

"Part of it was denial I guess. If I didn't say it out loud than it wasn't true. But mostly, I didn't want to worry you," Burt replied, causing Kurt to stand from his seat abruptly.

"I already worry!" Kurt shouted. "I worry about your health all the time, Dad! I knew you weren't feeling well. I knew something was wrong. Do you really think that I hadn't noticed when you were out of breath or in pain? Because I did! And every single time I asked you if you were feeling ok, you lied to me!"

"Look, I'm sorry-"

Kurt scoffed. "Oh now you're sorry?"

"But that does not give you the right to speak to me like this," Burt snapped. "Do you really think that getting in a yelling match is good for me right now?" Kurt stayed silent, his breathing heavy. "I shouldn't have lied to you but I did and for that I am sorry. Don't think I don't know you keep your own secrets as well, Kurt, because you get your observation skills from me." Kurt bowed his head and looked away, knowing his father was right. "I came in here to tell you something important, something life changing. But if you don't calm down I can't tell you."

Kurt wiped a few tears away, angry at himself for losing his cool. No matter what he shouldn't have lost his temper. "I'm sorry," he whispered. "I just…"

"I know son," Burt replied gently. "Sit back down. Let's talk."

Kurt sat, his arms crossed. "How bad is it? Honestly."
Burt sighed deeply. "It's not good, son," he admitted. "Kurt…I need to have a heart transplant."

"What?" Kurt breathed.

"I'm already on the donor list," Burt continued. "And I've transferred from Dr. Johnson to Cooper, so I'll be in good hands. Cooper's gonna take care of me."

"But…surgery?" Kurt asked, his voice breaking. "Is that absolutely necessary?"

Burt nodded, holding back tears. "Yeah, it's necessary. I wish it wasn't. I wish there was another way but…I want to live long enough to see my grandchildren then this is my best option." Kurt covered his mouth, a sob escaping his lips. "I know it's a lot to take in but I needed you to know."

Kurt threw himself into his father's arm, hugging him tightly, his body wracked with fear. "When?" he choked out.

"We won't know. It could be tomorrow or it could be months from now. But as soon as possible," Burt answered, his resolve breaking as his baby boy cried in his arms. He never wanted to put his family through such turmoil but as the inevitable drew closer, he had no choice. "But I'm going to be alright. Cooper's the best heart surgeon in the state. Maybe even the country. I'll be fine."

"You've said that before," Kurt reminded him as they parted.

"Yeah well, I mean it this time," Burt assured him. "I'm not planning on going anywhere anytime soon. We'll get through this. Alright?"

Kurt nodded. "Ok. I love you, Dad."

"I love you too," Burt said, holding him close as tears fell from his eyes. "So much."

The courtroom was warmer than it should be, Cooper thought. Warmer than the one they'd sat in for Blaine's hearing on the other side of town. This room had darker woods, softer lights, and cleaner carpets. It was a room built for putting families together, not taking them apart. He chose to take it as a good sign rather than bitter irony.

Mr. and Mrs. Anderson strode into the courtroom with their high priced attorney in a short skirted thousand dollar suit and high heels. She shook the hand of Cooper's equally high priced attorney in his Ralph Lauren Double Breasted Pinstripe. There would be no David and Goliath here. Cooper would spare no expense to protect his brother and their parents would spend fortunes to salvage their reputation.

They said nothing to one another as Cooper sat on the right and the Andersons sat on the left, an aisle separating them as surely as the Great Wall of China. The courtroom was near silent, only the soft chatter of the court clerk and officer discussing last night's television filling the air. Cooper's heart raced but he didn't let it show. Stoicism was the order of the day.

"All rise," was bellowed as the judge entered the courtroom and they stood in unison until they ceremoniously were permitted to return to their seats. The attorney's remained on their feet. The clerk announced the case for the record and the judge looked over his petitioners for the first time.

"Councilors, what brings us here today?" the judge asked, as he grabbed the docket file and began looking it through.

"Emma Greenwood, Your Honor, for the plaintiff" started the Andersons' attorney. "We are here
on petition to dissolve the guardianship of the minor child, Blaine Anderson, by his brother, Dr. Cooper Anderson. The petition was brought forward by the child's biological parents."

"Dr. Anderson objects to the dissolvement," Cooper's attorney quickly interjected. "Michael Harris for the defendant," he added.

The judge peered up. "Are the parents requesting that the child be returned to their custody?"

"They are Your Honor," Ms. Greenwood stated. "The parents feel that Dr. Anderson has not held up his end of the agreement to ensure that Blaine remains out of trouble. The child is currently incarcerated at Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Detention Facility on charges of Assault and Battery."

"So the child is currently in the custody of the State," the judge requested clarification.

"Yes Your Honor," Cooper's attorney explained. "However, we have reason to believe that the charges will be dropped at the court date next week following Blaine's 45 day evaluation. The alleged victim will not be pressing charges and the District Attorney's office has chosen not to pursue the case."

The judge took in this information. Cooper knew what it meant for him. It was forcing the judge to make a decision today on Blaine's underlying custody so the State would know to whom he would return when he was released. "What is the reason Dr. Anderson does not want the child returned to the parents?" the judge asked.

"Your Honor, Dr. Anderson has evidence that his parents intend to place Blaine in a boarding school that he feels would be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of his brother. He has experts lined up to testify on his behalf this afternoon should it become necessary," Mr. Harris explained.

"Do the parents have a response to this?" the judge questioned.

"Yes Your Honor," Ms. Greenwood stated. "Mr. and Mrs. Anderson admit that they do intend to send Blaine to boarding school for the remainder of his senior year in hopes that he will learn how to be a gentleman and a productive member of society. However, they do not agree that it would be to his detriment at all. In fact, they feel that remaining with Dr. Anderson would be far more to his detriment."

"Your Honor," Cooper stood, quietly begging permission to address the court.

"Yes Dr. Anderson?" the judge asked, an eyebrow raised.

"Your Honor, the only person that really matters today is Blaine and he couldn't be here. But he very much wanted to be heard. He wrote a letter to the court. I'm hoping that once you've read it that none of the rest of this will be necessary. It is witnessed and notarized, to prove that he wrote it himself," he said, eyeing his parents. He knew the games they played and was certain they would question its authenticity if given the chance. "And it's in his handwriting. The envelope is sealed. I don't know what it says," he finished tentatively.

The judge reached his hand out and motioned to the court officer, who took the letter from Cooper and handed it to the judge. He opened it, slowly reading it silently as everyone in the courtroom watched for any sign of what it might say and to which side the judge might be swayed. Finally he lifted his head. "I will read the letter for the record," he announced and proceeded to read the letter aloud.

Your Honor,
My name is Blaine Anderson. I'm guessing you've already met my parents and my brother and I wanted you to at least have a chance to meet me, even if it was just through this letter. All the kids and staff at Cuyahoga Hills tell me that if today was a guardianship or an adoption hearing that I would be old enough to give or not give my consent. But because it is my biological parents who want custody of me, no one was sure. So I wanted to make sure you understood something just in case, because it's very important. If you are planning to return me to the custody of my biological parents, I DO NOT CONSENT.

I love my brother. And he loves me despite all of the things I do and all of the things I am. He has cared for me, protected me, and kicked my ass more times than I can count, whether I liked it or not. And at one time or another, you can be sure I did not like him doing any one of those things. I have tried to push him away and he refused to go. I have distrusted him and he has proven himself trustworthy. I have hated him and he has done nothing but love me. I guess in short you can say I've been a teenager, and he has been the closest thing I've ever had to a Dad.

I also love Kurt. He's my boyfriend. And he also loves me despite all of the things I do and all of the things I am, though I'm still not sure why. But I would give anything, do anything, for the chance to figure it out.

That last paragraph is important. Because it is the reason why my parents hate me. Oh, they will swear up and down they love me, but they don't. They love the idea of me. The empty shell. The blank slate they had when I was born. Only I wasn't born as an empty shell or a blank slate.

I was born gay. And they hate this.

Should you entrust me to my parents, they fully intend to take me to a place that will try to tear out my mind, remove everything that makes me who I am today, and turn me into an empty shell. A blank slate on which they can draw someone they can be proud of.

Someone straight.

I'll be the first to admit I've made a lot of mistakes in my life. Being gay was not one of them.

Now I may just be a kid, but I'm not dumb. I know you've already made up your mind, Your Honor. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but I understand how the world works. If you believe that being gay is wrong, you'll send me back to them, secure in the belief that they will fix me. If you believe that trying to make me straight is wrong, you'll leave me be, where I am, with the person who loves me, and cares for me, and protects me, and kicks my ass when I need it. Which is way more often than I'll ever admit to again.

To my parents, because I know this is being read out loud and they can hear it: I love you. I love the idea of you. Just like you love me. But I acknowledge that I cannot change who you fundamentally are as people. Because we aren't empty shells or blank slates. Though everything you do and have done has added to the writing on my heart just as writing has been added to yours, I know that deep down inside we are who we are. Still, just like I forgive Andrew for what he did to me, I forgive you. Because it has brought me to here. To a wonderful life with Cooper. And to Kurt. And who knows where the rest will lead. They say in Cuyahoga that I have a choice of paths to follow when I get out. I know the path I want but today my choice is in the judge's hands.

I pray he chooses well.

Sincerely,

Blaine Devon Anderson
The judge lowered the paper. Cooper wiped his eyes, all stoicism gone as tears rolled down his cheeks. He didn't look over to his parents, but he knew they would be seething.

"Your Honor," Ms. Greenwood stood defensively. "This letter is prejudicial without other evidence being submitted-"

She stopped when the judge held up a hand. "Dr. Anderson," the judge said gently, turning to Cooper and Cooper stood as he was being addressed. "Your brother is quite the writer," he said with a smile.

Cooper let out a breath of relief as he chuckled and smiled brightly with pride. "Yes he is, Your Honor. He's quite a talker as well, never afraid to speak his mind," he shared fondly. "He wants to be a songwriter when he grows up. Go to college for music."

"I think he could well be on his way," the judge agreed. He dropped his smile and turned to all of the parties before him. "We'll hear evidence at 1pm. Get your witnesses ready. We will be brief and concise, and we will try and get this over with today. I'm sure Blaine wants to know which path I've chosen should he be released."

"I don't know how much more of this waiting I can do Puck," Blaine said as he paced the basketball court instead of shooting the basket.

"They aren't going to have a decision today Blaine, these things take forever," Puck reasoned, trying more than anything to just get him to stop focusing on it so much. "Now for fuck's sake just shoot the ball or forfeit the game."

"Blaine," a young woman called from the door and Blaine turned to see his clinician. His eyes grew wide with hope. "Your brother's on the phone," she told him.

"Yeah okay," he said, suddenly regretting his wish for a quick answer as his nerves skyrocketed. He absentmindedly ran his fingers through his curls, quickly turning into an afro from lack of product and a haircut. He threw the ball at Puck and kept his arm pointed at him. "This is not a forfeit," he insisted to his best friend.

"Face it Anderson, your tiny little legs will never beat me in basketball," Puck laughed.

"But my far superior brain power will!" Blaine called behind him with a grin.

He followed his clinician to her office where the light on her phone was blinking with the waiting call. She motioned for him to pick it up and he sat anxiously in her office chair as she clicked the button for him.

"Hello?" he said tentatively.

"Hey Squirt," Cooper sang and Blaine could hear the whir of traffic as his brother drove. "How was your day?"

"Cut the crap Coop and spill it," Blaine begged nearly jumping out of his skin.

But Cooper couldn't stop being the big brother he was. "Aren't you going to ask me how my day was?" he asked with mock indignation.

"No asshole, just tell me what happened!" Blaine spat.
"Is this one of those times when I have to kick your ass?" Cooper joked, his smirk evident even through the telephone. "Because I'm happy to take a boot to your backside when you come home."

Blaine was silent as he let the words wash over him. "Come home? Does that mean…"

"You're all mine little brother, for better or for worse," Cooper grinned. "I told you I'd take care of it."

Blaine couldn't help the tears that fell or the sobs that escaped his throat. "I need to get out of here Coop," he whispered, his voice cracking.

"You will," Coop promised. "And when you do I'll be waiting with open arms to take you home."

Home. It was the sweetest word he'd ever heard.

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"No way Kurt," Burt said, putting his foot down Sunday night. "You have school tomorrow and that is final."

"How am I supposed to concentrate when Blaine is in court?" Kurt whined.

"Figure it out," Burt snapped at him and Kurt flew up the stairs and slammed the door behind him. He waited for the inevitable footsteps but they did not follow. Kurt frowned and curled up on his bed. His father's temper was becoming as short as his breath. Kurt knew he shouldn't push him, but his worry about both his Dad and Blaine wasn't making anything easier between them since he too grew more curt and sharp-tongued when he was scared.

He reached for his phone and dialed a number, speaking as soon as it was answered. "My dad won't let me go," he pouted into the phone.

"I'm sorry Kitty Cat," Jeff answered sympathetically. "But I told you not to get your hopes up."

Kurt sighed. "I know. I just had to try."

"I'm sure that everything will be okay and he'll be back at school on Tuesday like nothing ever happened," Jeff assured him. "Everyone is saying that Kyle's not pressing charges. Cooper must've had one hell of a talk with his dad."

"I'm sure the power of persuasion runs in the family," Kurt mused, smiling slightly.

"You better watch out Hummel," Jeff teased. "Blaine's gonna have you on your knees before you can even think to say no."

"Why would I say no?" Kurt smirked though his cheeks bloomed like wildfire at the image. He was so glad that Jeff could not see him.

Jeff gave a hearty laugh. "Well then I will be sure to postpone our welcome back celebrations until Wednesday so that you two have plenty of time together," he promised. "Though the minute he sees you in that leather jacket we bought he may be so at your mercy that all powers of persuasion are wiped from his mind."

Kurt's eyes grew mischievously dark as the image of Blaine falling to his knees crossed his mind. "I would be okay with that too," he answered thickly.

Jeff chuckled loudly. "And I think that is my cue to get off the phone and leave you be to your imagination. Night Kitty Cat," Jeff smirked.
"Night," Kurt said, but his mind was already elsewhere as he gently tossed the phone on his nighstand and turned out the light. He pulled off his shirt and his pants, and palmed himself, now hard and pulsing beneath his fingers. One more day.

Blaine paced in the cell, and not only because he felt like a caged lion with the walls closing in on him. He was trying hard not to get his hopes up for anything. He still didn't believe that the judge had thrown out his parents' petition. He still didn't believe that if he walked out if here today he would go home with Cooper. And he still refused to believe that he was walking out of here today at all.

"Everything we've heard is that Kyle is dropping the charges Blaine," Cooper assured him as he and Attorney Harris visited on Saturday.

"What if the judge still doesn't let me go?" Blaine asked, his knee still bounced nervously. "What if the evaluation says that I need to be committed, that I'm a danger to society, that-"

"Stop Blaine," Cooper told him placing a hand on his knee to calm him. "They can't hold you on nothing. I won't promise you anything, but I think it's going to be okay."

Cooper thought it was going to be okay, but no promises. So Blaine paced and paced the room, back and forth. Six feet left. Six feet right.

"Will you sit down already!" Puck yelled, grabbing him and pulling him on the wooden bench beside him. "You're making me dizzy."

"I need to go home Puck," Blaine said desperately, his eyes fixated on the dirty wall across from them.

"Well then stop acting like a crazy person. Be cool in front of the judge. Use that old Anderson charm that's gotten you out of every other situation," Puck told him.

Blaine didn't have time to answer because the door clattered open and the court officer was there. "Blaine Anderson," he called for him. Blaine stood up, his hands clasped in front of him in handcuffs. He was escorted out. "Kneel on the chairs," the officer ordered him pointing to the hard blue plastic chairs lined against the wall. Blaine faced the wall and climbed up on his knees, his ankles out behind him. He felt the shackles clasp shut on one leg, then two. His face reddened. The position was remarkably vulnerable, almost degrading. "Step down carefully," he was told. He felt a hand on his shoulder as he slipped off the chair that moved down to his elbow as the Officer guided him through the door and up the stairwell to the adult courtroom. It was full today and Blaine's blush held firm on his cheeks as the faces peered up at him. He prayed they wouldn't see him go back down.

He entered the lobby and looked around. Kurt and Burt weren't there today. His heart immediately dropped, though he was grateful. He wasn't sure he could face seeing Kurt if he was once again escorted back down in cuffs. He glanced around and saw Puck's mother and father both in the lobby. Blaine offered them a tight smile, glad to see that they were there.

He was escorted inside the courtroom where thankfully this time only Cooper sat on his behalf. His brother offered him a hopeful smile and Blaine tried to return it, but his heart was beating too quickly in his chest to make it sincere.

The case was announced and the lawyers said their piece. Blaine tried to pay attention but his thoughts wandered. He caught words here and there but no matter what tried he couldn't seem to
make sense of them.

"Blaine, I had the opportunity to read your evaluation before you came in here today," the Judge addressed him and he snapped to attention. "You, young man, are a very smart kid, whose been dealt a pretty crappy hand. And I have to say, I was impressed by both your honesty with your clinician and your insight."

"Thank you, Your Honor," Blaine answered as he clasped his hands tightly on the chair in front of him, waiting for the "But".

"The charges against you were dismissed today. Do you know what that means?" she asked him.

Blaine knew what it should mean. But he also knew that life had ways of throwing curveballs so left meant right and up meant down. He didn't want to get it wrong. "I hope so, Your Honor."

"Take his cuffs off," she ordered the bailiff and he came over and unlocked the cuffs around his wrists and ankles. Blaine rubbed his wrists and stared up at the judge. "I hope that it means that you will go home with your brother and I won't see you again. I hope it means that the next institution you live at will be a University and not a jail. Have you applied anywhere yet?"

Blaine was completely thrown by the question and glanced back at Cooper, wondering where the trick was. Cooper's proud smirk back though told him there was no trick and he better answer the judge quickly. Blaine turned to her and blinked. "Not yet, Your Honor. I guess I better get on that," he laughed softly.

"You're planning on majoring in music?" she asked, looking through his evaluation where he'd mentioned his plans.

"Yes, music and English. I want to be a songwriter," he admitted bashfully.

"Well I wish you luck Blaine Anderson. Next time I see your name I want it in the liner notes of a CD. Deal?" she asked with a smile.

Blaine nodded, unable to even believe what was happening. "Deal Your Honor."

"Okay. Case Dismissed," she announced and Blaine turned to Cooper who was racing toward him.

"Is that it?" Blaine asked in shock.

"You'll have to go downstairs to probation to close up the file and then drive over to the detention center to get your things there," the attorney explained. "But you're free to go home."

"Home," Blaine repeated, a bit breathlessly.

Cooper's grin lit up the whole room and he beamed down at Blaine. "What do you want to do first Squirt?" Cooper asked.

"Call Kurt," Blaine said without hesitation.

Cooper laughed. "Kurt is still in school right now but you can text him from my phone and let him know you're out. Tell him you'll call him tonight," he said and Blaine frowned but nodded. "Now what else do you want to do?"

Blaine's hand immediately flew up to his curls. If he was seeing Kurt soon he needed to take care of that first thing. "Definitely a haircut," he decided and Cooper laughed, ruffling Blaine's wild
It was dark by the time he and Cooper got home. Blaine took a long, hot shower while Cooper prepared Blaine's favorite foods for dinner. They ate in relative silence, simply reveling in the fact that Blaine was home, back where he belonged, and not on his way to either prison or conversion therapy. Blaine had spent so many nights thinking that he wouldn't be able to come back, terrified of having to leave Cooper and Kurt and his Crew behind. And as they ate dinner together, his reality setting in, Blaine could feel only happiness. Well that and the overwhelming need to hear Kurt's voice.

Still, he helped Cooper clean the kitchen, humming along with him as he dried the dishes Cooper washed, following through on his resolve to earn his keep more around the house. When all was done, finally he hurried upstairs. He wanted Kurt to be the last voice he heard tonight before he went to sleep so he decided to check in on Puck first.

"I never thought I would say this, but man did I miss my mom's cooking," Puck said when he answered the phone.

Blaine chuckled. "Oh come on, the food wasn't that bad," he joked, followed by a gagging sound.

"That's bullshit and you know it," Puck laughed. "But seriously man, I even took a bubble bath when I got home. I smell like a fucking daisy," he said with a content sigh.

"Yeah, I think I showered for an hour," Blaine remarked with a smile. "It sure is nice to be out."

"Hell yeah it is. I cannot wait to see the look on that fucker's face at school tomorrow," Puck gloated.

Blaine hummed in agreement. "You and me both. But stay away from Chandler. I got his ass handled." And he did. He wasn't going to beat him up though he sure as hell wanted to. But he was definitely going to have a little chat with the backstabbing two faced dweeb. "I'm gonna let you go. I just wanted to make sure you were home."

Puck scoffed. "Please. As if they were actually gonna keep me there. They didn't wanna deal with the Puckasaurus," he joked though they both knew it only covered Puck's fear. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Later."

Blaine hung up the phone, sighing in relief. He settled into bed for the night, biting his lower lip nervously. His heart was racing a mile a minute. Now that the moment was here, he was suddenly terrified, like it was the first time all over again.

Kurt lay in his bed, staring at the ceiling restlessly, his phone in his hands. Blaine had texted him earlier that he would call and he didn't want to interrupt his reunion with his brother, but he was growing more and more anxious waiting. When the phone started to ring, he nearly jumped out of his skin, his heart beating frantically when Blaine's picture lit up on his screen. "Blaine?" he answered shyly.

Blaine smiled from ear to ear at the sound of Kurt's voice. "Damn it is so good to hear your voice."

Kurt let out a laugh, relief flooding his veins. "Yours too Blaine," he said, his voice choking
"Slightly on happy tears. "So you're home? For good?"

"For good," Blaine sighed happily. "I'm home and I cannot wait to see you tomorrow. Every night in that place I dreamt of holding you in my arms. I'm almost tempted to sneak out just to come see you."

"Don't you dare go getting in trouble your first night out," Kurt admonished him, then sighed. "God Blaine, I missed you so much," he breathed. "I thought I was going to lose you. I thought I'd never see you again."

"There's nothing that could keep me away from you Kurt, I know that now. I'm not going anywhere," Blaine said with a firm gentleness that made Kurt's heart surge. "I love you so damn much, Kurt. You're the only thing that kept me from going crazy in there."

"What was it like?" Kurt whispered carefully.

Blaine was quiet a moment. Part of him just wanted to forget but the other part wanted to share everything with Kurt, to never keep another secret from him again. "It was lonely. Terrifying. Not the kids or the staff, that was fine. Just knowing that you're locked in, trapped, and can't get out. There are moments you forget and things are going well. In school or playing ball in the gym. And then you step outside and see the barbed wire or at night when I'd want to talk to you, hold you…"

Kurt's heart broke at Blaine's words and he wiped his eyes. "I love you, Blaine. So, so much." They were quiet for a moment, just listening to the other breath. There was so much to say, mostly in person, that neither knew where to begin but even that small sound was enough to fill their hearts for now. "How's Puck?" Kurt finally asked, both curious and cautious.

"He's okay. He got out too," Blaine answered, grateful for the easier topic. "We talked while we were locked up, and…look I know you're probably mad at him but don't be too much, he'll have our back now. I understand why he did what he did. Quinn too. I wish I could explain it to you, but I hope you'll just trust me for now."

"Quinn and I have actually been talking more," Kurt told him and Blaine smiled at the news. He imagined Quinn's motives were similar to Puck's, but reality had a way of slapping a person across the face when actual consequences came to bear and waking them up to the world around them. "I think she might even be starting to like me, though she'll never admit it."

"Well you are irresistible," Blaine teased him, though to Blaine it was the complete truth. He yawned, the excitement of the day catching up with him as exhaustion hit him suddenly. Kurt chuckled and he yawned again, louder and deeper this time.

"You should go to bed, get some sleep. You've had a long day," Kurt said softly.

"I don't want to hang up from you," Blaine tried to argue but his eyelids were too heavy. "Meet you by your locker tomorrow?"

Kurt smiled, his heart racing. He knew sleep wouldn't come quickly tonight. "Ok. I'll wait there for you. Goodnight, Blaine. I love you."

"Goodnight, Kurt. I love you too."

Blaine met the crew under the bleachers after a quick goodbye to Cooper in the parking lot, promising that he would stay out of trouble. The day was cold, the clouds overhead dark. A storm was brewing which suited Blaine just fine. Rain just gave him an excuse to huddle away
somewhere inside with Kurt over lunch which, as much as he loved his Crew, was all he'd want to do once Blaine had his eyes set on him.

The crew was waiting for him under the bleachers. Puck was already there, gearing up for their return. Though he'd been alright in juvie, he craved the power he had in school, the fear he instilled in the other students, and the ominous weather electrified the air and simply intensified their arrival.

Santana was the first to see him, a wide grin in place as she ran to him and jumped in his arms. The others followed after her, Quinn the only exception as she stayed behind, unsure how Blaine was feeling towards her.

Blaine laughed jovially as the tough Latina squeezed him tight. "Missed me?" he joked, his grin huge.

"That's the understatement of the damn century," Santana responded, a tear streaming down her cheek.

"You did miss me," Blaine pouted with smirk, thumbing the tear away.

"Don't ever get locked up again or I will personally kick your ass," Santana warned though there was no bite to it.

Blaine smiled softly. "I won't. Thank you for holding down the fort for me. And for Kurt," he said only to her.

"Anything for you," she whispered back, understanding all he meant.

"Blaine!" Brittany squealed, interrupting their tender moment as she tackled him from the side.

Blaine laughed, wrapping his arm around her and kissing her cheek. "Hey, Britt."

"My boy!" Jeff shouted, pulling Blaine away from the girls into his own embrace. "Damn it's good to have you back."

"It's good to be back," Blaine replied as he grabbed hold of the Puckerman brothers on either side of him and slapped them on their backs in greeting.

Nick grabbed his hand in a firm shake and Blaine pulled him in for a quick hug. "Thanks for keeping me updated on everything with the Crew," Blaine told him sincerely. "Your letters meant the world to me."

"Well someone has to play secretary around here," Nick shrugged as he smiled. "You're our leader Blaine, inside or out, and we all agreed that no matter what we had to stick together."

Nick's words hit Blaine as he looked up, his eyes shifting to the bleachers were he saw Quinn leaning against the fence, her head down. Everyone grew silent as they watched his gaze. They held back as Blaine approached her slowly. They'd take their cue from him, they'd promised each other, but Jeff was still worried, unsure of what Blaine would say. No matter what she'd done and how he felt, he still loved her and had a sudden urge to protect her.

Quinn looked up when she heard his footsteps. She'd been waiting, nervous and full of regret. The Crew kept her around for his sake, she always knew it would be his decision, and now came the moment of truth and she was scared. "Blaine, hey-"
Her words were cut off though, Blaine grabbing her arm and pulling her into a tight hug. Quinn melted into the embrace, the guilt that had been eating away at her dissipating slightly as tears of relief flooded her.

Blaine kissed her forehead before leaning into her ear. "We'll talk later, ok?" Quinn nodded, a few tears unintentionally falling. Blaine turned to the Crew, his arm still draped around Quinn. "I'm not making any speeches guys, but it is great to be back with my Crew. Except there seems to be one person missing," Blaine said with a twinkle in his eye and everyone smirked. "I just want to thank you all for accepting Kurt. It means the world to me and I know it means a lot to him. So why don't we go make our grand entrance, find him, and remind the school who runs this show!"

Kurt leaned against his locker, his eyes glued to the double doors where Blaine always made his entrance. He looked down at his phone to check the time again and glanced over nervously toward the girls.

"He'll be here," Marley promised, squeezing his hand.

Harmony looked up and nodded in the direction of the door. "Right on schedule," she commented as the doors flew open and Puck's howls suddenly filled the hallways.

"We are back bitches!" Puck announced, the Crew strutting down the hall.

Blaine had an extra pep in his step, a newfound swagger that Kurt could only swoon at. He'd imagined this moment over and over again while Blaine was away but how had he forgotten just how undeniably gorgeous Blaine was?

Blaine eyed the students, a smug smirk on his lips, as they all reacted to the Crew being together again and walking obviously straight toward Kurt Hummel. After 45 days of being locked up, fearing for his future and feeling forgotten, the power he had here, the knowledge that his presence meant something, good or bad, for everyone in this building, was certainly welcome. He couldn't care less anymore what the dimwits at Shaker Hills said or did, but they were thinking about him and that was all that mattered.

Well not all, not by a long shot. Not anymore. His eyes shifted to Kurt and grew wide as he took in the painted on black jeans, the blue t-shirt that matched his eyes perfectly, and dear god the leather jacket that hugged his muscles and made Blaine just want to bury himself in it. He needed to thank whoever convinced him to buy that, because holy fuck he could barely stay on his feet at the sight.

Blaine broke away from the Crew, covering the distance between him and the boy he loved in only a second, and grabbed him by the hips, pulling him into a searing kiss. The taste of Kurt's lips on his, finally after all this time, was the most precious thing in the entire world. He remembered nothing and no one else around him as he felt Kurt's arms around him fast, fisting his leather jacket. Blaine pinned him up against the locker, wanting more, needing more, and he pressed himself ever so slightly against Kurt.

He couldn't help but grin against the kiss. "Hi," he whispered as Kurt chased his lips.

"Shut up and kiss me," Kurt grinned back before surging forward once again.

"Now that's what I'm talking about," Santana called out.

Puck walked over to the crowd that was ogling them. "Take a damn picture. It'll last longer," he snapped at them. "I know it's hot as hell but move along."
When they finally needed air Blaine pulled back again, resting on his heels, his pupils blown with desire. "Fuck, I missed you," he purred.

"Me too," Kurt breathed, his eyes matching Blaine's.

"Yo, Hummel." Kurt looked behind Blaine to see Puck holding his fist out to him. He exchanged a glance with Blaine, who nodded encouragingly. Kurt smirked and pounded Puck's fist. "Nice jacket."

"Thanks," Kurt said with a nod and turned his attention back to Blaine whose eyes were scanning his body. "Like what you see?" he asked, low and seductive.

"You have no idea the things I want you to do to me right now," Blaine nearly growled, pushing himself against Kurt so that he could feel how hard he still was.

Kurt whimpered just loud enough for Blaine to hear, pushing Blaine back a little and flipping their position. "We have a lot of catching up to do," he said as he pressed his own erection against Blaine's thigh.

Blaine slid his hands down Kurt's back, cupping his ass, and biting back a moan. "Yes, we do." The first bell rang, both groaning at being forced to part ways. Blaine wrapped his arm around Kurt's waist, keeping him as close as humanly possible. "Come on, babe. I'll walk you to class."
School was absolute hell. It may have been the longest six hours of their life. Quick brushes of their fingertips and lips in the hallway between classes and stolen minutes in a secluded corner of the school over lunch did nothing to satiate their appetite for one another. In fact it only fueled their desire for more. Their longing for one another hummed beneath their skin in every class and their bellies fluttered the entire day with butterflies just aching to escape. They were desperate to hold one another and never let go.

Kurt drove them back to Blaine's house after school, thankful the trip took only a few minutes. Despite the fact that the house was empty, Cooper working the noon to midnight shift that day, they went straight to Blaine's room, nearly stumbling up the stairs hand-in-hand in a rush to get there. The moment Kurt crossed the threshold, Blaine slammed the door behind him and pushed Kurt up against it. He crashed their lips together in desperation for the taste of Kurt on his tongue and the feel of Kurt's body against his. Kurt felt the same and his hand slid down the length of Blaine's back to his backside, grabbing his ass and rubbing his erection against Blaine's thigh.

"Way too many clothes Blaine," Kurt complained, but it got lost in his throat as he moaned with Blaine's thrust against him.

"You have no idea," Blaine murmured into Kurt's mouth, "how bad I want you. Have wanted you all fucking day."

Kurt smirked against Blaine's lips, his hands running up Blaine's chest and removing his jacket. "I think I do."

Blaine grabbed Kurt by the hips, walking them backwards to his bed. "I spent so many nights dreaming about you, wanting you inside me."

"Tell me," Kurt whispered hotly as he laid Blaine down and straddled him, ridding him of his shirt. "Tell me what I did to you in your dreams."

"You were on top of me, just like this," he said reaching out to caress Kurt's thighs. "Your body, your eyes staring down at me like some Greek god I'd been given the privilege to love." Blaine's cock pulsed against his jeans. Kurt smiled, leaning over to lick devilishly down his neck and Blaine shivered beneath him with desire. "Hmmm…and you were so deep inside me, making me feel so good."

Kurt leaned back, rocking his hips against Blaine's so that electricity sparked through their bodies with pleasure. Blaine reached behind Kurt and cupped his ass, encouraging every thrust against him. "Is that what you want Blaine?" Kurt purred. His blue eyes were dark with desire, pupils blown with lust. "Do you want me inside you? Fucking you?"

Blaine didn't believe he could think straight with Kurt talking like that, his cock so close, so hard, and yet so far away, but he gathered his senses if only for a moment. "No," he answered, his eyes fixated on Kurt with a passionate intensity. It took Kurt's breath away and he slowed his hips with hesitation. "I want you to make love to me. But only if you're ready," he added breathlessly though he prayed Kurt was.

Kurt leaned down and kissed his lips, soft but sure, his tongue begging entrance as if in answer. He threaded his fingers through Blaine's curls, tugging just enough to feel so amazingly hot with the hint of pain that Blaine gasped at the sensation. "God, Kurt, please…" he stammered against Kurt's
"Yes," Kurt whispered. He traced his hand down Blaine's chest, already slick with sweat, and he inched back onto his thighs. His fingers slowly made their way down from Blaine's belly button to the top of his jeans. Kurt slipped a finger just under the waistline and Blaine shivered beneath his lingering touch, a moan of anticipation escaping his lips as Kurt tormented him. It melted into babbling as Kurt undid the button and lowered Blaine's zipper achingly slow until his palm pressed against Blaine's already rigid cock. "So ready for me aren't you," Kurt teased.

"God yes, please," Blaine babbled and Kurt chuckled as he slipped Blaine's remaining clothing off. Kurt bit his lip at the sight of Blaine's leaking erection, his own now throbbing almost painfully against his painted on jeans.

"You are so gorgeous," Kurt breathed, his heart pounding in his chest as he leaned down to give Blaine's cock a soft kiss. He looked up, a mischievous smirk on his lips. "Now no touching," he ordered with a twinkle in his eye.

"Fuck Kurt, let me see you, please," Blaine begged, leaning up slightly on his elbows. Kurt smiled as he removed his clothing, trying desperately to remain both graceful and sexy. He slipped his leather jacket from his shoulders and laid it out on the bed before slowly removing the rest of his clothes. Blaine stared at him hungrily, almost reaching down to stroke himself as Kurt undressed, but he remembered Kurt's orders and he gripped the bedsheets instead. This is what he wanted, to give himself over and pour all of his trust into Kurt, to let go and let someone else hold him together for a change. "Would you wear the jacket? Please?" Blaine asked.

Kurt stopped and looked at him, losing the control he'd been holding on to for just a moment as an entirely new thrill coursed through his veins. "Really?" he squeaked unimpressively.

Blaine nodded, almost bashful as he looked up at Kurt through his lashes. "So fucking hot Kurt, please."

Kurt licked his lips as he reached for the jacket, slipping the soft fabric back onto his skin. It hung tight and open on his chest and Blaine fell back onto the bed, a new surge of arousal rushing through him. It gave Kurt the chance to reach into his bag, grabbing the condoms and lube he had bought the night before just in case. Then he crawled over to Blaine like a predator ready to catch his prey.

Kurt licked up the vein on the underside of Blaine's cock, then kissed up Blaine's torso, his hands massaging Blaine's thighs. His tongue mapped out the curves and dips of Blaine's muscular frame. The zipper on the jacket chilled and tugged at Blaine's skin while the leather tickled and teased. Blaine reached up to grasp it, the power mixed with softness intoxicating his senses. Kurt was lost in his own discoveries, exploring every inch of Blaine as if he were Eros incarnate. He kept his ministrations slow, teasing, Blaine's whimpers and moans beneath him imparting all the confidence he needed to continue. He stopped when he reached Blaine's nipple, looking down and waiting for Blaine to look up at him, desperation clear in his eyes. The moment their eyes met, Kurt sucked Blaine's nipple into his mouth, rolling it on his tongue and biting down just hard enough for Blaine to throw his head back with a moan.

"Did you like that?" Kurt asked with a grin, not truly needing the answer because the pulse of Blaine's hardness beneath him answered on its own. Kurt teased the other nipple while he shifted his legs from between Blaine's to straddle him, both moaning as their cocks pressed against each other. "You didn't answer my question, Blaine," Kurt scolded. "Did you like that?" he asked again, thrusting firmly against him.
"Yes! Fuck!" Blaine groaned, already way too close to falling over the edge.

"Yes, what?" Kurt asked, his hands finding their way to Blaine's and pinning them over his head. "Answer me peasant," he demanded with another firm thrust.

"Yes, Your Highness," Blaine breathed out. "Please. I can't."

"Hm?" Kurt hummed against his neck as sucked a strong hickey.

"I need you, Kurt," Blaine whispered almost brokenly. "Please, baby."

Kurt nodded against the crook of his neck. "I love you, so much."

Blaine turned to face him. "I love you too," he whispered, their lips meeting in a slow, tender kiss.

Kurt sat back on his legs, grabbing the lube and condom. "Open up for me," he said, nudging Blaine's legs farther apart.

Blaine did, his hand caressing Kurt's chest. "You're so beautiful. What did I ever do to deserve you?"

Kurt smiled softly, the adoring look in Blaine's eyes making him melt. "You loved me for me. That's all I could ever hope for."

"I love every bitchy, stubborn, smartass…" Blaine's words caught in his throat as Kurt teased him with his finger.

"What was that?" Kurt asked impishly.

Blaine shook his head, forgetting everything he had been saying as Kurt carefully inserted a single finger. "Fuck that feels so good," he moaned.

Kurt stretched Blaine slowly, reveling in the power Blaine was allowing him as he thrashed underneath him. The closer Blaine got to the edge, the louder he became, begging Kurt for more, needing more. And as Kurt inserted a second then a third finger, brushing skillfully against the bundle of nerves, Blaine could no longer take the wait.

"Kurt, please," he pleaded, grabbing hold of Kurt's jacket. "I'm not going to last and I don't want to…I need you now."

"Ok," Kurt breathed, removing his fingers and grabbing the condom.

He fumbled with it, nerves suddenly coursing through him. Blaine reached over and grabbed it, ripping the package open with his teeth. "May I?"

Kurt nodded, closing his eyes and sighing as Blaine rolled the condom onto him. As soon as Blaine removed his hand, Kurt coated himself with the remaining lube on his fingers and lined himself up. "Ready?" he asked breathily. Blaine nodded eagerly, fisting Kurt's jacket. Kurt slid in slowly, throwing his head back in pleasure. "Fuck Blaine, you feel so good. Oh god."

Blaine groaned, his grip on Kurt's jacket tightening as his body began to quiver. Kurt leaned forward, his hips thrusting in and out slowly, deliberately, his lips catching Blaine's mid moan. They lost all sense of time as they made love, only separating when desperately in need of air. Blaine's cock pulsed on his belly, aching for release and he grasped at Kurt's ass. "Touch me," he breathed with the only strength he had left. "Please."
Kurt grabbed Blaine's thigh and brought it up, resting it on his shoulder. He kept his thrusts slow but hard, and grasped Blaine's cock in his hand. He matched his thrusts with his hand and Blaine urged him faster and harder with only the touch of his fingertips, all words lost to him in his haze of ecstasy. Kurt was happy to comply though, his own climax nearing. He scraped his nails against Blaine's thigh and it was the final sensation Blaine needed to lose all control. They fell over the edge together, waves of pleasure coursing through them as their muscles shuddered and convulsed against one another. They clutched furiously at each other, never wanting it to end.

Their bodies continued to twitch at their contact and Kurt eventually rolled off, curling up next to Blaine, his arm and leg still thrown over him as their breathing slowed.

"I love you so much," Blaine whispered, holding him close enough to feel Kurt's heart beating against him.

Kurt kissed his neck softly. "I love you too," he sighed.

They stayed silent for a few moments, then cleaned up. Kurt removed his jacket before it became uncomfortable, and turned to face Blaine, draping an arm over his chest and cuddling into his neck. Blaine wrapped his arm around Kurt and brought him closer, nuzzling into his hair.

"You were incredible Kurt," he said quietly, as he kissed his temple, then squeezed him tight. "I love feeling your heart beat against my skin," he smiled. Kurt stiffened, Blaine's words bringing reality back like a slap in the face. Blaine didn't miss it and he caught Kurt's eye. "Are you okay?" he asked with concern. "Did I do something wrong?"

"What? No," Kurt promised him, brushing his fingers up and down Blaine's side, then over to where Blaine's heart was pulsing in his chest. Blaine took his hand and held it against him to feel the beat that was beginning to race slightly at just the touch of Kurt's skin on his. "Feel it?" he asked softly. "That's what you do to me."

"It's amazing isn't it," Kurt said, his voice almost dreamlike. "We take it so much for granted that our hearts will just keep beating. Day and night we pay it no mind but it keeps working for us, letting us live, letting us love. It's only when it stops working right that we even give it a passing thought."

Blaine propped up on his elbow, resting his head on his hand to look at Kurt. His eyes though had faded away, shining with unshed tears. Blaine brushed his hair softly trying to bring him back. "Kurt something's wrong, I can tell. Please tell me. If I did something-"

"My father needs a heart transplant," he blurted out coolly, but the moment the words were out of his mouth it became more real than it had been before and tears started streaming down his face. "What?"

Kurt nodded. "I just found out. Cooper's agreed to do the surgery if they find a donor. I'm sorry I didn't tell you earlier. I just… I needed to be with you."

"Hey, no," Blaine cupped his face, thumping the tears away and kissing his forehead. "You have nothing to be sorry for. And if Cooper's doing the surgery then he's in excellent hands. Cooper's the best heart surgeon in the country. He'll take care of him," he assured him, though his own heart ached with worry. "Don't stress about it right now. Everything's going to be ok."

Kurt gulped and nodded, settling back into Blaine's arms. "You're the best thing that's ever happened to me, Blaine. Please, don't leave me."
"Never," Blaine whispered. "I'll never say goodbye to you."

Chandler watched Kurt all day and waited. He waited for Blaine to leave his side. He waited for Kurt to even glance his way. He waited to work up the nerve to approach him since Kurt hadn't even once looked his way since their last confrontation. And even though he was upset that Kurt had stolen Marley and Harmony away from him, he couldn't help but still love Kurt. He missed him dearly, and he was desperate for his friendship. Finally, with only a few minutes before the busses left and would leave him behind, with Blaine and the Crew nowhere to be seen, he mustered all his courage to approach Kurt at his locker.

He glanced around the halls in case any Crew members jumped out of the shadows. Blaine and Puck had been sending him deadly glares since yesterday and Chandler was actually shocked that they had yet to beat the crap out of him for what he'd done. In his mind, he imagined that Kurt had asked them not to, still holding on to some vestige of their friendship, missing Chandler as much as he missed Kurt. It gave him hope for the future and Chandler needed Kurt to know that he understood and he would be there for him when Blaine inevitably broke his heart.

"Hey Kurt," he said cautiously. Kurt though continued to stare into his locker ignoring him completely. "Look, I know you're still mad at me, and you have every right to be," he said, though he didn't truly believe it. He'd only been trying to protect him. "But I really am sorry. I was jealous and I handled things all wrong. I really miss you and I really want us to be friends again." Kurt made no indication of listening, closing his locker and walking off toward the senior parking lot. Chandler chased him, his patience wearing thin. "Dammit, Kurt! Would you listen to me?! You've clearly forgiven Puck and Quinn and they weren't even your friends! It's the least you could do after turning Harmony and Marley against me! Let Blaine fuck you all you want but you owe me that much!"

Kurt stopped abruptly, swiftly turning on his heels and slapping Chandler across the face. "I don't owe you anything," he spat. Seeing movement over Chandler's shoulder his eyes flicked up to see Blaine walking toward them, but he returned his gaze to Chandler. He could handle this on his own. "How dare you insinuate that I turned Marley and Harmony against you? They made that choice on their own when they found out you were nothing but a backstabbing bitch." Blaine stopped a step behind Chandler, crossing his arms over his chest with a smug, proud grin. Kurt paid no attention though and continued his attack on Chandler. "You have clearly lost your mind if you think that I would ever be friends with you again," Kurt yelled taking a menacing step forward. Chandler stepped back inches from bumping into Blaine but he didn't turn around, too transfixed by the rage in Kurt's eyes. "Stay the fuck away from me Chandler. I swear if you come at me again, it'll be my fist that meets your face."

"Kurt," Chandler whispered brokenly, his hand on his cheek, the sting of the slap nowhere near as painful as Kurt's words.

Kurt ignored him and looked past him to Blaine. "I'll meet you by the car, babe," he said and walked off.

"I'll be there in a minute," Blaine called out, chuckling darkly when Chandler jumped in the air at hearing his voice. Blaine's eyes fell to Chandler's. "You really are dumber than you look," he chuckled.

Chandler gulped fearfully. "I-"

"Ah," Blaine stopped him from talking, holding his hand up in front of Chandler's face, a smug smile still in place. "Not a word. I'm going to talk and you're going to listen. Nod if you
understand." Chandler nodded frantically. "Wonderful. Now, you're probably thinking that I'm going to beat the hell out of you, and really, I should. But I won't for two reasons. One, you're not worth returning to jail in any way, shape or form. And two, if you really think about it, I should thank you. You see, if you hadn't totally screwed Kurt over and forced us to be apart for more than a month, then I never would have realized just how much I truly love him, and him me. So thank you for that," he said, slapping Chandler on the arm a little too hard. Chandler reached up to rub it, crossing his arms around his chest in terrified protection.

Blaine laughed again and took a step forward. Chandler jumped back in response. "Now…and I'm only going to say this once so listen very carefully…stay away from Kurt, stay away from my Crew and stay away from Marley and Harmony. Those are Kurt's girls just like the Unholy Trinity are mine, and I am sure that my girls would be more than happy to send you a daily reminder if need be. Are we clear?" Chandler nodded again, holding back the tears. "Perfect. Oh! One more thing," he drew close, whispering as if conspiratorially. "I'd be extra careful with Puckerman if I were you. He's leaving you alone for now because I told him I'd take care of things but he's not as forgiving as I am and he might not mind going back to jail. He's kind of a top dog there." Blaine gave Chandler a playful little shake and stood back up straight. "Now if you'll excuse me, I have a sexy ass boyfriend whose cock I'm certain is just dying to be sucked after that little power trip. And really, what kind of boyfriend would I be if I didn't fulfill his needs?" He licked his lips and grinned, patting Chandler on the same cheek Kurt had slapped. "Later, loser," he called before walking away, a spring in his step as he imagined exactly what he was going to do to Kurt.

"Where the fuck's the beer dude?" Puck yelled, staring into the mini-fridge as if it would just magically appear.

Blaine gaped at him incredulous. "You seriously think Cooper is going to leave beer down here for you in our basement after everything we've been through?" Nick and Jeff snickered over on the couch. "You really are a dumbass aren't you?"

Puck huffed as he grabbed two waters, keeping one for himself and throwing the other at Blaine's head. Blaine ducked, catching it just in time and swiftly opened it, taking a big swig. He fell into Kurt's lap on the armchair and kissed him quickly.

"Wanky," Santana trilled, cuddled up on the floor with Brittany.

"That's not even close to wanky," Kurt teased her and to prove his point he captured Blaine's lips in a deeply passionate kiss.

"Damn Hummel," Santana said, fanning herself before climbing on top of Brittany and ravishing her lips in response.

"Oh for god sake, can we not?" Quinn grumbled in the corner, turning away with disgust. It wasn't that she had issue with any of them, she just couldn't stomach watching anyone's PDA right now, especially with Jeff so close but so far.

"Shut up Fabray, the Puckermans are enjoying this impromptu orgy, am I right little brother?" he declared holding a hand up for Jake to high five.

Jake rolled his eyes and walked away, leaving Puck hanging. "Blaine's right, you're a moron," he said, taking a seat on the floor next to Quinn.

"See, this is what I missed in lockup!" Puck declared, leaning back on the wet bar, a huge grin on his face. "Just chillin' with my peeps, drinking an ice cold water as the gays get their mack on."
"Yeah, pretty sure you were in lockup because you didn't want the gays to get their mack on," Quinn snapped.

"Like you wanted it any more than I did," Puck snapped back, and the couples drew back as the air in the room suddenly changed. "If you hadn't recorded Blaine and Kurt in the first place maybe we would never have gotten into the whole mess to begin with."

"Or maybe you both could have just let them be and supported them," Jeff mumbled from the couch.

"Well I don't remember you standing up for them in the courtyard that day," Quinn argued haughtily.

"Stop!" Kurt yelled and they all quieted, turning to him with embarrassment. "It's nobody's fault but mine, so let's just move on," he whispered.

Kurt peered at his hands, averting Blaine's gaze, but Blaine pulled his chin forcing their eyes to meet. "I told you Kurt, this is not your fault." Kurt blinked in reply, accepting but not believing. Blaine turned to the rest of the room. "It's no one's fault but mine. I'm the one who was too scared to fight for Kurt. I'm the one who goaded Chandler and who played right into Kyle's hands. I'm the leader of this Crew and no matter what Puck and Quinn did, I should have talked to Cooper, stood up for myself and never let it faze me." His voice was grave, his eyes severe as he looked at Kurt and each and every member of the Crew. "No more blame. We all played a part but in the end it falls to me and me alone. So whatever guilt you feel let it go."

The room was silent and Quinn turned her eyes away. Blaine noticed immediately. He kissed Kurt's cheek and got up off his lap, walking over to her. He held his hand out and she looked up. "Maybe it's time for that talk?" he said softly. Her sad eyes gazed at his warm ones and she nodded, taking his hand. "We'll be back," he told the others and he led Quinn up the stairs to the living room.

She let go at the top of the stairs and he grabbed a pillow from the far end of the couch, curling up with it on his lap as he sat, watching her the whole time. She stopped across the room, too unsure to come closer. He took a deep breath. "Look Quinn sweetie, I get it. You and Puck…I understand. And I forgive you. So please forgive yourself," he pleaded.

Quinn looked to the floor, shaking her head slightly. "I was just so scared Blaine. I thought if you were with him that we'd lose everything we've worked so hard for since Beth. And I just couldn't risk it."

"But one of the most special things in the world to me was that you trusted me with Beth," he said trying to understand what she'd been thinking, trying to make her understand. "Why couldn't you just trust me with Kurt?"

She looked up, their eyes meeting. "Because I knew if we let him into your life he'd become more important to you than the Crew."

Blaine laughed softly as he threw the pillow aside and walked over to Quinn. He took her hands in his and looked at her. "You and me, we are so much alike. Quinn, I need the Crew as much as the Crew needs me and there is no way in hell I'm going to let the shithheads like Kyle and Chandler take that from us. We don't rule this school because of who we date. We rule it because we're smart, we're strong, and we know that we're better than all of them. We rule it because we stick together. We're survivors, you, me, Puck and Santana, and no one can take that from us."
She watched and she listened and finally believed him and understood. "That's why you love him? Kurt. He's a survivor too?"

Blaine's heart swelled and he nodded. "Yes, that's why I love him. That and because he does this amazing thing with his tongue..." he teased, his eyes sparkling.

"Blaine!" Quinn yelled, smacking him on the arm, but he just grabbed her hand and pulled her into a hug, kissing the top of her head.

"I love you Quinn Fabray," he laughed affectionately.

"Even when I'm crazy," she asked, an eyebrow quirked.

He nodded and threw his arm around her shoulder as he led her back downstairs. "Especially when you're crazy."

"Hey, you, uh, you got a minute?" Kurt looked up at Puck surprised, but nodded and followed him to a corner of the basement where they could talk in relative privacy. Puck shuffled his feet, leaned against the wall and looked over at Kurt nervously. Kurt looked back at him, brows raised expectantly. He was happy to have the conversation, but it didn't mean Kurt had to make it easy on him. Puck cleared his throat. "I've uh, I've never been real good with the whole, talking shit out thing but...I um, I owe you an apology."

"Puck-"

"Just please let me get this out," Puck interrupted and Kurt rested against the wall to listen. "I'm sorry for being such an asshole to you. I had no reason to be other than my own stupid pride. I've never really been good with sharing anything and Blaine, well he's my boy. It was hard for me to see him be all lovey dovey with a..." Puck fumbled for an acceptable word.

"Dweeb like me?" Kurt supplied.

Puck snorted a laugh and nodded. "Yeah. Not that it makes anything alright but, I guess I was threatened by you. And the Puckasaraus don't get threatened, especially by some lame ass theater geek who can't keep his mouth shut," he teased, playfully punching Kurt's arm.

Kurt rolled his eyes. "You're right, you really suck at this apology thing," he smirked.

"Seriously though, I wanted to beat your ass so bad that first day you sat with us," Puck grinned.

"I was so sure you would," Kurt admitted quietly. "I hope you know that I never intentionally tried to steal Blaine away from you or anything. There was just something about him. I couldn't help but want to get to know the real him."

"I know that...now," Puck chuckled. "And I get it. People don't get to see the real him, the broken boy. But you...you saw right through his shit and you didn't run scared. You stayed and you dealt with all the bullshit that was thrown at you and for that, I gotta give you props. Just don't go getting him to start wearing cardigans and bowties cause then we gon' have problems," he warned with a smirk.

Kurt laughed. "Well...I'll try not to. No promises," he smirked. Puck groaned, glancing over to the stairs where Blaine and Quinn were walking back down. "I really am sorry for how things went down. I never meant to start any problems."
Puck waved him off. "Don't be. It's life. Shit happens. What's done is done and now we move on," he said uncharacteristically soft. "Now let's hug this shit out like real men."

Kurt laughed and allowed Puck to wrap his arms around him in a tight embrace, surprised but not upset by the level of comfort between them. That is until Blaine started to slow clap from the other side of the basement.

"Damn, Anderson. Why you gotta ruin the moment?" Puck asked as they parted, his arm still draped over Kurt's shoulder.

"Cause he's mine and no one's allowed to touch him but me!" Blaine shouted at him.

"Get real, Anderson," Santana scoffed as she and Brittany quickly ran over to Kurt, Brittany hugging him from the side as Santana wrapped her arms around him from behind.

"Stop groping him, Satan!" Blaine laughed, walking over to the group to pull Kurt away from them. He pushed Kurt up against the wall, threading their fingers to hold him back, and kissed him hard. Kurt melted immediately, his knees going weak. He moaned into the kiss, and into Blaine, but Blaine pulled away with a tease and turned to Puck with a smile. "Now that, Puckerman, is how it's done."

Quinn and Jeff slipped silently out of the room. They grabbed their coats and headed out, the early winter darkness offering them a veil of protection from each other. The stars and moon were out, shining bright above them. They walked down the sidewalk in silence. Jeff kept his eyes focused on the rock he was kicking as they walked, his hands shoved deep in his pockets.

Jeff had watched Quinn and Blaine, hand in hand as they walked downstairs. Blaine had clearly forgiven her, accepted her, just as Kurt seemed to have, and it allowed the ice around his heart to melt just enough to forgive her too. But he still didn't understand why she had done what she had, and he desperately wanted to. He still loved her, more than anything, but there were moments late at night where he cried, wishing he could stop, because love wasn't enough. He didn't trust her anymore and he couldn't be with someone he didn't trust.

"It's a beautiful night," Quinn broke the silence, her vision on the ground. When she'd asked him in the midst of the noise if they could go outside and talk he'd agreed, hoping that somehow they could at least clear the air for the sake of the Crew.

Jeff kept walking down the sidewalk. The air was crisp and it wasn't too cold. The trees that lined the comfortable neighborhood had lost their leaves and stood bare, waiting for the snow that would make them beautiful again. "Why did you bring me out here?" he asked, his voice quiet like the night. "I want to forgive you Quinn, I really do. But what you did was so hurtful. Cruel even."

"I know," she spoke softly, walking beside him but wanting nothing more than to fall into his arms. "I know what I did was wrong. And I know that you don't forgive me. But I also believe that you still love me and right now, that's the only thing giving me the courage to talk to you."

Jeff stopped at her words. He slid his hand back into his pocket and turned to her, squinting as the street light hit his face. "What do you want, Quinn?"

"I just want to explain," she replied, her head down. "If you're willing to listen."

Jeff looked back at his ex and hated how his heart ached for her. He took a seat on the curb and waited, taking a deep breath to calm his racing heart. Quinn sat down next to him, leaving a small space between them, and pulled her pack of cigarettes out. Jeff quickly snatched them out of her
"If you're gonna talk then talk. You know I hate that you smoke these things," he grumbled.

"You're not my boyfriend anymore. You can't tell me what to do," she said grabbing back the pack.

Jeff scoffed. "As if you listened to me when we were dating."

"As if you didn't enjoy the fight," Quinn retorted, a hint of flirtation slipping through.

"Only when I won," Jeff flirted back instinctively before cursing himself. That was another reason why he'd tried his best to stay away from her during Blaine's absence. He knew how easily he would fall right back into step with her and he couldn't allow himself to.

Quinn smiled to herself, slipping the pack back into her jacket pocket. "I let you win," she smirked.

They stayed quiet for a while, watching the cars go by as they let the playful moment pass into solemnity. When Quinn spoke again, it was barely above a whisper. "Do you remember when you first spoke to me?"

Jeff turned to her curiously. He remembered it vividly. It was their freshman year. He had just moved to Shaker Hills and early in the year the beautiful but shy blonde was little more than a passing thought in a stream of people trying to fit in. When they returned from winter break though, everything about her had changed. Her hair was pink, her clothes were punked out and the whole school found themselves shocked and unsure how to deal with the new Quinn. But Jeff was instantly captivated by a pain in her eyes that hadn't been there before. "Yeah. I kept bugging you to tell me why you'd changed and you told me it was to prove a point to your parents. Though I never really knew what that point was."

"You always were a pesky little shit," Quinn said fondly, recalling how she kept telling him off and how he refused to give up. She dropped her head, frowning as she finally told him what she never had been vulnerable enough to share. "Anyway, I lied, about why I did it. Or rather, I didn't tell you the entire truth." She paused, then looked over to him. "You know how Puck and I used to date back in Junior High."

Jeff nodded.

"I always pretended to be such a good girl. Sweet and innocent. Maybe Noah Puckerman was a stupid choice for a girl like me but I thought that I could change him. Turned out he changed me instead." She took a breath and stared out into the distance. "I got pregnant. The end of 8th grade. Puck and I were so scared we hid it from everyone. We pulled away from everyone, our family and friends. Everyone but Blaine since he basically wouldn't let us. We should have known we couldn't hide anything from him." She took a chance to look over to Jeff. He was watching her carefully, his eyes clearly wide with shock though he tried to cover it. "It was such a relief that someone knew. He helped us keep it hidden and we started hanging back with Santana and Britt and everything was okay until winter break when it all went to hell."

Jeff cleared his throat. "What happened?"

"Puck and Blaine and I were hanging out in an alley down the street from the hospital one day. We were waiting for Coop to drive us home when I started having terrible pain. The boys got me to the ER and Blaine begged Cooper to meet us down there. I went into labor immediately. The baby… she didn't make it." Quinn wiped away the tears as Jeff grabbed her hand and squeezed it. "Her name was Beth."
"I'm so sorry," he said and he didn't move away when she put her head on his shoulder. "Why didn't you tell me before?" he asked her gently.

"I didn't want you think that I was damaged goods," she shrugged. "You were that weird kid in class with all the stupid jokes but...you were also that adorable new guy that always made me laugh. I couldn't tell you."

Jeff put his arm around her, pulling her close. "I never would've thought that."

"I know that now but at the time I didn't. And as we got closer and time passed, I lost the nerve to tell you. I was always scared you'd hate me for what happened with Puck," she admitted.

"Why now then? After all this time, why tell me now?" Jeff questioned, still trying to piece together how it all connected.

"Because it's why I did what I did to Blaine and Kurt," Quinn replied guiltily. "After everything happened, we were worried that word would get out. Everyone would know and would slam us down. So we promised to build ourselves up, make it so no one could ever touch us. Santana and Brittany, then you and Nick, we all fell right into step even though you guys didn't really know why. But Kurt...I freaked out. I was terrified that he would undo all our work and I couldn't...I wouldn't let it happen." She closed her eyes, thankful for the darkness that hid the marks of shame on her cheeks as she continued. "But I was also jealous as hell. You and Blaine made it easy for me to stay strong, to keep going. And all of a sudden this kid comes in, steals away my friends and my boyfriend? I panicked. It doesn't excuse how I've acted but...there it is."

"Oh Quinn, I wish you would've told me sooner," Jeff said truthfully. "But I understand why you did it. We've all put ourselves on this pedestal at school when really, we're all just as broken as the next person." Quinn sighed but said nothing. "Am I the only other person who knows?"

She nodded. "I don't think Puck will ever tell anyone, it hurt him too badly," she noted quietly. She turned to him, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Please, Jeff. Please forgive me. I know I've fucked up. I know I'm a bitch. But I can't...I can't be without you. Losing Beth was painful and the thought of losing Puck and Blaine and the Crew kills me. But losing you? I can't deal with that. You're the only person who actually gets me, the only person I'm ever truly myself with. I can't be without you."

Jeff pulled her into his arms, his own tears falling down. "You're not without me. I'm right here."

"I'm so sorry," she cried. "I love you so damn much."

"I love you too. You know I do," Jeff whispered, kissing the top of her head. "We'll get through this. I promise."

They walked in silence, following the path that Quinn had mapped out for Blaine. It had been three years since both boys had been there and Beth was only one grave among thousands. It was cold, the winter chill thick in the air and Puck tucked his hands beneath his arms as he closed in on himself. Blaine held the directions in his gloved hands.

It was peaceful but a bit stark in the bitterness of the air. When they finally spotted the headstone Blaine stopped and turned to Puck. "You want me to go with you?" he asked.

Puck nodded, his lip caught between his teeth as he stared at the stone. "Please."

Puck didn't move so Blaine took the initiative, walking up first and bending down to clear away
the remnants of the flowers Quinn had last left, now dried and dead. Puck bent over and picked up two stray pebbles from the grass, rolling them over and over in his hand.

Blaine tried not to think on that day too much. It had been heartbreaking for all of them but the loss didn't belong to him and he never wanted to claim it as his own. But he'd held Quinn's hand as she'd screamed in pain and fright and he watched as the baby came into the world already gone. He'd watched his best friends as they cried with grief he knew was mixed with relief, bringing its own bit of shame along with it.

"She's better off," Puck whispered, his own thoughts clearly mirroring Blaine's. "I would have made a terrible father." Blaine watched him as he stared at her name, though his eyes looked through the gravestone not at it. "Sometimes in my darkest moments I remember that I am a Dad and I hate myself for the things I do."

"You would have done the best you could," Blaine tried to comfort him where there was none. "Quinn too."

"There were guys in Cuyahoga who had kids on the outside. Waiting for them. Some of them talked so much shit about their baby mamas but they all knew how lucky they were to be able to see them again when they got out." Puck choked back a sob from escaping. "I just wish I could see her again."

Blaine grabbed his hand and Puck couldn't hold it back any longer. He fell to his knees and Blaine went with him, holding him as the toughest guy he knew let out years of pain. His own tears fell as well as Puck's pooled on the shoulder of Blaine's jacket. Puck cried until there were no tears left.

"You are her Dad," Blaine told him as Puck pushed away from his arms. "You're gonna make her proud."

Puck stood, tracing the top of the headstone with his finger. He opened his hand and left the pebbles neatly on top. "I love you baby girl," he whispered before Blaine placed a hand on the small of his back guiding him away. They were wordless as they returned to their car. A few rows down Quinn and Jeff were getting out of her car. She took Jeff's hand and he held her close.

"She's a good Mom," Puck said low as he watched them follow the path they'd just taken. "She will be a great Mom." Blaine smiled sadly as he opened the door and settled in to start the car.

They were survivors, all of them.

Blaine leaned his elbows on the counter, his eyes staring at Kurt's perfectly round backside as he stood on a ladder replacing a lightbulb. It was Blaine's first day back at the shop and he couldn't have been more thrilled. His night with Puck had taken a toll on him and he was glad for the familiarity of the shop to put him at ease. He missed the hustle and bustle of the garage. He missed the smell of the gasoline and clanging of tools. But more than anything, he missed the way Kurt looked when he worked, the greasy overalls hugging his body, the small grease stain on his cheek, the way his perfectly coiffed hair became a little wild after a few hours of working. There was no denying how sexy his boyfriend was and having to look but not touch made him so desperate for more.

"You know, there's this shelf in the supply room that seems to be stuck," Blaine hinted low and seductive. "Once you're done with that I can show you which one it is and then maybe we could fix it together." He gazed up at him longingly.
Kurt glanced over, sending Blaine an unimpressed glare. He had promised his father that they would keep things professional while at work and Blaine was making that promise entirely too difficult to keep. "I'm sure the shelf just needs a little gentle touch, maybe some oil, and it will slide again with ease," he answered, purposefully teasing.

Kurt carefully stepped down from the ladder, the old light bulb tucked underneath his arm. Blaine came around the counter, grabbing the bulb and placing it on the counter before taking hold of Kurt's hips. Blaine waited until his feet were on the ground before attaching his lips to Kurt's neck. Kurt quickly slipped away and grabbed the light.

"Stop," he said firmly, though a smirk played at his lips.

Blaine bit his lip, hooking his fingers into the sides of the overalls and bringing Kurt closer. "You're nothing but a tease, you don't mean that," he purred, his eyes blazing.

"Yes, I do." Kurt pushed him away, grateful when the outside assistance light came in. "You have a customer. Get to work, peasant," he ordered and quickly walked off.

"This conversation isn't over," Blaine called out and headed outside, thankful for the burst of cold air.

An hour later, Kurt found himself pinned against the door of the men's restroom, Blaine's mouth firmly attached to his neck. "You seriously need to stop doing that."

"Give me one good reason why," Blaine all but demanded, pressing himself against Kurt, eliciting the most delicious moan.

"Because." Kurt pushed Blaine back with as much force as he could muster, which wasn't a lot when all he wanted was for Blaine to claim him. "I promised my dad that we would be professional while we work."

"But breaking the rules is fun," Blaine whined, attempting to kiss down Kurt's neck once more. Kurt's firm hand on his chest stopped him though. "Ok, fine. Have it your way," he said firmly and he took Kurt's hand, pulling him out to Burt's office. "Mr. Hummel, Kurt and I were talking and we can lock up if you want to go home and rest," he said earnestly. "I can bring Kurt home after."

Burt raised an eyebrow, knowing exactly what the boys were trying to get away with. "Cooper's not expecting you tonight?" he asked.

"No Sir, he's working late, as always," Blaine said with a grin too wide for the moment. Kurt lowered his eyes and shook his head. Blaine's current lack of subtlety was unbelievable.

Burt shifted his eyes between them, Kurt's face growing redder knowing his father knew exactly what Blaine was trying to get away with. "Then you can join Kurt and me tonight. Thank you for locking up, I'll expect you both for dinner right on time," he said with a smirk.

Burt shut down his computer and grabbed his coat, giving Kurt a meaningful glance. Kurt averted his eyes, shyness turning quickly to mortification. "Sometimes you can hit the wrong button and the whole thing just goes crazy."

They watched Burt leave and the sound of the air compressor as one of the guys in the shop continued his work took them out of their revelry. "Okay, back to work peasant," Kurt commanded.

Blaine leaned in slowly, brushing his lips against Kurt's ear. "The minute that clock turns five I'm going to pin you up against that wall and show you who's really in charge."
Kurt shivered. "Is that a promise?" he asked bashfully.

Blaine chuckled, backing away and letting Kurt go, his eyes blown with desire. "You bet your fine ass it is," he replied gruffly. Kurt let out a small whine and quickly walked away before he allowed Blaine to ravish him right then and there.

Blaine watched him go, his eyes lingering on Kurt's ass. He surveyed the room as he walked back to the front counter, considering all the possibilities. He watched the seconds click by on the old clock hanging on the wall, occasionally stealing a glance at Kurt through the glass wall. Thirty more minutes and he'd be a peasant standing tall, with his highness down on his royal knees.
Blaine turned off the pumps and locked the front door. He cashed out the register, recording the day's receipts in Burt's office, while Kurt and their coworker Jed cleaned up the tools and put them away in the supply cabinet. Kurt walked Jed to the door when they were done, locking it behind him. He was lowering the garage door bays when he heard the thump of the switch seconds before his eyes adjusted to the huge fluorescents in the ceiling fading. Kurt loved this time of day at the garage; the silence pulsing through the openness illuminated by the orange and pink light of the setting sun streaming in through the high windows with a beautiful glow.

He turned from the door with a contented smile but abruptly stopped when a black foam mat was thrown at his feet.

"On your knees, your highness." Blaine's command came with precision, and he sucked in a breath when Kurt obeyed him immediately. "Fuck, Kurt, that is the hottest thing I've ever seen," he breathed.

On his knees he stared up at Blaine in his tight jeans and leather jacket spotlighted by a ray of sunlight. Kurt's eyes darkened at the sight while his lips turned up in a nervous smirk. "I hope you'll say differently in a minute or two," he teased as he licked his lips.

Blaine stepped in front of Kurt and kneeled down just to capture his lips in a kiss. It was aggressive and so incredibly needy, Blaine's desires finally being set free after pulsing trapped inside him all day. Kurt took everything he gave, moaning into it, begging. But Blaine pulled back, leaving Kurt breathless and wanting for so much more. Which Blaine was more than happy to give.


"Please what, Kurt? I can't hear you," Blaine taunted staring down. Kurt was a vision that made his erection grow hard and leaking but he wasn't going to just give it over. Kurt had made him work for it. Turnabout was fair play. "Tell me what you want and maybe I'll let you have it."

Kurt's cheeks blushed with embarrassment to say the words and it was the most adorable thing Blaine had ever seen. He took pity on his boyfriend and brushed a hand through Kurt's hair, offering a small smile as his thumbed over his reddened cheeks and his perfectly soft lips.

"Your lips are so perfect Kurt, like silk on my skin. Do you want your lips on my skin Kurt?"

"Yes, please," Kurt begged, his eyes closing as his heart raced.

"Say it Kurt," Blaine ordered, still not giving in. He wanted to hear the words, needed to hear them straight from Kurt. "Tell me what you want."

"I want to suck your cock Blaine." Kurt fell desperately over his words. "I want to taste you."

"Such a good Prince," Blaine said as he unbuttoned his jeans for Kurt and lowered the zipper. Kurt's mouth watered in anticipation and his belly fluttered uncontrollably.
Kurt could wait no longer and he reached up to help Blaine lower his pants down the ground. He nearly lunged at Blaine as he took his cock in his mouth, immediately licking up the underside and swirling his tongue around the head. Kurt looked up at Blaine through his lashes, a devilish gleam in his eye and Blaine bit his lip and grasped Kurt's hair to stop himself from fucking his face right then. Kurt cupped Blaine's ass as he took him into his mouth, running his fingers up and down in tantalizing rhythm with his lips.

"Holy hell Kurt, if I'd know how good you were at this I would have clawed my way out of jail," Blaine choked. His eyes rolled back in his head and he squeezed them shut to fully take in the sensation.

He felt Kurt smile around him, then reach his fingers down, teasing at his balls while he took in just the head and sucked just right. Blaine groaned as Kurt popped off, but just as he worried Kurt had lost his nerve, a slow breath wafted over the wet skin and Kurt grinned up at him mischievously. Shivers of bliss rushed up Blaine's spine and Kurt licked up his cock over and over until Blaine was sweating and his breathing was erratic with both the need for Kurt and the determination to hold back. Kurt took him entirely in his mouth again, swallowing once around him, but Blaine pulled out before his legs gave way and his knees buckled beneath him.

Kurt suddenly faltered and looked up at him nervously. "Did I do something."

"I need to fuck you," Blaine interrupted and he jerked Kurt up. He grabbed at Kurt's clothing, discarding his overalls quickly and he slammed his lips onto Kurt's neck, all the while guiding him backwards toward the corvette they had been working on. He pushed Kurt down on the hood and nearly ripped the t-shirt off over Kurt's head. He tore his own shirt off as well and Kurt slipped a condom and lube out from his jeans before removing them. "Well aren't you a fucking Boy Scout," Blaine noted, his eyebrow quirked in wicked amusement.

"Let's see if I know how to build a fire," Kurt quipped before leaning in to suckle Blaine's nipple.

"Mmph," Blaine moaned, his head falling back at the miracle that was Kurt's flawless lips and mouth and tongue. He wanted them all the time, anywhere and everywhere on his body. "Kurt if you don't stop I'm gonna come just from that," Blaine warned.

Kurt pulled away with a sly grin. "Well we wouldn't want that now, would we," he said and he scooted back on the hood.

Blaine stared at Kurt, laying open for him on the hood of the black corvette, and shook his head with disbelief that anyone so perfect and so ready could possibly exist in the world just for him. Kurt gazed back at him, inviting but waiting hungrily with the patience of someone willing to be taken. Blaine didn't keep him waiting long. He placed a foot on the bumper and a knee on the hood and crawled on top of Kurt rubbing against him almost immediately. Kurt threw his head back and Blaine reached for the lube. Nuzzling into Kurt's neck, licking, biting and sucking a mark of remembrance into the soft and hair-raised flesh, he slowly and gently worked Kurt open, one finger at a time, following Kurt's pace and not his own.

"Are you okay?" he whispered when Kurt's silence became deafening.

"So good," Kurt whispered against him. "I love you."

"I love you too," Blaine grinned and kissed him before brushing over Kurt's most sensitive nerves. He felt Kurt quiver beneath him as he moaned into the kiss, his mind going blank with the sensation.
"I need you now," Kurt breathed.

Blaine kissed him once more before tearing the condom packet open and rolling it on. He placed a hand under Kurt's ass to raise him up just slightly and slowly entered him. Instantly every nerve ending in his body felt like it was on fire and he found himself wanting to thrust hard, but he waited until he felt Kurt relaxing beneath him. "How does that feel?" he whispered, as he leaned over to nibble on Kurt's ear.

"It feels incredible, now move," Kurt begged as he shifted himself beneath Blaine. The hardness of the metal beneath him seemed to amplify his need for Blaine's softness above him and he pressed into Blaine's arms, kissing him wherever he could, his love overflowing so that it felt like it was bursting out of his chest.

Blaine started slow, dancing to the rhythm of Kurt's own movements, his ass nestled wonderfully in his hand. He squeezed at the supple skin and Kurt hissed with pleasure, slamming himself into Blaine with an embarrassed grin. Blaine though beamed lovingly back and kissed him as he began thrusting harder and faster.

The everyday worries and thoughts escaped their minds, time stopped, and nothing existed but the two of them. They kept moving together, their bodies slick with sweat as they slid against one another, touching and tasting every inch, never wanting it to end while at the same time hungering for the delicious release.

"Touch me Blaine, please," Kurt pleaded as his heart raced.

Blaine grasped Kurt's cock in his hand and matched the rhythm of his own, in and out, up and down, the pressure in their bellies building but hanging on the edge. Blaine adjusted slightly, trying hard not to lose his balance, and hit Kurt's prostate as if he finally hit the perfect note. Kurt broke his silence with a scream that made Blaine laugh with delight. "So undignified for a prince," he admonished teasingly.

"Fuck you," Kurt growled and he grabbed Blaine around the waist and forced him forward again and again.

"Such terrible language," Blaine scolded and he squeezed Kurt's cock, twisting just right over and over, all the while pounding into Kurt until they were both breathless. The fire burned hot and powerful, making their toes curl as it rose through them and finally exploded between them. Kurt leaned up and grasped at Blaine's curls, riding out his orgasm as he pulsed between Blaine's fingers. Blaine thought he'd spent all he could but the pain of Kurt's hands pulling at his hair sparked more and quivered holding Kurt close, his breath nearly ceasing from the intensity.

"Holy Fuck Kurt," Blaine muttered as he captured Kurt's lips. When he finally thought he could stand without collapsing, he slid carefully down from the car and Kurt slid down the hood as well, wrapping his legs around Blaine. Blaine lifted him up and Kurt giggled as he was carried to the bathroom so they could clean up.

"Oh my god," Kurt suddenly exclaimed and Blaine raised a brow at Kurt in question. "My father knows exactly what we're doing," Kurt blushed.

Blaine glanced back to the Corvette. "Well maybe not exactly," he smirked.

Kurt's blush grew darker, spreading down his neck and chest and Blaine laughed at Kurt's sudden rush of self-consciousness. "Blaine stop laughing, we need to make sure we clean that up completely before we go," Kurt told him.
Blaine kissed him on the cheek. "I'll take care of it. Dr. Harrington will be thrilled for the courtesy wash. You finish freshening up and get dressed. We have a dinner to get to."

"You're late," Burt snapped gruffly when Kurt and Blaine finally arrived home. "Dinner's on the table boys, let's go."

Kurt ducked his head with embarrassment while Blaine followed, the bounce still in his step. "We're sorry sir, it won't happen again," he apologized, though he knew it was most likely a lie.

Burt knew it too. "Mmhmm," he answered not believing Blaine for a second, and not wanting to think at all on what the two had been doing.

Dinner was one of the most awkward Kurt had ever experienced. Burt kept staring at him and Blaine, stabbing the food on his plate just a tad too hard. Carole was doing her best not to laugh, which was proving difficult with the way Burt watched the boys and the blush that had been on Kurt's face from the moment they got home. And Blaine, well he found the entire situation entirely too entertaining and decided to send Kurt coy smiles and winks despite the glare Kurt returned. They were halfway through their meal when Carole could no longer take the awkwardness, deciding to steer Burt's attention.

"So Blaine, what are your plans for Thanksgiving?" She asked conversationally. "Your brother isn't working is he?"

"No?" Blaine answered unsurely. "I mean, he's not scheduled to but he could always get called in," Carole nodded understandingly. "We usually have a small turkey and some potatoes. Nothing fancy."

Carol immediately caught the sadness in Kurt's eye as he watched Blaine. "Well that won't do," Carole commented, "Why don't you and Cooper have Thanksgiving with us?"

Blaine shook his head, a small smile on his lips. "It's ok. We wouldn't want to impose."

"You wouldn't be imposing," Carole assured him. "We would love to have you."

"Carole's right," Burt chimed in. "Thanksgiving is a day for family and you and Cooper are just as good as. Talk to him. We'd be honored if you joined us."

Blaine looked at Kurt, smiling at the hopeful look in his eyes. "You wouldn't mind? I don't want to intrude."

"Are you kidding me? Of course I don't mind," Kurt said, placing a gentle hand on Blaine's. "You're never an intrusion. You should come. Carole and I will cook while you, Cooper, Finn, and Dad can watch the game. It'll be fun."

Blaine laced his fingers with Kurt's, turning his attention back to Carole who was smiling encouragingly. "I'll talk to Coop but ok yeah, that sounds amazing."

Carole grinned from ear to ear. "Perfect. Now you'll get the chance to taste Kurt's amazing pumpkin pie."

Kurt preened at the compliment, a new blush setting in at the adoring look Blaine sent him. Blaine lifted their hands to his mouth, lightly kissing Kurt's fingers. "I can't wait."
"I want that door wide open!" Burt called up the stairs. His tone couldn't be mistaken for joking. "I don't think he's too happy that I desecrated his shop." Blaine pouted, but his eyes were alight with pride as he settled onto Kurt's bed.

"I definitely don't think he's gonna let us lock up again alone, that's for sure," Kurt smirked. "That can't stop me from loving you," Blaine grinned as he grabbed Kurt's hand and pulled him on top of him. Kurt straddled him and Blaine's lips were on his, kissing him deeply. Kurt wrapped his arms around Blaine's neck, melting into the embrace.

"Mmm... I cannot wait for Thanksgiving," Blaine muttered, his hands slowly teasing down Kurt's ass, squeezing just hard enough for Kurt to moan. "I bet you look sexy as hell in an apron."

Kurt pulled away, his eyes sparkling with desire. "I do look sexy in an apron, now behave yourself, Anderson," he scolded playfully as he got up and walked over to his DVDs. "What are you in the mood for?" he asked as he looked through.

"You," Blaine teased and Kurt shot him a death glance that shut him up with a coy shrug. "Then the movie that's most you."

Kurt grinned and knew immediately what to pick. He pulled Moulin Rouge out of the rack and slipped it into the DVD player throwing the case on the bed. Blaine picked it up and threw a look to Kurt. "Seriously? You're going to make me sit through a whole sappy romantic musical?" he asked, his brows raised high.

"Yes I am," Kurt said as he curled in next to him leaning his head on his shoulder. "And you are going to like it."

Blaine grumbled but he wouldn't do anything that would make Kurt move away so he inwardly rolled his eyes as the movie started and kept quiet for as long as he could. Until…

"Oh come on Kurt, what the fuck? I mean, it's the middle of bohemian Paris and they're singing Smells Like Teen Spirit? This is the stupidest movie ever."

"Shut it Anderson," Kurt growled and Blaine was quiet again, for a while. Until…

Roxanne
You don't have to put on the red light

Blaine got out of bed and started putting on the moves, screaming of sex as his slithered toward Kurt and gradually climbed the bed again to rest on top of him.

I loved you since I knew you
I would always go down on you
I have to fuck you just how I feel
I won't share you with another boy

Kurt rolled his eyes. "Blaine, I swear to god if you sing one more word…” he warned, pushing him off.

"I'm just singing along with this ridiculously stupid musical, I thought you'd enjoy my enthusiasm," he said innocently then laughed with a smirk and nestled back into Kurt's arms. Until…
Blaine started singing in Kurt's ear, his beautiful voice once again filling Kurt's senses, but twisting the words to his own liking.

_Come, you may_
_Come, you may_
_I will fuck you, until your dying day._

"Oh my god, what do you do, make up dirty lyrics to every romantic song you hear?" Kurt snapped.

"Not the ones I write myself," he blurted out and then pulled away, going still.

Kurt paused the movie and shifted away to face Blaine. "You write your own songs? Like the music and the lyrics?" he asked surprised.

"Yeah," Blaine answered softly, suddenly bashful. He'd planned to share his songs with Kurt sometime, but he wanted to perfect his skill first, make sure it was perfect before he let the boy he loved judge his ability.

"Why haven't I heard it before?" Kurt asked curiously.

Blaine shrugged. "Because I haven't shared it before," he said matter-of-factly and he pulled Kurt back between his legs and into his chest.

They watched the end of the movie, Blaine keeping his quips and comments and entirely himself, but when Satine died, Blaine stood up on the bed and in elaborate and dramatic fashion died with her.

Kurt applauded slowly, grinning widely. "That was very good Blaine," he said rolling his eyes for the hundredth time that night. "Feel free to get up any time."

Kurt smirked but Blaine lay still, splayed out on the bed as if he were truly dead. Kurt giggled nervously, knowing Blaine was faking and still the race of _what if_ suddenly rushed through his bones. Slightly panicked though he knew there was no reason to be, he pulled Blaine's hand but his head fell back and when he let go his hand went slack and dropped to the bed.

"Okay mister," he said crawling down next to him shaking his not moving chest. "Don't you dare do this to me Bla-"

Blaine swiftly reached up and grabbed Kurt, pulling him down and tickling him relentlessly. Kurt screamed but it was muffled by Blaine's mouth suddenly on his and his laughter was swallowed and turned into a soft and loving kiss. When they parted, Kurt leaned on his hands above Blaine. Blaine looked up at him, his eyes like hearts filled with nothing adoration and love, and it was Kurt's turn to sing.

_The greatest thing you'll ever learn_
_Is just to love and be loved in return._

Blaine smiled softly, brushing Kurt's temple tenderly and cupping his cheek. "That's true you know," Blaine whispered, suddenly very serious.

"I told you the movie is brilliant," Kurt quipped as if stating the obvious.
"Yes," Blaine said, letting go of all pretense. He loved the movie and he loved Kurt more than he ever thought he could possibly love someone. Learning to let himself love and be loved was indeed the greatest thing. "Yes it is."

Jake scowled across the hallway, watching Marley and Ryder Lynn, some dumbass football player that couldn't seem to take the hint. Marley was nice to him just like she was to everyone, giggling and flipping her hair, but she didn't smile at him the way she'd been smiling at Jake lately. She didn't blush or truly laugh with Ryder the way she did with him. But Ryder kept flirting with her, ignoring the glares that Jake sent him no matter how deadly they were. He needed to do something and soon, but he had no idea what. And when Blaine and Kurt weren't around Puck continued to make fun of her beautiful innocence. Despite all that had changed, too much had stayed the same and he had nowhere to turn.

But then he saw Blaine and Kurt turn a corner, hand in hand, and he watched them join in with Marley's laughter and he saw possibility. He shook his head. He had to think. Tonight he would think and tomorrow he would decide what he wanted to do.

Nick entered the auditorium, the sound of Harmony belting out Cabaret like the Broadway star she was someday going to be filling his ears and make his heart thump even stronger than it had been moments ago. He almost turned and ran, but Kurt spied him standing house center and came bounding over.

"Hey," Kurt greeted him with a smile. "Blaine send you to come and get me? We're not gonna be done for another like..." he glanced up at the clock and back at Nick. "40 minutes at least. The director wants to run through the whole second act."

Nick shifted his eyes briefly to Kurt, but otherwise remained fixed on the stage. She was breathtaking and memories of their summer together doing theater in the park came rushing back to him. "Blaine didn't send me," he said, his voice suddenly hoarse and he swallowed.

"Oh," Kurt said with a curious twinkle in his eye as he followed Nick's gaze. "You're not here to see me at all."

Nick flushed uneasily and turned around heading quickly back toward the door. "I should just go."

"Nick, wait, stop," Kurt called and Nick paused with a slump in his shoulders. "I see the way you guys look at each other. What's going on between you two?"

"Nothing's going on," came Harmony's hard voice behind them. They both turned slow and sheepish to find the brunette, hands on her hips, looking totally pissed off. She directed her first glance at Kurt who scurried off muttering something about her and Santana being long lost sisters. Once Kurt was gone, Harmony's glare turned to Nick. "What do you think you're doing here?" she snapped with a touch of exasperation. "You think that just because Kurt and Blaine stopped being asses and started being boyfriends that you and I will just go back to how things were? Because it doesn't change a thing that you did."

"You're right Harmony. It doesn't," Nick answered sadly. "And I regret everything I did and didn't do. But losing you is what I regret most of all."

"Well maybe it too late for regret Nick," she said. "Saying you'd do it differently and proving you are different are not at all the same. I need a guy I can trust. Who will proudly be on my arm
on the Tony Red Carpet, not cower in fear away from the paparazzi. I want someone I can thank in
my speech and who will blow me kisses in front of the whole world. I'm on the edge of glory Nick,
and I want someone on the edge with me!"

Nick watched her as she spoke and he'd never believed her more beautiful. Her dreams were so big
and she was so sure and that kind of confidence was just intoxicating. "How do I prove that I'm
there Harm? How do I prove that I don't care who knows about us anymore?"

"Figure it out," she told him. "And do it soon, because I'm ready to move on if you don't."
Harmony flipped her hair and stormed back to the stage, a sly smile on her face that no one could
see.

Kurt slid back up to Nick who stood dazed. He cleared his throat and Nick blinked, clearing his
eyes and staring at his friend. "Kurt, there's something I need to tell you. And I need your help.
And Jeff and Blaine," he said his voice and eyes growing enthusiasm. "His house. Tonight at 6," he
yelled before racing out of the auditorium to find his boys.

They had a performance to prepare.

"So why exactly are we here again?" Jeff asked as they settled around the coffee table in the
basement.

Blaine shrugged. "Nick said it was important. Needed us to help with something." They heard the
doorbell ring and Blaine stood up to answer. "That's probably him," he said and hurried back up
stairs.

Jeff turned to Kurt suspiciously. "What do you know that we don't, Kitty Cat?"

Kurt gasped, gripping his shirt over his heart. "I know not what you speak of."

Jeff scoffed. "Right, like I'm sure." Nick and Blaine came down the stairs, the urgency on Nick's
face clear as day. "What the hell is going on, Nick? And why does Kitty Cat know but not me?"

Kurt threw his hands up in surrender, shaking his head. "I didn't say a word."

"It's fine, Kurt," Nick assured him. "Honestly, I'm surprised no one has figured it out."

"Figured what out?" Blaine asked, glancing in between Nick and Kurt. "Seriously, dude. What's
going on?"

Nick took a deep breath. "I'm just going to come out with it. Harmony and I were dating." Jeff and
Blaine's jaws dropped, Kurt grinning excitedly. "We had been for months. We started dating during
summer stock and when we got back we kept seeing each other, but kept it quiet. Because of the
Crew. Only she hated being a dirty little secret. And I don't blame her."

"Did you break up because of us?" Kurt asked, feeling a touch of guilt.

Nick shook his head. "No. She broke up with me because I didn't stand up for you with Puck and
Quinn. And she figured if I couldn't stand up for you and Blaine, I could never stand up for us." He
looked at Blaine frowned. "And she was right. She wants someone who will be proud to be on her
arm, and not afraid to tell the world. And I was afraid. I was terrified. But I'm not anymore," he
announced.

"Good for you," Blaine said sincerely and patted him in the shoulder.
Jeff shook his head with disbelief. "I totally knew you were seeing someone. I cannot believe you didn't tell me. I'm your best friend dammit!" Nick shrugged apologetically.

"So, all that advice you gave me on Kurt," Blaine started. "Everything you said about not being able to merge the two worlds together, all that was about you and Harmony?"

"Yeah," Nick replied guilty.

"You should have told me," Blaine said sadly. "I told you about Kurt. Why couldn't you tell me about Harmony?"

"I told you, I was scared," Nick admitted. "Because I knew how hard it was and I didn't see a way out, not then. Because you were struggling with your own shit. How could I tell you about her when you were just barely starting to accept your feelings about Kurt?"

"He has a point," Kurt spoke softly, Jeff and Blaine both turning to scowl at him. "What? I'm just saying. You guys weren't exactly accepting of change. And I mean you too, Jeff. Just because you decided to give me a chance doesn't mean that it was easy. Or did you forget all the hell you went through with the Crew?" Jeff pouted but said nothing, knowing that he was right.

"Look, none of that matters anymore," Nick said, everyone turning their attention back to him. "What matters now is that I'm done being scared. I'm done being a coward. I want to be with her, for however long she'll have me. And I have a plan, but I'll need your help."

Blaine glanced at Jeff who was watching Nick and then at Kurt who was smiling encouragingly at him. He turned back to Nick. "Ok. What do you need us to do?"

Jake twiddled with the zipper of his jacket nervously wondering what he had been thinking coming to Blaine's house this late in the night. It was just passed midnight, he shouldn't be here. He should just go home and forget all about Marley Rose. Except that he couldn't do either. He hated listening to his parents fighting. And no matter how hard he tried, he could not stop thinking about Marley. He couldn't stop thinking about the smell of her perfume or the way she bit her lip when she was feeling shy. He couldn't stop imagining how different a kind of life he could have with a simple girl like her. He would always make her laugh and take her on adventures and they would have their disagreements but they would never, ever fight. Not like his parents.

Puck though would say a girl like Marley could never give him the things that he wanted. But Jake knew that all he really wanted was someone who loved him and who he could love back as best he could. Blaine would understand that.

With a quick inhale, Jake rang the doorbell and waited. Cooper's car wasn't in the driveway so Jake knew that he would be at the hospital still. He just hoped that Blaine was awake. After a few minutes of no answer, he pounded on the door then rang the bell a few more times.

"I'm coming!" Jake heard Blaine shout moments before the door swung open. "What?!" he snapped, rubbing sleep from his eyes. "Jake? Is everything okay?" he asked in a bit of a panic as he ushered Jake in.

"I uh, sorry for waking you man," Jake replied, rubbing the back of his neck. "I should've called or something. I'll just go."

Jake tried stepping around Blaine but Blaine grabbed him by the shoulders to stop him. "Wait, hold on. You obviously came here for a reason, so what's up? Everything cool with Puck?"
Jake waved dismissively. "Yeah, Puck's fine. I um, I just…the thing is…you see…"

"Just spit it out Jake, it's fucking midnight," Blaine snapped tiredly.

"I'm in love with Marley Rose," Jake blurted out and just like that, his walls came tumbling down. "I mean, I'm not like, in love with her the way you are with Kurt, or Quinn and Jeff, but…I'm totally into her dude. Like, I can't even tell you how much I like this damn girl because I don't even know myself but I can't stop thinking about her. I can't eat. I can't sleep. And if I don't talk about it then I'm gonna do something stupid like…burst into damn song in the middle of the hallway professing me love. And I just…I don't know what to do."

"Oh for the love of…" Blaine breathed out a laugh, running his fingers through his hair. "Ok then. Let's go to my room and talk," he said and headed up the stairs, Jake following uncertainly behind. "You stayin the night?"

Jake shook his head. "I don't wanna bother you."

Blaine scoffed, a smirk on his lips. "Well it's a little late for that don't you think?" Jake lowered his eyes regretfully but Blaine slapped him fondly on the back. "Don't be stupid, Jake. You aren't bothering me. Besides, I don't want you riding your bike this time of night and if my instincts are right your parents won't be lettin' you get too much sleep at home tonight anyway." Blaine looked at him knowingly and Jake sent him a half smile. Blaine was always good at taking care of them. "I'll just text Cooper to let him know you're here. He oughta be home soon anyway."

Jake nodded as they entered Blaine's room, shrugging off his jacket and setting it down on Blaine's desk with his helmet. He looked around the room as Blaine texted Cooper, noticing the guitar against the wall. "I didn't know you played."

"Yeah, I taught myself when I first moved here. It was kinda therapeutic."

Blaine chuckled softly, tucking his legs underneath him. "Not as much as you apparently," he teased, laughing at the way Jake ducked away from his gaze. "Come on, baby Puckerman. You just spilled your soul downstairs and now, I wanna know everything." Jake groaned to himself. "You didn't wake me up for nothing, dude. Sit your ass down and talk."

Jake sighed loudly though truthfully, he was relieved that finally someone else knew. He turned Blaine's desk chair around and straddled it, his arms crossed along the back. "I just…I don't even know man," he groaned, ducking his face into his arms.

"You Puckermans are horrible at talking things out," Blaine said with an eye roll. "Why don't you start from the beginning? How long have you liked Marley? Is this a new development or…"

"I wish it was that simple," Jake grumbled with a sigh. "No, it isn't new. I've been crushing on Marley since middle school," he admitted, a slight blush creeping up his cheeks.

Blaine looked at him shocked. "Well why the hell didn't you say anything earlier?" he asked.

Jake averted his eyes and bit his lip. "You guys would have kicked my ass if I'd said I was interested in Marley Rose. Santana and Quinn would have gone after her relentlessly."

Blaine took a breath and lowered his head. "Yeah, that's true," he admitted, though he hated that it
was. "Guess we've all done a bit of growing up these last few months." Jake nodded, but he said nothing. "So Middle school, huh? How did it happen? Did she let you borrow her pencil? Or did she show some ankle?" Blaine teased. Jake sent him an unimpressed glare only egging Blaine on more. "No, I got it. You were screwing around in class and she snapped at you to shut up, then apologized for being mean."

"Dude…shut up," Jake groaned, his cheeks flushing.

"I'm just busting your balls, man," Blaine laughed. "Seriously though, how did this all happen?"

Jake smiled softly to himself, his vision on the floor as he recalled the first day he saw Marley. "It was the first day of 7th grade and she was in my History class. I remember thinking that she was the prettiest girl in the whole world." Blaine watched Jake with a smile, the gentleness of his tone tugging at Blaine's heart. "I never talked to her, but I watched her and she was just…so sweet to everybody. She still is. She's the kindest girl I've ever met, she's so good-hearted and I just…she makes me melt, dude."

"Awe," Blaine pouted. "Jakey's in love."

"I'm not!" Jake denied, though a smirk played at his lips. "I mean, ok yeah, maybe I kinda am but I can't help it! She's incredible, Blaine. And now that she's around and I can actually talk to her without all you guys going apeshit on me or her, I don't know how. I don't know what I'm supposed to say to her. She's so smart and I always feel like such an idiot."

"You're not an idiot," Blaine rolled his eyes. "You're just a love sick puppy, which ok, kinda makes you an idiot," he laughed.

Jake groaned into his hands. "What am I supposed to do here?"

"Just ask her out. And be yourself. If she's anything like Kurt, which she kinda is, she's gonna see right through your bullshit. So just be you, the real you," Blaine advised.

"And what about Puck?" Jake questioned with a raised brow. "He's not going to be thrilled about this. I was going to wait to do this, ya know. I was gonna hold off until next year when you were all gone. But I don't think I can anymore. And that Ryder guy keeps flirting with her and if I don't step up soon, I'm gonna lose her before I even had her."

"If Puck gives you any bullshit just let me know and I'll take care of it," Blaine assured him. "If there's one thing I've learned it's that you can't choose who you love based on what your friends or your family think. The only thing that matters is what the two of you think. So you gotta man up and ask her out. Find out what she thinks. You're a Puckerman dammit. You got this."

Jake sighed and shrugged. "I don't know, man. You really think she'd go for me?"

"Actually yeah, I think she would," Blaine replied sincerely. "But you'll never know until you try. You gotta be honest though. And commit. If there's anything I've learned about Kurt's crew it's that they don't want to be anyone's dirty little secret."

Jake offered him a small smile and nodded. "Thanks man. It's late. I should go."

Just then, they heard the front door open and close. "Blaine, I'm home," Cooper called.

Blaine raised a brow and scoffed at Jake as he hopped off his bed. "Yeah, too late now! Ain't no way Cooper's gonna let you leave. I'll go grab you some sheets for the guest room."
The plan was solid. As the first bell rang, Blaine, Jeff and Kurt raced to the side door. Blaine and Jeff slipped out and ran to the car, pulling their guitars from the trunk then ran back to the door. Three special knocks and Kurt let them back in, sight unseen. At least they hoped so.

They made their way back to the cafeteria hallway to meet a pacing Nick, rubbing his hands together, holding them in prayer under his chin as he walked to and fro just out of sight.

"Maybe this isn't a good idea," Nick stammered as he tried to run away.

Blaine and Jeff grabbed him immediately. "No way dude," Blaine said and rubbed his shoulders. "You are going to do this, and you are going to find out if she'll take you back or not and you are going to act like a man either way."

Nick turned to Kurt, who knew Harmony better than anyone, and raised a brow pitifully. "Am I doing the right thing here?"

"If there's one thing Harmony will appreciate, it's a grand gesture. So let's go before you chicken out," Kurt answered.

"Jeff?" Nick begged, maybe hoping that someone would tell him to run away screaming, but he should have known Jeff wouldn't be that person.

"It's now or never man. Unless you want it to be never I suggest you get some balls and show that girl what she'd be missing if she didn't take you back," Jeff told him.

Nick looked at his friends and took a breath. He ran his hands down his leather lapel and snapped it hard, gaining his courage. "Alright boys. Let's do this thing."

They flung open the doors and immediately jumped on to two empty tables. Nick scanned the crowd and found her immediately, sitting with her theater friends off to the side. As the whispers and chatter reached her she turned and saw him. Her expression was somewhere between astonishment, embarrassment, and excited curiosity and it fueled him. "Harmony Weathers, you said you wanted proof that I'd stand on the edge with you?" he yelled across the cafeteria. "Well if this isn't on the edge, I don't know what is!"

On his nod Blaine and Jeff started playing and rocking out, Kurt swaying with them singing back up. They were breaking many rules to show Harmony how Nick felt, but that was the edge for him and he was ready to stand and jump if needed.

Don't know where to go from here
My thoughts are tangled, twisted fears
Been waitin' a while now on the dawn
Seems like the sun may never come

I made my way through the darkest night
To the break of day on the other side
For some time the light's been creepin' in
Now I'm feelin' like I could trust again

Harmony watched, feeling hands on her arms shaking and patting her but she couldn't turn her eyes from Nick to see who it was. She'd watched him perform a hundred times last summer from across
the stage, but she'd never truly sat back and taken in how amazing he truly was. His gentleness discarded now for a harsher persona and yet it was the softness in him that still came through his eyes and bore into hers, causing her to let go, just a little, and maybe let him in.

You're the only person who reminds me
Love is beautiful and true
Life is beautiful and new
You're the only person who reminds me

Hold on now don't you blink or it's gone
I've been terrified of life for way too long
Oh no now don't you blink or it's gone
In another life who knows what we'd become?

Love is beautiful and true
Life is beautiful and new

Nick poured out his heart, his hopes and his truth about Harmony. She was truly the light in his life of too much gray. She reminded him to go for his dreams, take risks, and live a little on the edge. He had no idea how long she would be in his life or what wonderful things they could do and see together, he just knew that he'd been afraid of sharing his life openly with her for too long, but he was done hiding.

Been making plans and drawing maps
I plan to take the righteous path
And hope and pray it leads me back
To all the happiness I had

Been making lists and crossing off
Every kiss that wasn't love
And every word that stretched the truth
Like when she said she loved me

You're the only person who reminds me

Hold on now don't you blink or it's gone
I've been terrified of life for way too long
Oh no now don't you blink or it's gone
In another life who knows what we'd become?

Love is beautiful and true
Life is beautiful and new

Been making lists and crossing off
Every kiss that wasn't love
And every word that stretched the truth
Like when she said she loved me

Half the cafeteria applauded the impromptu performance while the other's started gossiping at once. Kurt shook his head with amazement and beamed at Blaine, taking him in his arms immediately and crashing their lips together. Jeff smiled sheepishly at Quinn, who kept an amused and watchful eye on her boyfriend.

And Nick just stared out as Harmony approached. He jumped off the table and waited, his nerves rising once again to the surface, sparking nearly out of his skin as he waited. She stood before him and she didn't reach out, but she didn't smack him either, so that was a plus in Nick's mind.

"I don't believe I ever told you I love you," Harmony said and Nick nodded. She never had.

"Then I have something to work for," he answered. He took a breath, trying to put together the words to say what he needed to say. "Look, for many I know that high school romances don't typically last. And I know that we will probably blink and it will be gone. But when you're standing on that stage, accepting your Tony Award and remembering back on all the people who got you to that day, I want to be on that list." He brushed their fingertips tentatively, then took her hand when she didn't pull away. "Because you'll be on mine."

Harmony leaned in and kissed him, meaning for it to be goodbye but pushing forward at his touch. He wrapped his hands around her waist and pulled her close. She melted into them, giving in to the here and now. Maybe it wouldn't be forever, but she decided that it could be for now, and that would be enough.

"Thank you for believing in me again," Nick whispered and rested his head on her shoulder.

"Thank you for believing in us," she answered.

Chapter End Notes

Songs:
Roxanne and Come What May (Blaine style) from Moulin Rouge
Don't Blink by Reliant K
It was the last day before Thanksgiving break, a half day that had most of the students cheering. Blaine though was too busy trying to fill himself with the taste of Kurt's skin, his lips attached to the crook of Kurt's neck as he pinned him against his locker. He wanted as much as he could get before they had to head out to the shop.

"Baby, we're going to get in trouble," Kurt said breathlessly, fisting Blaine's jacket.

"The teachers are already gone," Blaine muttered against Kurt's skin as he dug his fingers into Kurt's thigh. "Besides, I'm not ready to let you go. I gotta get in as much time as I can now."

"Blaine," Kurt whined with a chuckle, pushing him back though he kept a firm hold on his jacket. "We're gonna see each other every day during break."

Blaine pouted. "Yeah but we'll see each other at work, or with the Crew, or with our families. Your father's watching us so close I doubt we'll have any alone time together."

Kurt pushed Blaine further back and flipped their positions, Blaine biting his lip as Kurt smirked devilishly. "We'll make time. I promise," he whispered seductively, leaning forward to catch Blaine's lips.

Blaine moved his head at the last second though, his attention shifting to down the hall. "Hey there, Kyle," he called out with entirely too much enthusiasm.

Kurt rolled his eyes and pulled away from Blaine, his arms crossed and his hip jutted out angrily. "Please don't," he said dryly though Blaine was already walking off towards Kyle. Kurt followed him, fuming.

Blaine hurried over to Kyle's side, smiling broadly as the jock ignored him. "Man, I am so glad that I got to see you before break. I mean, really, so relieved," he said dramatically, Kyle making no indication of hearing him. "Nothing to say, huh? That's too bad. I was hoping we could be friends," he continued patronizingly. Kyle gritted his teeth and sped up, Blaine finally stopping at the end of the hall. "Bye, Kyle! Have an awesome Thanksgiving!" he shouted out, waving over-enthusiastically before turning back to Kurt. "Now, where were we?" he asked lowly, reaching out to grab hold of Kurt's hips to pull him close.

Kurt quickly stepped out of his grasp though and started walking towards the exit. "We were leaving. We have work," he snapped without a glance.

Blaine groaned and followed him, wrapping his arm around Kurt's waist. "Are you mad at me now?"

"Yeah, you could say that." Kurt stopped and spun around. "Why do you insist on screwing with him?"

"Because it's funny," Blaine shrugged.

"It's not going to be funny when he and his goons come after you or me again. It's not going to be funny when you're sent back to jail. And that's sure as hell not going to be funny in 3 weeks when
you turn 18!" Kurt shouted as he turned and exited the building.

Blaine grabbed Kurt's hand and pulled him back, locking his arms around Kurt's waist so he couldn't escape if he tried. "I'm not going back to jail," he said, his voice soft and deadly serious. Kurt tried to stay mad but in truth he was more scared than anything and he melted into Blaine's glowing eyes and rested his head on Blaine's shoulder. "They aren't going to do anything, Kurt. Cooper told me that his father was completely not cool with what Kyle's been doing and promised he's not gonna be messing with us ever again."

"You better hope so," Kurt muttered into Blaine's neck.

"Please don't be upset with me, I can't stand it when you're mad," Blaine pled, gently pulling Kurt from his shoulder so their eyes met again. He hated seeing tears hiding in Kurt's beautiful blues and his heart dropped, knowing he'd disappointed Kurt.

Kurt sighed. "I don't want to be Blaine, but we're already shoving it in everyone's face that we're together and we still have six months of school left. I don't want anything else to happen to you or to us. We have enough to worry about as is," he said quietly, his voice breaking at the end. "I can't risk losing you too."

Blaine kissed him softly then pulled him back in for a hug. "You're right, I'm sorry. I promise I'll quit screwing with Kyle." Kurt relaxed in his arms a little but said nothing. "You're dad's gonna be okay Kurt. You're not going to lose him, Coop's gonna take care of him," he assured him.

"That only helps if we get a donor," Kurt reminded him uneasily.

There was nothing really to say to that, Kurt was right. Blaine caressed his cheek, leaning in to kiss him gently. "Come on, let's get to work."

Blaine and Kurt walked into the shop hand in hand, greeting the mechanics on duty before clocking in inside the break room. Passing Burt's office Kurt let out an undignified high pitched squeal, let go of Blaine's hand and ran inside. Blaine eyed a tall figure looming over Burt's desk that he only recognized from pictures.

"Finn!" Kurt screeched.

Finn turned towards his step-brother, a big grin in place. "Hey little bro," he greeted, laughing when Kurt launched himself into his arms. "Miss me?"

"What are you doing here?" Kurt asked as they parted. "Dad said you weren't getting in until late tonight."

Finn shrugged, his eyes momentarily shifting to Blaine who was standing in the doorway watching them with a keen eye. "I finished early so I figured I'd come home. Plus I have like, no clean clothes other than what I'm wearing. I didn't want to spend break doing laundry so I'm doing it all today." Kurt rolled his eyes fondly. "Speaking of clothes, dude…what the hell are you wearing? I'm gone for a few months and you turn into a total badass!"

"That would be my doing," Blaine said from the doorway taking in Kurt's black stuck on jeans, white t-shirt, and leather jacket with a cocky grin.

Finn raised a brow. "And you are?" he asked, though he already knew the answer.

Kurt turned around and reached for Blaine, pulling him inside the office. "Finn, this is my
boyfriend, Blaine Anderson. Blaine, this is my step-brother Finn. Be nice," he warned.

"I'm always nice," Blaine responded, his voice low and laced with seduction. His hand trailed softly up Kurt's side.

"Not always," Kurt retorted, his eyes sparkling with desire while he batted Blaine's hand away.

Finn glanced in-between the two. "Wow, Burt wasn't kidding."

Kurt shot Finn a look. "About what? What did my dad say?" Finn smirked but said nothing. "Finn Hudson you tell me right now!"

Finn ignored him and turned to Blaine. "So, you and your brother are joining us for Thanksgiving, huh? That's pretty cool. It'll be awesome having someone else to watch the game with. Kurt here typically lasts about five minutes before running off to who knows where."

"The kitchen, Finn. It's called a kitchen. You know, the place where I make the food we all eat," Kurt retorted.

Blaine glanced amusedly at Kurt before answering. "Yeah, we're looking forward to it."

Finn nodded with a half-smile. "Cool. Well I gotta head home, got laundry to do. I just wanted to come say hi to Kurt first." He reached for Kurt's hair to ruffle but Kurt smacked his hand away. "See ya at home, bro. Nice meeting you, Blaine," he said turning to wave as he walked out.

"Finn! We are not done talking about this!" Kurt shouted after him, huffing in annoyance when Finn simply laughed and kept walking.

"So that's Finn, huh?" Blaine asked with a smirk. He loved it when Kurt was worked up. "I didn't realize he was so tall."

"Yeah, he's a giant," Kurt nodded then sighed. "Come on, let's clock in before Dad gets after us."

Kurt laid down in bed, moments away from calling Blaine to say goodnight when a knock on the door stopped him. "Come in," he called out, smiling brightly when he saw Finn. "Hey, what's up?"

"You got a minute? We haven't really had much of a chance to talk today," Finn asked, his face uncharacteristically serious. Kurt sat up and nodded, pulling his pillow in front of him. Finn walked in the room and sat at the end of Kurt's bed, sighing deeply. "I just talked to Mom and Burt. They told me about his heart," he said gravely.

Kurt looked down at his lap, holding back the tears. "Yeah. Things aren't looking so good."

"How long has he been like that?" Finn asked quietly. "That sick I mean."

Kurt shrugged a little. "A while I guess. He didn't exactly tell me he was getting worse and I guess I was too caught up in my own stuff to really notice."

Finn nodded understandingly. It had sounded to him like that had gone both ways. "You know Burt. Stubborn as a mule," he quipped. Kurt wiped a stray tear away but said nothing. "But he's as strong as one too. He's going to be alright, right? I mean, he said that Blaine's older brother is doing the procedure and that he's the best heart surgeon in Ohio, so that's good right?" he asked brokenly. Burt may not have been Finn's biological father but he helped raise him and Finn loved the man dearly. The thought of losing him shattered his heart.
"Yeah, that's good. I have a lot of faith in Cooper and so does Dad. He'll be in good hands," Kurt told him. "But he still needs a donor so it's the waiting game now, ya know?" Kurt frowned and he squeezed the pillow tighter. "It seems wrong to hope for someone to die soon so he can live, but I can't help doing it. Makes you feel like a terrible person."

"Yeah," Finn muttered, looking away from Kurt for a moment to compose himself. He needed to be strong for his little brother. "Blaine seems like a cool dude," he said changing the topic before things got even heavier.

"Blaine's great," Kurt spoke softly. "I really like him."

Finn turned back to Kurt with a smirk. "Like or love?" he asked teasingly.

Kurt chuckled softly. "I really love him, Finn. So damn much."

"I'm glad, Kurt. You deserve to be happy," Finn smiled. "I mean, he's not what I expected your first real boyfriend would be, but as long you're happy and he treats you right then I won't have to kick his ass." He laughed, then raised a concerned brow. "He does treat you well, right?"

"Yeah," Kurt said with a soft smile. "He really does. So, what did Dad say to you about him?"

"Well would you look at the time," Finn said, glancing at his wrist though he wasn't wearing a watch. "It's late. I should get to bed."

Finn started to stand but Kurt stopped him, grabbing him firmly by the bicep and forcing him to stay seated. "Tell me."

Finn laughed, shaking his head. "Dude, relax. He didn't say anything bad. Just that he was a little rough around the edges but that he's a good kid."

"And?" Kurt pressed. "Your comment at the shop pertained to…?"

Finn shrugged, a teasing smirk on his lips. "Nothing. Just, you know, the fact that apparently you two can't keep your hands off each other." Kurt bit his lip, an embarrassed blush creeping up his cheeks as Finn continued. "Which I totally thought he was kidding about, considering this is you we're talking about, but then I saw you. I swear I thought you were gonna start messin' around with him right in front of me," he laughed.

"We aren't that bad," Kurt argued, though he knew they kind of were. Finn scoffed. "Yeah, right dude. I could feel the sexual tension from freakin Mars!"

"Oh my God, Finn, please stop talking!" Kurt groaned, punching Finn in the arm.

"You're the one that asked!" Finn protested.

"I can't help it, okay?" Kurt defended himself. "I get around him and it's like the world disappears. Isn't it like that with Rachel?" Finn's face shifted over to guilt and sadness at the mention of his girlfriend's name. "Everything's okay with you two, right?"

"Are you still together?" Kurt asked cautiously, not wanting to upset his brother but needing to know. Both he and Finn had barely known Rachel at McKinley, but Finn had met her again at Ohio
State University, where he had a football scholarship and she was biding her time before reapplying to NYADA for her sophomore year. When Finn told Kurt they'd started dating, Kurt had initially been dubious, but ever since Finn brought her home for a few weeks during the summer he'd grown to truly like her. He hoped that whatever the problem, they would be able to work it out.

"Yeah, we're still together," Finn nodded, though his heart wasn't completely in it. "Some stuff just happened and we're trying to work through it."

"So does that mean we won't see her during break?" Kurt wondered.

"I don't know yet. I guess we'll see," Finn sighed and Kurt nodded understandingly. "Anyway, I'll let you get to bed," he said, reaching over to ruffle Kurt's hair.

Kurt immediately ducked out of the way. "Not the hair, Finn."

Finn shook his head and stood up. "Some things never change," he muttered as he walked to the door, "Night, Kurt."

"Night, Finn."

Blaine stood in front of his mirror, curling his hair again as Cooper waited for him to finish getting ready. He was dressed in a pair of black slacks and a blue polo, and all that was left was to perfect one particular curl that refused to stay in place. With a frustrated sigh, Blaine ran his fingers through his hair, groaning when more curls bounced out of place. He seriously could not win today.

"You just about ready, Squirt?" Cooper asked from the bathroom doorway. Blaine looked up at him, annoyance and nervousness written all over his face. "Hey, you okay?"

"I'm fine," Blaine muttered, turning back to the mirror to try and fix his mop. "My goddamn hair is being a fucking pain in the ass."

Cooper grabbed hold of Blaine's shoulders and turned him. He inspected Blaine's hair, turned the faucet on and wet his hands slightly before mixing in a dab of Blaine's product. He rubbed his hands together then scrunched them through Blaine's curls. "You sure you're alright?" Blaine shrugged a little but said nothing. "Come on, Blaine. Talk to me."

Blaine sighed, his shoulder slumping. "I'm just anxious I guess. Which is stupid because I've had dinner with the Hummels before but…I don't know. This is the first real family dinner we've had in years. It needs to go well."

Cooper twirled a final curl around his finger and wiped his hand on a towel. "Listen Blaine, today is going to be great because you'll be surrounded by amazing people who love and support you," Cooper assured him. "I know you're nervous, but don't overthink it."

Blaine looked at his hair, sighing in relief that Cooper was able to get it controlled. "I'm trying not to. I guess today just means more to me than I thought it would," he said quietly.

Cooper leaned on the bathroom counter, pulling Blaine towards him for a hug. Today meant a lot to him too. Blaine was right, it had been a long time since the two of them had been invited to be a part of any family and even before this they'd never felt at home with their parents. Cooper hadn't truly realized before how lonely the holidays had been for them until the Hummels opened their arms. But he also needed to keep his own distance. Burt was his patient and he couldn't get too close too soon. Emotions clouded good medical judgment and tragedy, especially in such a difficult
surgery, was always a realistic possibility.

Still, he needed to be there for Blaine and Blaine needed to be with Kurt and his family this year, so he'd keep his own heart guarded and he'd just try to enjoy himself. "You're right, this is the first real family type meal we've had in a long time, and while I understand it might be a little daunting, it's also really heartwarming." Blaine pulled back and looked up at his brother. "Burt and Carole have been gracious enough to invite you because they want you there. They want to share their home with you because their son loves you. So whatever worry you have, let it go. You don't need to pretend to be something you're not for anyone's sake. You don't have to be tough shit and you don't have to be some dapper schoolboy. In fact, we can both just be as ridiculous as we want and not worry about it being a faux pas."

Blaine rolled his eyes with a laugh. "You're just saying that because you made a bet with Burt over who's going to win the game and Dad never-"

"Dad never made bets because he was no fun," Cooper cut in, sounding more like an insolent child. "And you're right. That's exactly why I'm saying it. Because the Hummels are a real family who care more about each other than social status. And personally I'm honored that they wanted to include us." Blaine smiled softly at that. "So come on, stop being nervous and just be happy that we get a real turkey this year as opposed to my lame attempt at one."

"Hey now, last year's wasn't that bad," Blaine teased as they walked out of the bathroom together. "You know, once it finally finished baking," he smirked.

"How was I supposed to know that the oven wasn't on the right temperature?" Cooper pouted and Blaine laughed. "And besides, once it was done, it tasted amazing."

Blaine scoffed as they headed down the stairs. "Yeah, okay Coop. Whatever you say."

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Finn was walking back to the living room from the kitchen after once again being scolded by Kurt for nibbling when the doorbell rang. "I got it," he yelled out and doubled back. He opened the front door and smiled. "Hey guys," he greeted Cooper and Blaine as he ushered them in. "You're just in time. The game's about to start. I'm Finn, by the way," he directed at Cooper.

"Nice to meet you, Finn," Cooper said with a charming smile. "I'm pretty sure I've seen you around the shop. Where can I set this down?" he asked, gesturing to the bottle of wine.

Finn smirked. "You can take it in the kitchen but be warned, Kurt's probably going to bite your head off, he gets snappy while he's cooking."

"I'll take it," Blaine said quickly, loving more than anything his feisty boyfriend. He grabbed the bottle out of Cooper's hand and scurried off towards the kitchen.

"Good luck," Finn muttered and Cooper shook his head. "Burt's in the living room," he said and walked off, Cooper following him.

Blaine stood in the kitchen's entryway, wine bottle in hand, his head cocked to the side at the sight of Kurt in an apron. He was as sexy as Blaine had thought he'd be, but even more than that, the immediate feeling of "home" washed over him, and he froze to his spot. Any anxiety he felt on the drive over was gone. Cooper was right. Kurt loved him, wanted to share the holidays with him, and as Kurt raised his arm to wipe away some sweat, accidently smearing batter on his forehead, Blaine knew that he would never want it any other way. And he wanted to remember this moment forever. Stealthily, he pulled his phone out of his pocket and went to his camera. "Say cheese."
Kurt looked up at the sound of Blaine's voice, wincing when he saw what Blaine was doing. "You did not just take a picture of me like this," he said, grabbing a towel to wipe his hands.

Blaine smirked mischievously, saving the adorable picture to Kurt's contact. "You bet your sexy ass I did," he said and walked into the kitchen, placing the bottle of wine down on the counter before grabbing the towel in Kurt's hands and pulling Kurt closer to him.

"Blaine Anderson, you better delete that picture right now or I swear to God, I'll-"

"Shh," Blaine interrupted, kissing him softly before he wiped the batter off Kurt's forehead. "You can threaten me all you want but I'm not going to delete it."

"Blaine," Kurt whined with a pout.

Blaine wrapped his arms around him and kissed him again, nibbling on his lower lip the way he knew drove Kurt wild. Kurt struggled, trying not to ruin Blaine's outfit, but he found himself wrapping his arms around Blaine's neck instead as Blaine pressed against him. Blaine slowly released Kurt's lips, looking up at him lovingly through his lashes.

"I guess you can keep the picture," Kurt sighed happily, their noses brushes.

Blaine smirked. "Good, cause I wasn't gonna delete it anyway," he teased and stepped away from Kurt. He leaned an elbow on the counter as his eyes roamed down Kurt's body. "You really do look sexy in an apron. Only problem is you're wearing way too much underneath. You should come over and cook dinner for me one night and we'll make sure you do it right next time," Blaine winked.

Kurt rolled his eyes, though he was smirking. "Only if you're a really good boy," he said with a sultry glance. Blaine bit his lip at the image of how good he could show Kurt he was. "You look really nice by the way. Love the polo."

"Don't get used to it," Blaine said with a raised brow. "I can be a gentleman for your family, but Puckerman will kill you if you even think of changing how I dress every day."

"Like I'm scared of Puckerman," Kurt scoffed. "Besides, you wouldn't let him kill me. You love me too much," he said with a cheeky grin.

Blaine's face softened. He really did love Kurt too much and he was more than okay with that. "Yeah, I really do," he said quietly. Kurt matched his smile, giving him a sweet kiss and turned back to the mixing bowl.

Kurt and Carole spent most of the day in the kitchen preparing dinner, only coming out once in a while to talk with the guys as they watched the game. Kurt lingered in the back of the living room a few times, simply watching Blaine with Finn. He'd worried at first that they wouldn't get along, but as they laughed together and high-fived when their team scored a touchdown, Kurt's heart filled with joy and pride for the boy he loved. The most important people in his life were all gathered in his house and he couldn't have been happier.

When the game was done, the Hudmels and Andersons gathered around the table, a cacophony of voices all chattering at once. Burt was arguing with Blaine and Finn about a referee's call that allegedly cost his team the game, while Cooper and Carole gossiped about a certain world renown doctor in pediatrics that hated children so much they couldn't understand why she had chosen that field. Kurt couldn't help but smiling as he watched them all. Blaine caught his eye and smiled back softly. This is what family was about and Kurt loved that he could share it with Blaine.
"Alright, everyone settle down," Kurt said as they all took their seats. "Before we start dinner," he gave Blaine and Finn pointed looks, both pulling their hands away from the bread rolls, "we need to say what we're thankful for."

Burt, Cooper, and Finn groaned, and Blaine rolled his eyes. "Do we have to, man?" Finn asked. "You know I hate this part every year."

"Yes, we have to and if you complain you don't get any dessert," Kurt said matter-of-factly. Finn sneered at him though the corners of his lips upturned into a smirk.

"Isn't he sexy when he's bossy," Blaine purred, earning him a playful smack from Kurt.

"Watch it, Anderson," Burt said sternly, though he was unable to hold back a grin for long as Blaine suddenly grew contrite.

"As I was saying," Kurt continued, placing a gentle hand on top of Blaine's. "We must all give thanks before we eat and I want to go first. This year, I am thankful for my family, especially my Dad who I love very much. And I'm thankful for the new friends I've made." He looked over at Blaine with a soft smile. "And I am so thankful that you came into my life Blaine, and taught me to never judge a book by its cover. You've shown me that love can prevail over anything, and that's a very special gift to give."

Blaine grinned adoringly, his eyes shining, and brought Kurt's hand up to his lips to kiss. "I'm thankful for you, for reminding me of who I really am and for loving me through all my fear. I don't know where I'd be without you," Blaine said. Carole and Cooper both awed as Kurt failed to hold back a blush. Blaine turned to Burt. "And I'm thankful for you, Burt, for taking a chance on me and believing in me. But more than anything," he said, turning to his brother as he choked up. "I'm thankful for you Coop, for never giving up on me, even when I tried like hell to push you away."

Cooper reached across the table and grabbed Blaine's free hand. "Always, Squirt. I'm grateful to have you in my life no matter how much of a pain in the ass you are, and no matter what happens, I'll never regret taking care of you." Blaine nodded, his eyes clouding over. "I'm also thankful for you Hummels, for watching out for Blaine when I can't and for believing in him as much as I do. Especially you, Kurt."

Carole cleared her throat, wiping a tear away. "You guys are going to make me cry."

"Don't be such a sap, Mom," Finn teased, earning him a smack on the head. "Owe!"

"Don't be rude, Finn," Carole scolded. "Now say what you're thankful for or you don't get any pie."

Finn rubbed the back of his head, glaring disgruntledly at Kurt and Blaine who were snickering. "I guess I'm just thankful for my family and friends, and I'm thankful for the awesome dinner Mom and Kurt worked so hard on."

"Oh yes, butter me up," Carole teased, the table laughing at a pouting Finn. "I'm thankful for my family, and for the company we have this year. And I'm thankful for the beautiful watch Finn is going to buy me for Christmas."

"Wait, what watch?" Finn asked and Carole shrugged in response. "What watch is she talking about, Kurt?"

Kurt bit back a laugh. "No idea. Guess you're just gonna have to find out." Finn grumbled to himself and Kurt turned to Burt. "Your turn, Dad."
"Why? Everyone else already said what I was thankful for," Burt said.

Kurt gave him a look. "Dad."

"Fine, fine," Burt conceded. "I'm thankful for my beautiful wife and my wonderfully annoying boys."

"Hey!" Kurt and Finn whined simultaneously but Burt ignored them and continued.

"That includes you too, Blaine," Burt said with a small smile and Blaine ducked his head with a blush. "And I'm thankful for Cooper who I know is going to take care of me." Cooper smiled softly and looked down at his lap, wanting nothing more than to have the chance to save Burt's life. "And I'm thankful for this food, which is taunting me. Can we eat now?"

Kurt rolled his eyes and nodded. "Yes, yes. Let's eat."

They were quiet for a minute while everyone piled food on their plates. "So how are your college applications going Kurt?" Burt asked, attempting to take some of the focus off himself and the size of the portions on his plate. He was unable to sneak a thing with both Kurt and Cooper keeping an eye on his diet.

"They're going fine Dad," Kurt grumbled as he took a bite. "Stop nagging."

Finn turned to Blaine with a curious glance. "What are your plans Blaine? You gonna be a doctor like your brother?"

Blaine laughed and shook his head. "No way, man. I don't do the whole blood thing." Finn grunted and nodded in agreement. "I um, I actually want to be a songwriter," he answered sheepishly.

"You write music?" Burt asked in surprise. "I didn't know that."

Blaine shrugged a little, glancing at Kurt who was smiling encouragingly. "Yeah, a little." Cooper scoffed and raised a brow and Blaine's cheeks reddened. "Ok, maybe a lot. It's not something I really share. I don't even know if I'm that good."

"You are, Blaine. You just need to believe in yourself," Cooper said.

"What schools are you looking at?" Carole wondered.

"I used to dream of going to NYU, Columbia, or Julliard," Blaine answered, but he shook his head. "But none of them are gonna take a kid with no extracurriculars other than juvie," he huffed with self-deprecation.

"Hey, we've talked about this," Cooper scolded. "Don't go selling yourself short. There's a lot that schools will forgive for the right kid."

"Cooper's absolutely right," Burt nodded approvingly. "You work hard the rest of the year and prove yourself in your interview and essays and you have a good chance."

"And hey, if you get into any of those schools you could go to New York with Kurt," Finn commented with a mouth full of food. "I mean, he'll be at a different school but it'll still be cool to be in the same city."

"Where are you hoping to go, Kurt?" Cooper asked.

"Parsons. Or Tisch. But Parsons is my number one choice," Kurt answered. "I want to be a fashion
"You're not gonna try out for NYADA?" Finn asked curiously, wondering if maybe Kurt and Rachel would go together.

"What's NYADA?" Blaine questioned.

"It's a performing arts school. Or rather, it's _the_ performing arts school. But I don't wanna go into the arts," Kurt said shaking his head. "Don't get me wrong, I love performing, but design is where my heart is."

"And your heart is what you should follow," Cooper said with a smile. "I know I'll be happy if you both end up in New York. Blaine's going to need someone to keep him in check."

"Oh come on, I'm not going to get into any trouble," Blaine argued with a smirk. Cooper, Burt, and Kurt gave him the same unconvinced glare. "Ok, I might get into some trouble…maybe…just a little," he said sheepishly and Finn laughed.

"Don't worry, Cooper. I'll make sure he's a good boy," Kurt said a lot more seductively than he'd intended.

Finn laughed harder, Cooper joining in while Carole pursed her lips. Burt looked at his now blushing son and gaping boyfriend sternly. "Not at the dinner table boys."

Blaine raised his hands in surrender. "Hey, that was all Kurt this time, I'm just an innocent bystander!"

"I don't think you ever have the right to claim innocence, Blaine Anderson, especially while you're busy throwing me under the bus," Kurt said pointedly and Blaine could only peck his lips in response.

Finn glanced around the table and smiled. This was definitely one of the best Thanksgivings so far.

Though it was very much organized by Kurt, Harmony and Marley, Blaine was more than happy to tag along to Karaoke on Saturday night, bringing Nick and Jeff with him. Especially since Kurt had asked so nicely, his lips brushing over the skin of his neck earlier when he'd suggested it.

"I'd do anything for you," Blaine answered before melting beneath the skilled touch of his boyfriend.

He hadn't known that "anything" meant listening to the worst, and very drunk, rendition of a Shania Twain song that was possibly imaginable.

"Oh my god, I forgot my phone in the car. If my Mom calls she'll kill me," Marley cried, bouncing out of her seat. Harmony handed her the keys and she started away from the table.

Blaine stood up almost immediately. "Hey, don't go out by yourself, I'll walk you out," he called when he saw Jake not making a move and though she squinted at him with some confusion she waited and they headed out to the parking lot together. He enjoyed the silence as they walked.

Marley retrieved her phone from Harmony's car and started back but Blaine gently touched her hand and she stopped. "Look," he said a bit hesitantly, but he'd been wanting to say this for a while and now was a good chance. "I just wanted to thank you for standing by Kurt through all this. I know Harmony had her doubts and I don't blame her, but it just seems like you believed in me like..."
Kurt did. And that really means a lot to me."

She smiled softly back at him. "Well I could see how much you meant to Kurt. I believe in him and he believed in you, so obviously you couldn't be so bad," she smirked. "It takes someone very special to see inside a person's heart."

"Well Kurt is a very special person," Blaine agreed.

"I meant you," she said with a smile and brushed her hand on his shoulder. "There were very few people who could see in Kurt what we see in him. But you did. So thank you," she said, giving him a small squeeze.

Blaine kissed her chastely on the cheek and took her hand. "Come on, we should get back inside before they send out a search party," he said and they both laughed.

"I cannot believe I let you convince me to come," Jake complained to the second she returned. "I'm pretty sure you brought me here to kill me because I am dying listening to these people."

"You'll just have to get up yourself and show us how it's done," Nick winked and Jake shut his mouth. The last thing he needed was his secret love of performing getting out.

"You're just mad that Puck, Tana, and Brittany got out of coming," Kurt smirked, his hand on Blaine's leg underneath the table.

"And how exactly did they weasel their way out of joining us again?" Blaine asked with a raised brow.

"Tana and Britt already had plans with their families and Puckerman hung up on me as soon as I said karaoke," Kurt shrugged. "It's okay, though. They're missing out on all the fun."

The singer on stage screeched a high note, the table wincing in pain. "Oh yes, so much fun," Jake groaned.

"Would you feel better if I told you that I was singing in a little bit?" Marley asked him sweetly.

Jake visibly perked up. "Sure! Well, I mean, as long as you don't sound like a dying mule."

"Trust me, she doesn't," Harmony snapped, defending her girl against any attack. "She may be sweet and petite but she's got some major lungs on her and she will blow all of you out of the water."

"Oh is that so," Blaine asked, rising to the challenge. "Well let's just see about that!"

"Blaine what are you-" But Kurt didn't have time to finish his thought because Blaine got up and stormed up to the front where he signed himself up to sing. Kurt couldn't help but smile with excitement.

"Alright, alright! That was certainly entertaining to watch," the announcer said, taking the stage with a face. "Next up is...Quiff? What the hell kinda name is that?" he asked, the crowd laughed.

"Let's go," Jeff said excitedly, grabbing hold of Quinn's hand and running up to the stage.

"This should be good," Jake snorted.

"Can Quinn even sing?" Nick questioned. Blaine shrugged and turned his attention to the stage.
Much too everyone's surprise, not only could Quinn sing but she was damn good. Smiles and laughter broke out amongst their table as Jeff and Quinn belted out Jason Mraz's "Lucky" and sounded amazing. Kurt just adored their flirty glances and coy smiles, and more than anything he loved seeing Jeff happy again. He'd been so miserable without Quinn and though he didn't truly know her well, even he could tell that Quinn wasn't herself without him. Despite their enormous differences, they really were a sweet and spicy perfect match.

_I'm lucky_ I'm in love with my best friend
_Lucky to have been where I have been_
_Lucky to be coming home again_

Kurt glanced over at Blaine who was already looking back at him, no doubt thinking the same thing. Blaine leaned over and cupped his cheek, kissing him softly on the lips. "I love you," he whispered.

After their duet, the table was forced to sit through a few more songs, none anywhere near as good as Jeff and Quinn had been, when finally the announcer called Marley's name. The whole table cheered loudly, Kurt and Harmony yelling out encouraging words while Jake sat on the edge of his seat, eager to hear her voice.

She blushed brightly as she nervously took the mic stand and stared out over the crowd. "Hey, everyone. Thanks for having me," she said with a shy smile. Her eyes fell on Kurt and Blaine holding hands. "I want to dedicate this song to my friends for inspiring me. They taught me that fear doesn't have to overcome us. And that sometimes strength can be found in a place we never imagined."

"Harm, get your camera out!" Kurt whispered excitedly. "We need to record this! It can be used in her documentary later when she's a huge star!" Harmony nodded and quickly pulled out her phone to record.

"Is she really that good?" Jake asked in a whisper as the music started.

"Better," Kurt said with a nod, his attention on Marley.

Marley rested her eyes on Kurt and Blaine, then Jake before closing them to center herself. She breathed deeply and started to sing.

_She was given the world_
_So much that she couldn't see_
_And she needed someone_
_To show her who she could be_
_And she tried to survive_
_Wearing her heart on her sleeve_
_But I needed you to believe_

She opened her eyes and looked out to the crowd, her vision landing on their table where Blaine was watching her awestruck and Kurt was smiling proudly. The words hit home for them in so many ways and Kurt rested his head on Blaine's shoulder, snuggling close. Marley saw them and smiled, proud that she could sing for them. They'd taught her so much about courage and love. They'd made her look outside the little corner she'd backed herself into and start seeing the bigger world. They opened her eyes. And what she saw was something totally unexpected.
You had your dreams, I had mine
You had your fears, I was fine
Showed me what I couldn't find
When two different worlds collide

"She's amazing," Blaine whispered to Kurt before kissing him softly on the head.

"She's beautiful," Jake muttered, his eyes transfixed on the girl who'd stolen his heart so many years ago, but never more than she did right now.

She was scared of it all
Watching from far away
She was given a role
Never knew just when to play
And she tried to survive
Living a life on her own
Always afraid of the throne
But you've given me strength to find hope

Marley lost herself in the music, putting her everything into it. She watched Jake watch her, admiration and pride in his eyes and something else she couldn't quite name. She wondered if they'd ever stand a chance, two kids from two different worlds. It worked for Kurt and Blaine but how many people could really get that lucky? She was so shy, living so much inside herself. Could he bring her out of her shell? Would he even want her?

She was scared
Unprepared
Lost in the dark
Falling apart
I can survive
With you by my side
We're gonna be alright
This is what happens when two worlds collide

You had your dreams, I have mine
You had your fears, I was fine
Showed me what I couldn't find
When two different worlds collide

The place erupted with applause when she finished. Marley took a small self-conscious bow but laughed when her friends cheered louder than the rest. She walked back to the table, taking her seat and blushing as they continued to praise her. She looked over at Jake, holding tight to her confidence for just a moment and smirked at the way he was still gaping at her.

"So did I sound like a dying mule?" she asked, allowing a flirtatious tone to slip through.

Jake smiled broadly and shook his head. "Not at all. You're incredible."

Marley's blush deepened and Blaine rolled his eyes at them. "If you thought that was good, you
ain't seen nothing yet," he said, kissing Kurt on the cheek and walking up to the stage.

"So on a scale of 1 to fuck me against the wall, exactly how good a singer is he, Hummel?" Quinn asked with a smirk.

Kurt matched her smirk, his eyes on Blaine. "He's, fuck me against the wall hard, good," he replied with a cheeky grin.

"Damn," Quinn laughed. "Guess I know what you two are gonna be doing when we get out of here."

"Puckerman is going to be pissed he missed this," Jeff said entirely too enthusiastically as he stared at the stage.

Blaine grabbed the mic and took the stage. "This one's dedicated to my sexy boyfriend over there," he said with a sultry glance, sending Kurt a wink. "Everybody see him? Yeah the one turning red right now. Isn't he beautiful?"

Kurt groaned and hid his face in his hands. "And he's probably going to sing about sex too, isn't he?"

"Probably," Jake, Jeff, and Nick said simultaneously and laughed as Jake took out his phone to record it for his older brother.

But as the song started, the table all went silent, shocked by Blaine's choice, no one more so than Kurt. Kurt listened and was reminded of the story of their journey, Blaine's journey, in every single word of the song. He watched spellbound, so proud of just how far they'd come.

But something happened
For the very first time with you
My heart melted to the ground
Found something true
And everyone's looking 'round
Thinking I'm going crazy

Harmony sat wide-eyed, perhaps appreciating Blaine Anderson truly for the first time. "Kurt, he's incredible!" she whispered.

Kurt nodded with a dreamy smile. "Yeah, he really is."

But I don't care what they say
I'm in love with you
They try to pull me away
But they don't know the truth
My heart's crippled by the vein
That I keep on closing
You cut me open and I

Keep bleeding
I Keep, keep bleeding love
I keep bleeding
I keep, keep bleeding love
Keep bleeding
Keep, keep bleeding love
You cut me open

Blaine let himself go, let the words fill his heart as he sang directly to Kurt. If there was one thing he'd learned in the past few months it's that Kurt truly meant the absolute world to him and he wasn't going to let anything keep them apart. This song had played over and over again in his head while he was locked up and he'd wanted nothing more than to get out and prove that he didn't care what anyone said about him or about Kurt. He'd wondered if he could really do it. Everyone had tried so hard to keep them apart, thinking the worst about both of them. But once he'd made the choice it hadn't mattered because their love for one another was stronger than anyone else's hate. And they proved it and came out on top.

Trying hard not to hear
But they talk so loud
Their piercing sounds fill my ears
Try to fill me with doubt
Yet I know that their goal
Is to keep me from falling

But nothing's greater
Than the rush that comes with your embrace
And in this world of loneliness
I see your face
Yet everyone around me
Thinks that I'm going crazy
Maybe, maybe

Blaine stepped off the stage walking toward Kurt, needing the touch of his hand, the heat of his breath. He pointed to Kurt as he sang and crooked a finger, calling his boyfriend toward him. Kurt blushed and giggled and met him halfway through the room. He sang quieter, more intimately, and it was beautiful.

But I don't care what they say
I'm in love with you
They try to pull me away
But they don't know the truth
My heart's crippled by the vein
That I keep on closing
You cut me open and I
Kurt smiled through happy tears as Blaine sang to him. He was so proud of Blaine, for letting down his walls, opening his heart, risking his friends and most of all teaching everyone what it meant to truly love without fear. He was so thankful to have Blaine in his life. He was everything Kurt never knew he wanted, and everything he always knew he needed. All the pain and drama they survived to get to where they were was worth it to be able to stand in his arms right now. Kurt sang with him the next verse holding Blaine's hand as they returned to the stage, belting the final chorus out with passion.

Blaine and Kurt bowed, Blaine's cocky grin plastered on his face as the place erupted with cheers. He winked at a few elderly women in the corner as they made their way back to the table. They waited to take their seats next to one another before Blaine pulled Kurt into a searing kiss that left the table hooting and hollering.

Marley smiled and her eye caught Jake's. He grinned a bit bashfully and leaned over to whisper, "Do you wanna get some fresh air?"

She nodded and blushed slightly when he held his hand out to her. She took it, softly, not wanting to appear too eager, and followed him out the door. He let go of her hand once they were out and leaned up against a streetlight. She took a breath, the cool night feeling good after the heat of the bar though she shivered at the rush of the wind.

"Oh, here," Jake responded quickly taking off his leather jacket and draping it on her shoulders. She pulled it close around her, loving the weight of it on her body.

"Thanks," she said with a smile that quickly transformed from appreciative to shy.

"Um, you were really good in there," Jake stammered, his own nerves catching up with him. "It was really nice of you to sing it for Blaine and Kurt. It fit them really well." He looked at her feeling like an idiot with absolutely nothing right to say.
"I think it could fit a lot of people," Marley answered with her eyes downcast, but she peered up at him through her lashes.

He looked out onto the park across the street and offered Marley his arm. She took it, falling into step beside him as they crossed the street and walked out of the light of the street lamp and into the safety of the darkness. They took a seat on a bench beneath a tree, the moonlight glowing down on them between the empty branches. "Do you think you could ever do it?" he finally asked, his voice soft in the night. "Take a risk like that? Be with someone you never thought you'd be with?"

Marley stared down at her fingers on her lap. "I suppose," she shrugged faintly as she squinted up at him. "If it's the right person."

"Do you ever..." he took a breath and licked his lips unconsciously. His heart was racing in his chest but it was now or never and he fought the urge to look away. "Do you ever think that I might be the right person?"

Marley's pulse quickened even more than it had already been and her voice answered barely above a whisper. "Sometimes," she said honestly. "Tonight I did."

Jake smiled, and laughed nervously. "I did too," he admitted and she blushed despite herself. He carefully reached a hand up and tucked her hair, flying in the breeze, behind her ear. She leaned into his caress and he cupped her cheek softly. "You're so beautiful," he said.

Her eyes opened wide. "You think so?" she asked.

He nodded, leaning in to her. "I know so," he answered before closing the distance completely and kissing her softly on the lips. He allowed her to pull away if she wanted, but she didn't, instead leaning into him to strengthen the kiss and deepen it as he asked for entrance. It was her first time and in the solitude of the park beneath the moonlight, the distant sound of music coming from the bar, it was perfect and everything she could have ever imagined it to be and more.

"Thank you," Jake said, his smile broad as he caught her lips one more quick time. "Thank you for letting me kiss you," he said sweetly.

Marley laughed and ducked her head then beamed up at him giddily. "You are very welcome," she answered.

Chapter End Notes

Songs used:
Two Worlds Collide – Demi Lovato
Bleeding Love – Leona Lewis
Cooper knocked on the door of the Chief's office. He'd made up his mind, he wasn't truly going to take no for an answer, but he still worried nonetheless that he'd be given a fight. The truth was he should have had this conversation years ago, but he'd been selfish, still building his name and his reputation. It had all paid off. He had top ratings, his credentials were phenomenal and he had the trust of the whole hospital. Which was also the problem. The more they believed in him the more they believed he could do and it was starting to spiral out of control. He needed to put a stop to it.

"Come in," the Chief Surgeon called. Cooper opened the door to the office, smaller than one would think but still nicely furnished in dark Cherry woods. The desk was covered in paperwork that was certain to be in some semblance of order that was an enigma to anyone but the owner. "Have a seat," the Chief offered gesturing to a comfortable leather backed chair and Cooper settled in. "So what can I do for you Dr. Anderson?"

"Well Dr. Howard first of all I wanted to thank you for approving the Hummel transplant. I know it took finagling with the insurance companies-"

Dr. Howard held his hand up to stop Cooper. "Mr. Hummel has made a lot of friends amongst the staff in the hospital over the years. When I brought it to the board it was an easy vote. So you're welcome. But that's not why you came in here."

"No, it's not," Cooper admitted. He shuffled in his seat, but held firm. "I know how much this hospital values my skills and I want to assure you I have no intentions of leaving. But I need to be home for my brother more if I'm going to make sure he makes it to college alright."

Dr. Howard leaned forward on his desk clasping his hands in front of him. "So what are you suggesting?"

Cooper took a breath. He knew how much it could hurt the hospital but not doing it would hurt Blaine more. He wished it hadn't taken his arrest to realize it, but better late than never. "I need to cut back my hours. I need to be done by 6 to be with Blaine after he's done work. I need to be free on weekends. No more overnights. I'll do ER consults during the day. I'll even be on call for emergencies that others truly can't handle. But that's it until Blaine goes to college."

"Done," Dr. Howard said without argument.

Cooper raised a brow. "Done?" he asked dubiously. It couldn't have possibly been that easy.

But Dr. Howard's voice made it clear it was. "Dr. Anderson, you could have easily asked for a sabbatical or told me you were leaving for private practice. This hospital does not want to lose your talent. So if you need to adjust your shifts for the next year in exchange for your ongoing commitment following that then we are in no position to decline that offer," he explained.

Cooper understood. It was more than his talent. His presence brought prestige to the hospital. It brought grant money. It brought top rankings and free advertising and a great future. But only if he stayed long term. He stood up and held his hand out. "Then it sounds like we have a deal."

Dr. Howard rose and shook Cooper's hand. "The new shift schedules will be out next week. If you need anything else, please let me know."

"Thank you Chief," Cooper said a bit informally now that it was over. "This really means a lot to me."
She pulled the leftovers out of the fridge and made herself a turkey sandwich with stuffing and mayonnaise but it barely made a dent in the packed refrigerator. Even after all this time, Julia Anderson still always forgot that it was just the two of them for Thanksgiving dinner. Moments like this she missed her boys. Not just because between Blaine and Cooper they would have eaten nearly everything by now. No, she just missed their presence. Blaine's constant energy and curiosity. Cooper's focus and charm. She missed watching them together. She took her sandwich and chips into the living room and imagined her boys, wrestling together on the floor. She'd yell at them to be careful, reminding Cooper how much bigger than Blaine he was. Eventually someone would get hurt and their father would come in and send them to their corners barking that if they were gonna do the crime they were gonna do the time.

She hoped they were okay and not killing each other now. The words she'd heard in court had warmed her heart, knowing that Blaine felt safe with his brother. That's all she had truly ever wanted for him when he was a baby. Things changed as he got older and decided on the path he wanted his life to take. Even if she wanted to support him she couldn't, not as long as she was married to their father and that wasn't something she was willing to sacrifice at this point. Maybe if Blaine didn't have anyone else, but he did. She had always raised Cooper to care for Blaine. To love him. Because somehow a small part of her had always known. In the end it would be Cooper and Blaine against the world and they would need one another more than anything else.

Jeff gazed out the window, the dark skies promising a strong storm. He watched the road for any indication of Blaine invading their secret get together. They'd planned the meeting for when they knew Blaine was working but Blaine had this way of sensing when the Crew was gathering without him and they couldn't risk getting caught. He'd text Kurt but even that had the potential of Blaine getting wind of them meeting so he crossed his fingers and kept an eye out. After a few minutes though, Jeff decided the coast was clear and headed back into the kitchen where the Crew was quietly waiting for him.

"Are we good?" Puck asked impatiently.

Jeff nodded, taking his seat next to Quinn. "Yep, we're good. Let's get this started before his 'the Crew's up to something' feelers kick in."

"He's at work with Hummel," Puck scoffed. "His feelers are focused elsewhere." Santana chuckled and gave him a high-five. He'd gotten the words out only seconds before she had.

"Shouldn't we be doing this with Kurt?" Brittany asked looking around the table.

"No," the Crew answered simultaneously.

"Britt honey, we can't risk having Kurt involved," Santana explained as she opened up the notebook they'd been planning in. "All Blaine's gotta do is work that sexy and Kurt will sing like a canary."

"Tana's right. We can't risk Kurt spilling the beans just because Blaine seduced it out of him," Nick said apologetically. "The less he knows, the better." Brittany pouted a little but nodded in understanding. "Alright so, what do we wanna do this year? He's the first one to turn 18 so we gotta do it big."

"But not too big," Quinn interjected. "We can't do anything that's going to get us in trouble." Puck rolled his eyes. "I'm serious, Noah. You two just got out of juvie. We have to keep this year kind of mellow."
"Mellow is boring," Puck retorted. "Our boy's turning 18 and you wanna what? Take him to dinner and have the wait staff sing him happy birthday? Give him a gift card to Macy's and then call it day?"

Quinn narrowed her eyes. "I'm not saying it's gotta be lame. It just can't be stupid."

"And what exactly would you consider stupid, Fabray?" Puck questioned.

"Oh, I don't know, breaking into the school to steal all the chalk and erasers?" Quinn asked dryly. The Crew though immediately burst into laughter.

"Yo, that shit was funny," Jake said, high fiving Nick.

"It really was," Nick nodded, snickering at the memory. "Watching the teachers run around like that was hilarious."

"Blaine did have a lot of fun acting all concerned during class," Brittany giggled. "Especially in Mrs. Jensen's class."

Santana threw her head back and laughed. "Oh yeah! He was being such a smartass. He was all like, Oh Mrs. Jensen, you can't teach us any formulas today and that makes me so sad." She pouted the way Blaine had and the Crew laughed. Even Quinn's lips upturned into a smirk at the memory.

"Yeah and then he mysteriously found chalk and erasers in Lance's backpack," Nick recalled. "I still don't know how he got that in there with no one seeing."

"Or how he filled Kyle's locker with it," Puck snorted. "Now that shit was funny."

"Ok yes, that was all hilarious," Quinn reasoned. "And so was the year before when we decided to fill Peters' car with feathers and bird seed. But those were all just dumb pranks and we do the same thing every year. We come up with some stupid prank and let him take lead after it's all planned. This year has to be different. With everything he's been through we have to show him how much we love him, how much we appreciate him."

"I agree with Quinn," Brittany said softly. Quinn raised her brow in surprise. Brittany was the one hold out of the crew, the only one who was still struggling to forgive Quinn and Puck for their heartlessness and she was shocked that Brittany had even muttered her name, nonetheless agreed with her.

"Me too," Nick said with a fond smile. "Blaine deserves an actual party this year. Not just some dumb prank, no matter how funny it would be. He's 18 years old. We all almost are. It's time to grow up. I mean, just think of all the stuff he's done for us, all the times he's been there."

"Like the time he slept over my house because I thought Lord Tubbington was having kittens but it was just bad gas," Brittany said. "I remember being so worried that something bad would happen and he stayed up all night taking care of Lord Tubbington's every need."

"Or the time he let me crash at his place for a week when my grandmother died," Jeff recalled. "I was devastated and my family kept telling me to get over it because she was old and it had been coming for years. But Blaine understood and he let me cry. He let me get all my anger and sadness out and not once did he mock me for it."

"I remember when we first met," Jake said quietly. "I was mad as hell at you," he said nodding toward Puck, "cuz you wanted to hang with him instead of me. But instead of leaving me behind like you wanted, he let me tag along, told me that he wanted to get to hang with cool baby
"You were so annoying though," Puck teased, playfully punching Jake in the arm.

"See, this is what I'm saying," Quinn cut in. "Blaine's always been so good to us. He's forgiven us for a lot of shit and when we needed someone to listen he was always there." She sent Puck a pointed look. "We should do something special."

Brittany's eyes lit up. "I have an idea! What if we do a big kid party?"

Puck raised a brow. "A big kid party?"

"Yeah! We could choose a kid's theme, Harry Potter or superheroes, and just make it really cool. We could decorate the basement like a dungeon or a super villain's lair or a castle, and we could all dress up and pretend to fight each other and stuff," Brittany nodded enthusiastically.

"That actually sounds really fun," Nick agreed. "He did tell us that his parents never let him have a real party like that and that's why he never really liked his birthday as a kid. That's why we started the whole birthday prank thing in the first place."

"But this year is different," Brittany continued. "Blaine's happy this year, truly happy, and with everything going on, an over the top kid party would be perfect."

The Crew looked at each other before looking at Puck for the final call. Puck sat back and thought for a moment before nodding. "One question though. What are the chances that we could fit a moon bounce in the basement?"

The rain poured down all afternoon, thundering on the roof of the garage where Kurt and his Dad were working on the brakes of a Toyota Corolla. Every time the thunder clapped and the lightning struck, Kurt jumped and stole a glance across the bay outside to where Blaine was pumping gas. No one wanted to get out of their car in this weather and Burt's garage never left its patrons unattended.

Blaine was soaked to the bone, shivering in the cold wet air despite the extra rain coat Burt had given him to wear over his leather jacket. For what seemed like the hundredth time that day he reached into his pocket to pull out a soggy roll of bills to make change. "Don't let the rain get you down," he smiled to the woman in the car as he handed back the bills. She took the ten and left him the ones and smiled back. "Have a nice day son!" she called before rolling her window up.

Wrapping the rain coat around himself, Blaine ducked beneath the hood and ran back to the front desk.

"Damn it's cold," he muttered, his teeth chattering. He grabbed the towel he'd kept on his stool and wiped himself off again, though the towel itself was nearly soaked through by now.

"Could somebody use some hot coffee," Kurt grinned as he poked his head in the door.

"Oh my god, you are my lifesaver," Blaine said, rushing over to grab the cup. He wrapped his freezing fingers around it and breathed in the steam before taking a sip and letting it warm him from the inside out.

"I would hug you but you're like a wet puppy and a Prince can't muss his royal robes," Kurt teased.

"We'll just have to take the robes off then," Blaine smirked. Kurt went to smack him playfully on the shoulder when they both heard a yell.
Neither hesitated. They bolted to the garage where Burt was crouched down wincing in pain.

"Dad!" Kurt grabbed him around the shoulder and Blaine immediately knelt down in front of him.

"Where does it hurt?" Blaine asked with calm urgency as he tried to take a careful inventory of the man in front of him. His breathing was a struggle but his color was good and his eyes were focused and normal.

"Mostly my foot where I dropped the goddamn air gun," Burt snapped and he stood up, rubbing his right hand.

"God Dad, you scared me!" Kurt cried, wrapping his arms around his father. He couldn't stop the tears from falling and Burt held him tight.

"I'm okay Kurt. I'm just feeling a bit weak today and my hand started shaking and I dropped the gun. It's probably just the rain." He tried to assure Kurt and Blaine, but they both knew it wasn't that simple.

"Well I'm taking you to the hospital to get you checked out," Kurt said and he began gathering his father things.

Burt turned and grabbed Kurt's hand. "I don't need to go to the hospital Kurt, it's not a big deal. I just shouldn't have been trying to deal with the tire on my own."

"You shouldn't be doing anything on your own Dad," Kurt snapped, all of them knowing it was out of fear more than anything. "I'm taking you home."

"No," Burt said placing his hands on Kurt's shoulders to stop him. He caught Kurt's gaze and they stared at one another for a minute. "I'm fine Kurt. You're right that I should probably go home and rest, but I can drive myself and I'm fine. Have Blaine bring you home after you close up."

Kurt's eyes were filled with worry and he glanced at Blaine who just shrugged. Burt looked okay to him. Kurt gripped his Dad's hands and looked back at him. "Are you sure you're alright? I could call Carole or Finn…"

"I'm fine, Kurt, I promise." Burt kissed Kurt's head and hugged him close. "I'll see you at home."

Burt turned to Blaine and gave a weak smile. "Hold down the fort Blaine," he said and turned back to Kurt. "Try and get this car done please before you head home, I promised it to Dr. Macavoy in the morning."

"Okay," Kurt choked holding back the tears.

Blaine stepped up behind him and wrapped his arms around his boyfriend as they watched Burt leave. "He's going to be fine, Kurt, he just lost his grip, that's all," Blaine assured him, kissing him softly on the temple. He knew it was more than that though. He'd text Cooper as soon as Kurt was busy again.

"And now I'm all wet," Kurt joked half-heartedly, sniffling as he wiped his eyes. The bell rang and Blaine gave him one last kiss before heading back out into the rain. Kurt tried to pull himself together. He called Carole who promised to head home and take care of Burt, and he called Finn who quickly agreed to stay a few more hours until he knew things were okay before heading back to school. Feeling a little bit better, he returned to the car they'd been working on and spent the afternoon finishing the job.

He was lost in the work when he felt a drip on his shoulder. He looked up to see Blaine, sopping
wet and shivering. "I tturned off the pppumps, Kkkurt," Blaine chattered, his arms wrapped tightly around himself. "I'm sssooo cccold."

"Oh my god Blaine," he said, his eyes sparkling and his voice somewhere between worry and laughter. "Come on, let's get these clothes off you and get you in a hot shower before you catch pneumonia."

Kurt peeled off the raincoat, Blaine's leather jacket and the hoodie that was soaked through, dropping them onto the floor of the garage. He led Blaine to the bathroom and turned on the water in the shower as hot as he could. "You gonna ttttake the rest off me?" Blaine asked with a grin. Kurt smiled seductively and slipped his hand under Blaine's shirt, rubbing his hand over the goosebumps that were raised all over Blaine's skin. "My pants are very, very wet," Blaine whispered hotly in his ear and Kurt smirked.

"I bet they are," he answered, his voice throaty, his eyes devilish. He slipped off Blaine's t-shirt, then trailed his hands down to the button of his jeans. He kissed him, hard and deep, warming him up as he flipped the button open and lowered the zipper. He slid his hands inside Blaine's pants and cupped his ass before pulling them slowly down. They were indeed soaked through and Kurt knelt down to peel them off as Blaine slipped off his shoes. Kurt stared up at Blaine, so very tempted, but though his eyes were dark and wanting, Blaine couldn't stop shivering. "Get inside," he ordered, nodding to the steam filled shower.

"Only if you cccccome with me," he stammered, but Kurt just stood and pushed him in while Blaine pouted.

"You get warm, I'll be back in a few minutes," Kurt promised with a quick kiss.

As Blaine sighed and started singing while the water heated his chilled bones, Kurt gathered his wet clothes and put them in the dryer on high. He draped Blaine's leather jacket over a chair in the break room, laid out his shoes, and turned the fans they often used in the summer to stay cool on high. He locked up before returning to the bathroom, slipping his own clothes off and stepping in.

Blaine pulled Kurt into his arms immediately. "Already better," he smiled dreamily as the water rushed over them both. Blaine captured his lips and they melted into one another, their cocks teasing deliciously as they pressed together.

Kurt's hand trailed down Blaine's back, his taut muscles relaxing under Kurt's gentle touch. Blaine moaned softly as Kurt massaged in circles, nibbling on Kurt's lip as Kurt dipped a single finger teasingly between his cheeks. Blaine cupped Kurt's ass in reply, stepping back until he hit the wall, pulling Kurt with him. Kurt gasped in pleasure as his cock pressed harder against Blaine's, Blaine squeezing his ass roughly. Breathy, needy moans filled the deserted steam filled bathroom. Blaine tossed his head back as Kurt rutted against him.

"Fuck Kurt," Blaine growled, his hips bucking forward. "Want you-" he bit his lip, staving off his growing arousal.

"You're so tense," Kurt said seductively, slowing the movement of his hips. "How can His Highness be of service? What do you want?"

"Want you on your knees," Blaine said gruffly, his tone demanding and laced with desire. "Now."

Kurt acted instantly, falling to his knees and looking up at Blaine through his lashes. "Like this?" he asked innocently.
"Fuck," Blaine muttered again, his fingers running through Kurt's hair. Kurt massaged Blaine's thighs, peppering kisses on Blaine's torso teasingly. "Kurt," he cried, needing Kurt to touch him. Kurt licked the underside of Blaine's leaking cock then kissed the head before taking Blaine in entirely. Blaine gripped Kurt's hair, watching him as he sucked him off. "Look up at me," he demanded smoothly, forcing Kurt's head back just slightly and Kurt's eyes immediately looked up. Blaine smiled. "So sexy. So good for me." A surge of pride filled Kurt and he reached for Blaine's balls, gently massaging them as he hummed around Blaine. Blaine broke eye contact and threw his head back, a guttural moan escaping his lips. "Fuck. So close," he muttered. Kurt grinned and started to pull back with a tease before Blaine gripped his hair furiously and forced him forward again fucking his mouth feverishly. Kurt chuckled as he moved his other hand to Blaine's ass, touching the puckered hole for only a moment before Blaine reached his peak, fire igniting in his belly only seconds before mumbling profanities and screaming Kurt's name as he came.

Kurt sucked him till the very end, taking everything in before releasing him. Blaine grabbed hold of Kurt's arm, pulling him back up and crashing their lips together, moaning as he tasted himself on Kurt's tongue. Kurt had barely noticed while he was on his knees, but now the desperation for friction, for his own release was overwhelming. He pressed himself against Blaine, his hips bucking forward, and Blaine flipped their positions, pushing Kurt against the wall, his fingers wrapping firmly around Kurt's length.

"Maybe I should make you wait for it," Blaine hissed in his ear as he squeezed, but didn't move.

"Oh for the love of god Blaine, please," Kurt groaned trying to thrust into Blaine's hand.

"Only because you asked so nicely," Blaine answered with a kiss. He started to stroke him, painfully slow, while his lips attached to Kurt's neck, leaving an impressive hickey.

The speed was driving Kurt wild and he ached for release that seemed so close but so far. "Faster Blaine please," he begged.

Blaine smiled, loving how thoroughly wrecked he could make Kurt. "You're so beautiful like this," he said as he gradually picked up speed until Kurt was quivering so hard Blaine had to hold him up. "Come for me," Blaine finally spoke gruffly, his grip tightening. "Come for your peasant." Kurt mewled, his legs shaking as he came hard into Blaine's hand, remaining on his feet only because Blaine was holding him. A cocky grin graced Blaine's face as he brought his hand up to his mouth, looking into Kurt's eyes as he licked his fingers before the water washed it away. "Delicious."

Kurt rolled his eyes and chuckled. "I hate you so much right now," he joked as he rested his head back on the tiles, letting his dizziness pass.

"Well it's a good thing I love you enough for the both of us then," Blaine teased, lightly kissing down Kurt's neck.

Kurt looked at him adoringly, sighing with complete content. "It is a very good thing."

The rain must have stopped while they were in the shower, which was a blessing to them both. Blaine's clothes were still damp but not soaked, and at least they were warm from the dryer. They quickly dressed, turned the lights off and climbed aboard Blaine's motorcycle.

"Hold on tight," Blaine said, looking over his shoulder.

"Forever and ever," Kurt promised and he squeezed tightly.

Blaine took off on the short trip back to the Hummel home. The roads were wet and the clouds still
looked fierce but the lull in the storm lasted until they reached Kurt's doorstep.

"You could come inside," Kurt suggested a small pout on his face. "I'd drive you home but I really need to be here with my dad."

"Hey, I understand," Blaine said softly, pulling him into a hug. He kissed him softly and held him close. "It was scary enough for me today, I can only imagine how you must have felt."

"Someday it's gonna be real, Blaine," Kurt choked, his eyes starting to fill again with tears. "Someday his heart's going to give out and if there's no donor...I'm just so scared," Kurt cried into Blaine's shoulder. "I don't want to know what it's like to live without him. I don't want to go to college without him to come home to. I don't want to get married without him to give me away. I don't want children who never know their grandfather."

"I know baby, I don't want that for you either. You know if there was anything I could do to save him, anything at all, I would do it in a heartbeat," Blaine whispered, kissing him softly on his head.

Kurt nodded and sniffled against him. "I know," Kurt said, but there was nothing any of them could do except sit and wait. "I should go inside," he frowned and a thunderclap sounded in the distance. "You better hurry home before the rain starts again."

Blaine nodded, not wanting to let him go but needing to leave. "Give him a hug for me. Call me later."

"Drive safe Blaine," Kurt said, kissing him once more before opening the door to go in. "I love you."

"I love you too," Blaine smiled.

Kurt entered the house quietly, not sure if his father would be awake or sleeping. He saw Carole on the couch, eating leftovers and watching her DVR'd afternoon soap opera quietly. She looked up when she saw him, her face relaxing into a warm but tired smile. "Hey sweetie, how was the rest of your day?"

Kurt shrugged. Any lingering happiness he'd felt with Blaine back at the shop disappeared entirely the moment he'd entered the house and now the worry returned full force. "It was fine. How's Dad?"

"Stubborn," Carole admitted. "But he's upstairs resting now. He wanted to talk to you when you got home."

"Thanks Carole," he said before kissing her softly on the head and climbing the stairs to his father's room.

He remembered his mother before she died. He'd made the same climb, dreading reaching the top step, dreading going into her room where he knew only a shell of the mother he loved rested behind the door. He pushed his father's door open slowly and let out a breath when the father he knew lay before him, resting with his eyes closed, but still the same man.

"Dad?" he called out softly. He would leave if his father was truly sleeping, but Burt stirred and patted the bed at the call of his name.

"Come on in Bud," he said and he grunted as he sat up. "We need to talk." Kurt nervously walked over and sat on the edge of the bed. Burt placed a hand on the leg he tucked under himself. "Kurt, I
can't work in the shop anymore."

Kurt bit his lip and nodded, fighting back the tears. "I know," he whispered. He knew it was true. Hell he wanted his father to stop before he seriously hurt himself. But hearing the words come out of his mouth was still very hard to accept. He couldn’t let his father know that though. "But don't worry, the guys and I can handle things. Blaine can cover the pumps easily after school and on the weekends. I can do payroll and the books, you showed me all that last summer. And the guys are more than capable of keeping up with the repairs."

Burt smiled proudly. "I know you guys will all try, but if it gets too much then let me know. We'll close up the repair bay for a while. As it is you need to make sure you're scheduling and budgeting time without me in the mix."

"I know Dad," Kurt promised him. "What about Finn?"

"He had to go back to school for his finals but he'll be back home for winter break which will help. And if any of your friends in the Crew know a thing or two about cars you could hire them part time just to help you out, if you need to," he said. Kurt nodded again. The words just weren't coming out. "Look kid I know this isn't how you wanted to spend your senior year-"

"Don't," Kurt told him, shaking his head. "I'd spend every day in the shop if it meant you would be healthy. All that other stuff can wait."

"You're just happy that you and Blaine will have the shop to yourself every night," Burt smirked perceptively.

"Dad," Kurt whined, blushing, but he did not dispute it.

Burt tried to laugh but it ended up in a fit of coughing and wheezing. It reminded them both that no matter how much Burt tried to hide it, he was far worse off than either of them wanted to admit. He'd been pushing himself way too hard, pretending way too much that he was okay and if he kept it up he'd go downhill fast.

"You better get some rest Dad," Kurt said softly, hugging him tightly for himself and Blaine before tucking him in again.

"Goodnight son, I love you," Burt said closing his eyes.

Kurt sniffled and wiped his tears. "I love you too."

He went back to his room and went through a quick routine before he laid down on his bed exhausted. All of the emotions of the day had taken everything out of him. It was still so early, he hadn't even eaten dinner yet, but he curled himself up under the blankets and fell asleep before he could remember to call Blaine.

A lightning bolt streaked in front of him and thunder clapped behind him only seconds before the clouds opened up again and the rain pounded down around Blaine on the bike. The rain blew off of his helmet and he slowed down, carefully wiping away the water on his visor as he rode. The droplets felt like needles piercing the skin on his hands and he wished he'd worn his gloves. He didn't make a habit of driving in the rain but it wasn't his first time and given the emotion of the night, he'd thought it was far more important for Kurt to stay with his Dad rather than spending time driving him home when he could ride perfectly fine.

Besides, he needed some time alone on the open road. He hadn't wanted to lose it in front of Kurt
but his thoughts wandered to his own dreams he'd had ever since Burt's visit to Cuyahoga; walking down the aisle of Shaker Hills High School in his cap and gown and looking over into the crowd to see Burt and Cooper smiling proudly. The two men without whom he knew he would never graduate. The only two adults who had ever truly believed in him. Seeing Burt doubled over in the garage he'd watched that dream slip away and it had broken his heart. He knew it must have been a thousand times worse for Kurt. His mind drifted for less than a second as Kurt's beautiful face swam before him just at the thought of him. The brightness in his eyes jolted him alert.

The headlights came straight at him, out of the blue at the top of a hill less than a mile from home. Time slowed as he fought to react, calculating the risks of swerving left or swerving right while his eyes focused on the tiny droplets of rain shining beautifully off of the two beams of light. He wondered if Kurt was crying now or if he and his Dad were curled up watching television. The headlights turned sharply left and he swerved right, skidding off his bike as together they tumbled off the road and down the small embankment, hitting rocks and brush along the way, into a ditch. He heard a thundering crash and he didn't know if it was from the sky or the other car as it struck something in the distance. The pain in his body was frozen in his bones and he cried out for Cooper to come save him and for Kurt to come hold him. He tried to reach for his phone but he couldn't get his body to move. The last thing he saw before his eyes closed and his mind went blank was the glow of the moon shining down on him through the earth's tears.
It was just after 3am when the telephone rang.

"Hello Mr. Hummel? I'm calling from Dr. Anderson's office. We have a donor."

Burt didn't hear much more, he knew what to do. He shook Carole awake and nodded. She didn't need any other signal. The bag was packed, had been for weeks now, ready to go at a moment's notice. Burt was already getting out of bed and pulling on some clothes when the nurse stopped giving him concise instructions and hesitated slightly. It made him pause as well.

"Mr. Hummel, there's one more thing. Dr. Anderson hadn't wanted to wake you earlier, but…it's about his brother, Blaine."

They raced immediately to the hospital, Kurt panicking in the backseat, Burt trying desperately not to panic in the front. Burt had time, there was a four hour window for him to get to the hospital for surgery. But Kurt would not wait a second longer than he had to before getting to the emergency room. The thought that in Blaine's condition he may have been left alone for even a moment was tearing him in two. He needed to be with him, right by his side.

The minute Carole parked the car Kurt tore out of it and ran straight to the Emergency Room doors.

"We'll meet you at the transplant center," Burt called but he wasn't even sure that Kurt had heard.

Kurt flew to the triage desk in the waiting room of the ER, ignoring the multitude of patients waiting to be seen. None of them mattered. Blaine was the only thing in the world that mattered right now. "Blaine Anderson," he barked at the nurse breathless and desperate. "He was brought in…motorcycle accident."

The nurse gave him directions; left at the door, then a right then another left, and he followed them quickly until he found a closed curtain with a chart labeled "Blaine Devon Anderson" in the tray outside on the wall. Kurt finally paused, terrified of what he might find when he opened the curtain. He reached out his hand and pulled it aside, slowly and quietly. Blaine lay on his back, his eyes closed, hooked up to machines that were beeping and IVs that were dripping. His face was uninjured, thanks to the helmet, and he just looked incredibly peaceful. Kurt stepped quietly toward him, brushing the curls off his forehead and Blaine's eyes fluttered open. At the sight of Kurt, Blaine's whole face lit up. "Hey," he said, his voice rising in surprise.

Kurt linked their fingers together and kissed Blaine's lips softly, never wanting to let go. He wanted to squeeze him tight and sob at how easily it could have been him, he could have been the one who had died. But instead he smiled bravely and softly whispered, "Hey you." At Blaine's small smile, his racing heart started to slow and filled instead with overwhelming love. Kurt looked him over quickly, taking in the hospital gown and the sling, but no cast, on his left arm. "Are you in a lot of pain?"

"Uh-uh," Blaine said with a dopey grin and Kurt realized that the drip must be pain medication. Blaine gazed up at the machine. "I've never done drugs before but I kinda understand now why people do," he slurred. "I feel fucking amazing," he giggled.
Kurt shook his head and stifled his own giggle. "Don't be gettin' any ideas Mr. Anderson. I don't date druggies even if they do have gorgeous curls and badass leather jackets."

Blaine blinked and tried to get out of bed, staring out the curtain. "Well then I better get them to take this line out of me," he said sincerely.

Kurt placed a hand on his shoulder, guiding him gently back down. "Shh…Blaine, just rest. It's okay," he soothed. He turned around and pulled up the chair next the bed, sitting down with Blaine's hand still in his. "Has Cooper been to see you?"

Blaine nodded but winced at the pain and grabbed his neck. "Yeah, he was down here a while ago but once he knew I was okay he said he had a really important surgery he had to prepare for and couldn't stay. He told me to just go to sleep until you got here so that's what I did."

"Did he, um, did he tell you what the surgery was?" Kurt asked tentatively. He wasn't sure if it was a good idea for Blaine to know right now, but he also didn't think it was fair to keep it from him. The question was, how much did he tell?

"No," Blaine said, his forehead crinkling in question, but Kurt was saved by the slide of the curtain as Carole walked in to see him.

"Hi there," Carole greeted Blaine with a soft smile. "How are we doing in here?"

"I'm okay, but I think I've had enough pain meds for now," Blaine told her. Kurt snapped to him but Blaine squeezed his hand reassuringly. "I'm not just saying it Kurt, I think I'm okay."

"We'll talk to the nurses about bringing it down slowly and see how you do," Carole told him with a motherly pat on the leg. "Cooper said you're pretty bumped and bruised and the sprain in your wrist's gonna take a little time to heal, but nothing's broken."


Carole shot Kurt a quick glance and Kurt gave a slight shake of the head, then slid closer to Blaine. Blaine watched the exchange carefully, his eyes shifting back and forth before he squinted at them suspiciously. "What's going on," he asked nervously.

Kurt swallowed hard, and his eyes darted to Carole before back again to Blaine. He took his boyfriend's hand between his own and kissed his fingers gently. "He's prepping for surgery. They found a donor."

Blaine's eyes went wide and once again he tried to sit up. "Kurt, that's great! No wonder Cooper couldn't stay!" His grin faltered as he saw Kurt's frown, his brow furrowed in worry. "What's the matter?"

Kurt lowered his eyes and Blaine looked to Carole. "What do you remember about your accident?" she asked.

Blaine pursed his lips as he thought back. He felt the rain on his skin again, and the lights of the car coming at him. "I was riding my bike and all of a sudden this car was coming at me in my lane. It was hard to see, the rain was coming down so hard, but I swerved to the right off into a ditch. Then I heard a crash."

"Blaine, the driver that came at you didn't make it," Kurt said gently. He was afraid that Blaine would take the blame even though it didn't seem like the accident was his fault. "He slammed into
a tree. He's been on life support so his family could arrive and make a decision." Blaine looked at him, not fully understanding. "His license said he was a donor Blaine, and it turns out he was a perfect match."

Kurt had been trying not to think about it, it was so hard. But somewhere in this hospital a family had made a decision through their grief to let go of someone they loved to give the chance of life to someone else. Someday he'd have to thank them.

Blaine had trouble taking it all in. The story was unbelievable. It was like a one in a million chance and yet here they were, every piece of a puzzle only the universe itself could dream up fell into place. So many what-ifs ran through his mind. What if Kurt had driven him home? What if Burt hadn't dropped the air gun? What if his parents had won at court and he'd been forced to leave town? What if he'd never smoked in the boy's room that day and been made to get a job at the shop?

What if Kurt had never fallen in love with him in the first place?

"Are you okay love?" Kurt's worried voice brought Blaine out of his thoughts and his glistening eyes fell on the love of his life. But no words came to mind. He just nodded and laid back down again, curling into his pillow.

"It's a lot to take in. Get some sleep Blaine," Carole whispered and she put an arm around Kurt. "Come on, Kurt, why don't we go see your dad?"

"No," Kurt said, staying where he was. "I don't want to leave Blaine."

But Blaine would hear nothing of that. "Go see your Dad Kurt. Stay with him as long as you can, I'll be fine. Carole's right, it's late, I should get some sleep before they discharge me in the morning."

"Okay." Kurt agreed blinking back tears. He kissed Blaine softly on the forehead and whispered, "I love you," before following Carole through the hallway.

"He's gonna be okay," Carole assured him and put an arm around him snuggling him in close.

"Blaine or my dad?" Kurt asked nervously as they headed into the elevator to the main hospital.

"Both sweetie," she promised, kissing him on the temple. "They're both going to be just fine."

"How are you feeling?" Cooper asked as he checked all of Burt's vitals and sat next to him with papers and a clipboard in his hand.

"Nervous," Burt chuckled anxiously. He sat up in his bed, the hospital gown embarrassingly small on him but he knew it didn't really matter. As soon as he was under it would all be off anyway.

Cooper smiled at him reassuringly. "It's okay to be nervous. But this isn't my first rodeo. Now, during surgery we'll open you up and connect you to a cardiopulmonary bypass machine. This makes sure that your blood keeps circulating and your lungs keep working during the operation. Once the blood has been completely diverted into the machine for pumping then your heart will be removed and the donor heart will be put in. We'll connect the new heart to your blood vessels and as soon as your blood begins to flow we'll shock the heart to get it to start beating. We'll remove the heart-lung machine and watch the heart to make sure there are no leaks. We'll put in the pacemaker, we'll put your chest back together and sew you back up."
Cooper paused for any questions but Burt just sighed taking it all in. "Sounds like a plan Doc," he chuckled trying to sound confident, though he actually was completely overwhelmed.

Cooper smiled and continued. "As I've explained before, it usually takes about four to six hours to complete the surgery. You'll wake up with a ventilator and we'll just see how you do. Sometimes we can take it out pretty quickly, sometimes it takes a couple of days. You'll spend the first few days in the ICU and when you're ready we'll give you a fabulous upgrade to a private deluxe suite in the postsurgical unit. You'll be here for about 10-14 days, so I hope Kurt packed you some good books," Cooper winked.

"I wouldn't trust Kurt to pack me books, I'd end up with a pile of Vogue and Harry Potter," Burt smirked.

"Hey! I heard that!" Kurt smirked from the door.

Burt peered over to see him and Carole in the doorway. He could see the nerves behind their brave faces and he reached a hand out for Kurt to take. Kurt walked around to the opposite side of the hospital bed from Cooper and sat down next to his Dad. Carole sat at the foot of the bed. "How's Blaine?" Burt asked.

"He's good," he assured his dad and Cooper. "He doesn't want the pain meds anymore but I don't know if it's a good idea. Carole talked to the nurses before we came up and they're going to slowly taper it down. He was going to sleep when we left."

"Good," Cooper said, fiddling with his pen, eyeing Carol gratefully. He hated that once again his job was getting in the way of being there for Blaine when he truly needed it, but at least this time Blaine would want him here instead of there. "I'll make sure I sign his discharge papers before we go in for surgery so he can come up here as soon as he wakes up. Do not let him leave this hospital without me, got it?"

"Definitely. I'm sure he won't want to go until we know what's going on with Dad anyway. I'll ask the Crew to bring him some clothes when I text them in the morning," Kurt said. He knew Blaine wouldn't want to walk around in a hospital gown and his clothes were pretty destroyed from the accident. They'd need to go buy him a new leather jacket as soon as everything settled down.

"Thanks," Cooper said and he meant it. He didn't know what he'd do if Kurt and Carole weren't there for Blaine right now. He turned back to Burt and took a breath. "Okay so even though we already talked about it, I'm required to tell you the risks of surgery."

"You sure you want to be here for this?" Burt asked his son cautiously. Kurt was hesitant, but he nodded. "Alright Doc, bring it on," Burt drawled and squeezed Kurt's hand tightly.

Cooper outlined all the risks from infection and bleeding to kidney failure, coronary arteriopathy and of course death. He reminded Burt that after the surgery his body could reject the heart and he briefly reviewed the multitude of medications he'd have to take for the rest of his life.

Kurt's head was spinning, overwhelmed by it all, but he tried to keep himself calm. "So when do we start?"

"We're gonna start prepping him as soon as he signs the consent forms," Cooper said and he handed them over for Burt to read. "We'll hook your Dad up with a ton of IVs, some catheters and a bunch of monitors so we always know how he's doing." Cooper looked at Kurt's terrified eyes and smiled softly. "We're going to take good care of him Kurt. He's got the best transplant team in Ohio."
Kurt nodded as he wiped away the tears. Burt finished signing the forms and handed them back to Cooper. Cooper slapped his hands on his thighs and stood up. "Okay," he exclaimed confidently. "Let's get this party started!"

Cooper left the family behind, the family that he was growing to love but wouldn't allow himself those feelings until after it was all done. He went out to the nurse and let her know that Mr. Hummel was ready to be wheeled down to pre-op. Then he took the long walk through the halls and down the stairs to center himself before he began. He'd been very honest with Burt. It wasn't his first rodeo. He'd done hundreds of cardiothoracic surgeries and more transplants in the last three years than most doctors got to do in a lifetime. He was sure of himself and certain that it was the right decision for them all for him to do the surgery.

No, it wasn't his first rodeo. But it was his most important.

After they wheeled his dad down to pre-op, Kurt sat in the cafeteria, not drinking the coffee in front of him as he stared off into space. He'd come down to give Carole some space, but also to try and compose himself before he broke down where he knew he shouldn't. Carole didn't need to be worrying about Kurt, but his mind flooded with all the risks Cooper had laid out for them. If the heart disease didn't kill him the transplant surely could, but Kurt knew it was worth the risks for his Dad to be able to live his best life. Still, he couldn't help his eyes filling with tears. He pushed them back, took a sip of his coffee and checked his phone. 5am.

Part of him was desperate to go back to Blaine's room, sit with him even if it was just to watch his chest rise and fall with every breath. But he knew that in that private solitude, with the face of the boy he loved so peacefully asleep, he wouldn't be able to hold back the tears and he'd end up waking Blaine for sure.

So instead he waited by his phone for Jeff's reply, not expecting it until later but still secretly hoping that the notification would have awoken him. He didn't want Jeff to rush to the hospital, he just needed someone to know what was going on. He finished his coffee and stood up to grab another, when his phone buzzed on the table.

From: Jeff
So where are you right now? Did you go home or are you staying at the hospital?

From: Kurt
I'm staying here in the hospital, just getting a quick cup of coffee in the cafeteria. But I can't leave either of them.

Kurt slipped his phone in his pocket and ordered another cup of coffee. The line wasn't long this time of morning, but the service was still slow. Finally he returned to his seat, nursing the hot liquid, occasionally blowing on it, but not drinking. He wasn't really thirsty, or hungry for that matter. His stomach was too twisted in knots. He sighed heavily and rested his head on his hand, wishing more than anything that it was all a bad dream. He didn't know how long he sat, just trying to breath, in and out, when he felt a gentle hand on his back and looked up. He expected Carole. His eyes widened in shock when he saw Jeff instead.

"What are you doing here?" he nearly yelled. "I said not to come until later."

Jeff just shrugged a bit and took a seat beside Kurt, a quilt in his arms. "If you seriously think that I'd leave you here by yourself than you're dumber than I thought," he said with a smirk, though his eyes were filled with sadness and worry. "How's Blaine?"
"He's ok," Kurt sighed. "Sleeping." Jeff nodded. "You really didn't have to come, Jeff. I'm not alone. Carole's here."

Jeff shrugged again, holding the quilt tightly. "I couldn't exactly sleep after you texted me. Quinn tried to come too but I asked her not to, figured you'd wanna be alone."

"You told Quinn?"

"She was with me when you texted," Jeff blushed and Kurt let out a ghost of a smile as he shook his head. "We let the others know but we told them not to come till after Blaine's been discharged. Puck and Jake are gonna head to the Anderson's place and grab Blaine some clothes. They'll probably be here in a couple of hours. No one wants to see Blaine walking out the door in a Johnny."

Kurt laughed slightly at the same time he fought back his tears, overcome by how much Blaine's friends loved him. "What's with the blanket?" he wondered.

Jeff smiled softly. "It was my grandmother's. I knew you wouldn't go home or go to sleep so I thought if I brought it, I could convince you to at least rest your eyes in the family room."

Kurt quirked a brow, a smirk on his lips. "Really, Jeff? As if I'd be able to sleep right now even if I wanted to."

"Don't underestimate the powers of my nana's quilt," Jeff said holding the quilt against his chest. "This thing is magical." Kurt rolled his eyes and chuckled quietly. "Come on. Throw your coffee away and let's go take a nap. Blaine isn't the only one who needs his sleep."

Kurt wanted to argue, he really did. But his exhaustion was taking over and he knew he really did need to rest. With a reluctant sigh, he nodded. "Ok. But if you drool on me, I'm going to slap you."

Kurt slept for a little over an hour before Carole came to wake him up. Blaine would be released soon and she knew Kurt would want to be there. He nudged Jeff awake before going to the bathroom to wash up a little.

Jeff pressed the palm of his hands against his eyes, rubbing the sleep out. When he blinked away the blur he was met with the beautiful sight of his girlfriend. She shimmied up next to him and he rested his head tiredly on her shoulder.

"I'm so glad to see you," Jeff mumbled, snuggling in.

"There, there, superhero," Quinn teased as she patted his head. "Coming to the rescue is a tough job but someone's gotta do it and I'm proud it's my man." She lifted his head and gave him a quick kiss on the lips before she saw Kurt walk back in. She immediately got up and took Kurt in her arms.

"Hey," he greeted, surprised that Quinn was suddenly hugging him. He didn't shy away from it though, needing all the love and support he could get right now, and he wrapped his arms around her and hugged her back tightly.

"Everything's going to be ok," she said as they parted. She recognized the fear in his eyes, felt the thrumming of his heart against her, and she brushed his hair back from his face. "I know you're scared but everything's going to be fine."

Kurt frowned and swallowed hard not able to either accept or refute her words. He didn't want to tempt fate in any way. "Did you come by yourself?"
"No, the whole Crew's here. They're all downstairs making trouble for Blaine no doubt," Quinn told him. "I came up to see if it was okay for you two to come down."

"Yeah, my Dad's in pre-op now so there's really nothing left to do but to wait," he said.

Jeff came in between the two and draped an arm over each of their shoulders. "Come on you guys, let's go down and get Blaine released. I'm sure he's going crazy having you out of his sight for even a few minutes," he smirked to Kurt.

"Well his eyes hadn't opened yet when we got there, but I'm sure he'd much prefer your pretty face to Puck's ugly one any day," Quinn smirked.

"Thanks," Kurt said smiling softly. "Let's go."

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Blaine rushed to the bathroom the moment he was disconnected from all his wires, and he was just heading back to his bed when he heard the catcalls behind him.

"Look at that fine ass!"

Blaine whipped his head around as the Crew followed him into his room. "Damn, Anderson. I bet Kurt just loves to squeeze that perky behind," Santana teased.

"What the hell are you guys doing here?" he grumbled, sitting on his bed to prevent them from seeing any more.

"What do you think we're doing here, dumbass?" Puck asked with an eye roll, tossing Blaine some clothes. "Do me a favor, don't get into any more accidents. I about lost my shit when I found it."

"Awe, Puckerman has a heart," Nick teased, earning him a glare. He laughed then turned back to Blaine. "How are you feeling?"

Blaine shrugged. "Fine, I guess," he answered. Though he was still sore all over the worst of the pain had definitely passed. "Where's Kurt?"

"Jeff came to stay with him last night so Quinn went to go find them," Brittany said as she took a seat next to Blaine on the bed. "I'm glad you're okay. We were really worried about you," she said softly, gently resting her head on his shoulder.

"That's an understatement," Puck grumbled, picking up Blaine's jacket to examine. "Dude, what the fuck did you do to your jacket?"

"You need help getting dressed?" Santana asked with a smirk. "I don't mind giving you a hand," she winked.

Blaine had no smart quip back though. He stayed quiet, not making eye contact with his Crew.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Jake asked curiously.

Blaine ran his hands through his unruly curls and took a deep breath. "How much do you know about what happened?" he asked them.

Santana shrugged, noticing the worry in Blaine's eyes. "Just that you were in an accident. Why? What happened?"

"There was someone else in the accident too," Blaine spoke quietly. "A car. The driver didn't make
"Dude, you aren't in trouble are you?" Jake asked fearfully.

"No, it wasn't my fault. But...that's not all," he said shaking his head. "Kurt's dad, he um, Cooper's doing surgery on him today. Probably right now, actually. Mr. Hummel needed a heart transplant and the driver was a donor. A perfect match actually."

The room went completely quiet as the information, and the strange twist of fate, sunk in.

"Damn," Puck swore, breaking the silence.

"He's going to be okay, right?" Brittany asked, her voice small. Blaine shrugged and looked up at his Crew. Brittany's tear-filled eyes matched his own. "Kurt can't lose his dad. He'd be heartbroken."

Blaine sniffled and wiped away a tear. He would be heartbroken too. "Cooper's the best so I'm sure the surgery will go great," he tried to convince himself.

Just then the curtain slid open and Kurt, Jeff, and Quinn walked in. Brittany hurried to Kurt's side and pulled him into a hug. Kurt glanced at the Crew, all looking at him instead of Blaine with concern, and he raised a brow at Blaine. Blaine nodded. Kurt sighed with relief. He hadn't really wanted to have to tell anyone.

"Carole said that Cooper was going to sign your discharge papers before he went into surgery," Kurt told him. He walked to Blaine's side and kissed him softly. "Shouldn't you be dressed already?" Kurt asked.

"I offered to help but..." Santana shrugged.

"I think he can dress himself, Santana," Kurt replied with a raised brow.

"Or you could help me?" Blaine suggested with a smirk. Kurt rolled his eyes and settled down on the bed next to him.

The nurse walked in with Blaine's discharge papers and immediately glared at the Crew. "There are too many people in here," she scolded. "Go to the waiting room, he'll be out soon."

The Crew grumbled but obliged, Puck sending Blaine a curt nod before grabbing hold of Jake's arm. "Come on. Let's go to the gift shop."

Jake raised a confused brow. "Why?"

"Because we gotta find something to distract Hummel," Puck told him. "And Blaine too. It's gonna be a long day hanging out so we need some games and stuff. Ain't no way we're leaving them here to deal with this alone."

Dressed in his scrubs, his sanitized shoes, his mask and magnifying glasses, he entered Operating Room 21, the transplant team's sanctuary. Typically he'd wait for the anesthesiologist to do his job before joining his team, but he wanted his face to be the last one Burt saw.

"Show time," Cooper said cheerfully, his crinkled eyes the only clue to the smile beneath his mask. Burt nervously laughed and nodded, but words were eluding him right now. "You're gonna go to sleep and when you wake up you'll have a brand new heart and a whole new life."
Burt reached up and grabbed Cooper's gloved hand before they could begin. "You look after him," Burt said, his voice never more serious. "If anything happens to me, promise you'll look after Kurt."

Cooper patted his hand and nodded. "I will," he promised. "But it won't be necessary because you're going to be there for everything."

Burt blinked away a tear and nodded as the mask went over his face. As Burt's eyes closed Cooper turned away, wiping his own tear on his scrubs.

"There's no one better to do this," his lead nurse Beth said, slipping up next to him. She knew him better than anyone in the operating room and she knew how hard this was going to be. "You know that right?"

Cooper took a deep breath and centered himself. "I hope you're right," he said before stripping off his gloves and throwing them in the trash. "I'm going to go scrub again."

He called quickly downstairs to the Emergency Room to make sure that Blaine was all discharged and fine in the family room with Kurt and Carole. Apparently all of the Crew was there waiting as well which wasn't a surprise but made him feel so much better about not being there himself. They may not have had much of their own family but somehow Blaine had figured out how to find his own.

With that reassurance, he was able to take his time back at the sink to regain his composure and focus. He watched his team at work. He had the best people in medicine surrounding him and watching them methodically prepare for him helped his confidence surge. He ripped open a fresh sponge, using the time he scoured his arms and hands, his nails, and each finger separately, like a religious ceremony to meditate over every step that needed to happen in the operating room. These moments were the most important to any surgery. There was nothing more sacred in the world than the touching of the human heart.

He walked back inside and Beth handed him a blue towel to dry his hands completely. Another nurse slipped on his blue surgical scrubs and Beth tied it in the back while he continued his concentrated focus. He placed his hands inside his surgical gloves, held open for him, and he walked over to do his job. By this time Burt's face was hidden by a curtain and he looked over the work they had done so far to open his chest. The tubes running from his heart to the machine were soon to be filled with blood and the team behind the machine were ready to do their job.

"Okay folks, let's get this party started," Cooper called with a clap. Knowing the cue, Cooper's music was started and he fell into the perfect mindset as the rest of his team fondly shook their heads at his song choice. Together they went to work.

Hello my old heart
How have you been
Are you still there inside my chest?
I've been so worried
You've been so still
Barely beating at all

Burt found himself dreaming of times gone by. Running on the hillside hand in hand with Elizabeth on the day he'd asked her to marry him. He saw them kiss at their wedding. He felt Kurt in his arms again as he held his beautiful little boy for the first time. He watched as Elizabeth left him. He danced with Carole on their wedding day, smiling over as Finn and Kurt laughed like long lost
brothers. He dreamed of moving to Shaker Hills, Kurt complaining every step of the way carrying in box after box from their trailer into their new home. And he saw Kurt smile with joy as Blaine kissed him when they didn't know he was watching. His heart swelled with emotion and determination.

Oh, don't leave me here alone
Don't tell me that we've grown
For having loved a little while
Oh, I don't want to be alone
I want to find a home
And I want to share it with you

Blaine took Kurt's hand and they quietly slipped away from the group in the family room. Their skin both buzzed with nerves as they waited, the two most important people in the world to them now locked away together in a terrifying and awe-inspiring dance. They were wordless as Blaine led them to Cooper's office, locking the door behind them. Blaine slid his hand from the sling and wrapped Kurt up in his arms, so warm and strong and perfect that Kurt believed the hug alone had the power to heal everything that was wrong in the world. Blaine closed his eyes and buried his face in Kurt's hair, breathing him in, holding him so close and never wanting to let go.

Hello my old heart
It's been so long
Since I've given you away
And every day I add another stone
To the walls I built around you
To keep you safe

Blaine pulled away just slightly. Kurt looked at him, blue and green eyes swirling with emotion. Still silent, Blaine cupped his face and guided Kurt's lips to his, kissing away the fear and the sadness and the fatigue and the anger. He kissed away the loneliness and the despair and the grief and the guilt. He kissed away all the pain, leaving room only for hope and love. Tears rolled down Kurt's cheeks but they were quiet and soft, full of letting go and possibility.

"I need you," Kurt whispered.

Blaine wiped away Kurt's tears and nodded. "I will always be here," he promised as he slowly unbuttoned Kurt's shirt.

Oh, don't leave me here alone
Don't tell me that we've it grown
For having loved a little while
Oh, I don't want to be alone
I want to find a home
And I want to share it with you

Cooper lifted Burt's old heart out of his chest and placed it in the container. As he examined it he could finally see the extent of the damage. They'd found a donor just in time to save him before things had gotten really bad. But the old heart had served him well, had created an incredible man, and for that alone it had done its job admirably for a long time.
The new was presented to him and it was a beautiful sight. The surgeon who had harvested the heart told him as much but seeing it for himself was crucial. He'd needed to be sure, holding the life of a man he greatly admired literally in his hands. When everything was ready he placed it gently, almost reverently inside the chest and began the intricate task of making him whole once again.

Hello my old heart  
How have you been?  
How is it, being locked away?  
Well don't you worry  
In there, you're safe  
And it's true, you'll never beat  
But you'll never break

Blaine and Kurt's hearts raced, beating wildly in their chest as they kissed and pressed their hips together, their clothing strewn all over Cooper's office. They muffled their screams against the other's skin as they thrust together once more and came as one. They panted, laughing with embarrassment as Blaine reached for the tissues on Cooper's desk.

"We shouldn't have done that," Kurt whispered, as the high disappeared and he pulled his clothes back on. His face blushed as his eyes began to cloud over. "Not while my father's-

"Hey, look at me," Blaine insisted, forcing their eyes to meet with his hands on Kurt's face.  
"There's nothing you can do right now for him except take care of yourself and stay relaxed. What we just did is nothing to be ashamed of. Understand?"

Kurt nodded and bit his lip. "I don't know what I would do without you, Anderson," he smiled softly and fell contentedly against him.

Blaine kissed him softly and wrapped him back in his arms. "Maybe we'll never have to find out."

Nothing lasts forever  
Some things aren't meant to be  
But you'll never find the answer  
Until you set your old heart free

Cooper took the paddles in his hand, held his breath as he said a quick prayer, and placed them on the heart. The shock went through them and they all waited, one…two…three…

When suddenly the heart began beating on its own a cheer flew up in the operating room. It wasn't the end, it was only the beginning. But it was a very good beginning.

Hello my old heart.

It was just after noon when Cooper strolled into the family room. Twelve expectant eyes stared back at him.

"Everything went perfectly," Cooper said with his famous grin.

Blaine rushed him and flew into his arms, breathing the first sigh of relief since returning to the family room. Kurt and Carole embraced, barely holding back their tears. The rest of the Crew
hooted and hollered and high fived until Cooper signaled for them to keep it down.

"When can we see him?" Kurt asked, turning with wide eyes.

"They're taking him to the ICU now, so you guys can visit in about two hours. Why don't you all go for lunch and grab some things at the gift shop. No food or flowers or balloons, but I bet there are some things down there Burt will like when he's a bit more alert." Voices rumbled as they all figured out their plans but Cooper flung an arm around his brother and pulled him aside. "How are you feeling?"

"Sore," Blaine admitted, eyeing Kurt to make sure he wasn't listening. "Especially my arm and my shoulder. But I'm okay, I'll survive."

Cooper smiled and ruffled his hair. "I'm sure you will. Wait a little bit and have lunch with me? I just have to make some quick notes in my office before I go."

Blaine looked across the room to see Kurt surrounded by Carole and his girls. He caught his eye and they silently agreed. "Yeah sure," Blaine smiled at Cooper and they walked out to the elevators.

"So everything really went well?" Blaine asked nervously.

"Yes, it was a perfect transplant," Cooper assured him. They reached Cooper's floor and walked to the Cardiology Department heading into Cooper's office. Blaine bit his lip sheepishly as Cooper looked around. He couldn't even hope that Cooper would miss the papers that had fallen off the desk onto the floor because his brother was staring right at them. One look back at Blaine made the culprit clear. "Did you two..." Cooper trailed off incredulously.

Blaine blushed but shrugged nonchalantly. "You save hearts your way, I'll save hearts mine."

They could only go in two at a time so Kurt and Carole went in together. Kurt was glad to have her by his side. His father looked so small and weak, hooked up to a ton of machines and alarms that buzzed and beeped without end. The ventilator was still inserted, preventing him from talking even if he were awake, which he wasn't. Kurt instinctually grabbed Carole's hand.

"He's okay sweetheart," she whispered, squeezing his hand. "Come on."

They walked toward him together and Carole pulled up two chairs. A nurse adjusting his fluids smiled at them. "Just ten minutes or so for now," she said kindly.

Carole nodded but Kurt was transfixed and he sat beside his father and reached for his hand. It was déjà vu only worse this time because his father waking up wouldn't be the end of their worries. The surgery was the easier part. The next ten days and two to three months would be the true tests of whether or not the transplant was successful. He felt Carole's hand on his shoulder, massaging gently. "He's gonna do this Kurt," she said hopefully. "He's stronger than any man I know."

"I can't lose him," he cried and tears started to fall. He suddenly felt his father's hand patting his own and he started. "Did you see that?" he asked Carole wide eyed and she smiled down at him.

"It's not like last time Kurt," Carole reminded him. "He can hear you and he'll wake up as soon as the medication wears off. So talk to him. I'll leave you two alone," she said, then turned back. "Do you want Blaine to come in?" she asked.

"Yeah, in a minute," he answered and she left to go get him.
Kurt watched his father's chest rise and fall for a minute and he brushed his thumb over his dad's calloused hands. "I know you can hear me," Kurt said, scooting his chair closer. "So I'm only gonna say this once. I'm not ready for you to leave me. We've got too many things to do still. Too many cars to rebuild and shows for you to come to and someday we'll have a wedding for you to yell at me about that it's too expensive." He closed his eyes and took a breath. "We'll have grandchildren that want to know their grandpa and will run and scream to see what gifts you bought them and then I'll yell at you that you're buying them too much." He sniffed and wiped his eyes. "We have so many things to look forward to so you listen to me brand new heart. My Dad's a good guy and he has good blood and I know you'll be happy inside him and live a good life. So you two play well together-

He was interrupted by a kiss on his head and he looked up to see Blaine. Blaine draped his arms around Kurt's neck and rested his chin softly on his head. "He's going to be okay Kurt," Blaine promised.

Kurt scoffed slightly and shook his head. "How can you be so sure?"

"Because if he's not we can have all the sex we want on the desk in his office and he'd never let that happen," Blaine quipped. They both were drawn to the motion of Burt's hand and watched as he lifted a finger and wagged it back and forth at them. Kurt couldn't help but laugh and Blaine grinned. "See? I told you so."

Chapter End Notes

Song used:
Hello My Old Heart by the Oh Hello's
Laughter Is the Sun

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face.  
-Victor Hugo-

Burt Hummel was good at a lot of things. He could change the spark plugs of a '96 Firebird in 90 minutes flat. He could build a small town garage into a booming business of high end repairs. He could talk circles around his poker buddies when it came to discussions of politics and the economy and he could raise a small and different little boy into a proud, respectful, trustworthy and loving young man.

What he couldn't do was sit in a hospital bed for 14 days.

His goal was to be out in ten. Even Cooper was amazed at his progress, because Burt Hummel had no use for being waited on hand and foot, confined to an uncomfortable bed with beeps and alarms and lights and constant blood draws and temperature taking and blood pressure checks at all hours of the night.

He wanted his bed. He wanted his pillow and his bathroom and if he had to eat oatmeal and Jello, he wanted it prepared by Kurt and Carole and not some cook in the basement of a hospital mixing up slop like he was back at Boy Scout camp. He wanted real coffee and real television and if he couldn't be in the shop then he wanted to be somewhere he could still do the other things he loved.

He wanted to go home.

It had taken five days to be rid of most of the lines attached to him. The breathing tube was gone within hours of him waking up, Blaine's words breaking through his dreams and bringing him back to reality. The kid was right, there was no way he was going to leave those two without a chaperone for any longer than he had to. He had too much to do to make sure that they both continued on the right path, stayed out of trouble, graduated high school, and went on to college. So he willed himself well and gradually the IV drips were stopped, the pain medication was reduced, and the stomach tube was removed so he could drink liquids and then eat foods again.

It took time for the immunosuppression medications to get to the right levels. Nausea and headaches were his biggest side effects. Kurt teased him that they should overdose him on the Cyclosporine to try and get his hair to grow back, but Cooper broke the news that it couldn't cure baldness. So they nudged his meds up and down until his blood levels were good and his side effects were minimal. He met with nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, physical therapists, and other members of the transplant team to make sure his breathing was good, his appetite and eating were healthy and he and the family all understood exactly what he would have to do once he went home. Finally they discharged him with an armful of instructions and appointments and Burt breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Home was better. But it was far from normal.

He went home on a Friday, which meant instead of having his first few hours to relax and ease in, he had Kurt fretting over him every second. Finn was home from college working with Blaine at the shop. They'd hired Puck and Jake to help out when they could, but Kurt refused to leave his
father's side, even when Burt told him he was fine.

By Sunday Burt had had enough. "Kurt, I have Carole, I have the visiting nurse, I'm fine," Burt promised at Kurt's tenth check-in before noon. He was lying in bed trying to just watch the recording of the game, but Kurt insisted on checking his temperature, making sure he wasn't hungry and had taken his meds when he was supposed to. "Go to the shop. Go be with Blaine. Go make out in the break room for God's sake, just stop futzing over me," he insisted.

"Ok, that just proves to me that you're not fine," Kurt argued his forehead creasing with concern. "I'm calling Cooper."

Burt reached out and grabbed his hand. Kurt stopped and took a breath. He knew he was overdoing it. He knew he was suffocating his father and that he needed to trust that he'd be okay. He was just so damn afraid of losing him that he couldn't let him out of his sight for a minute. It had been bad enough going to school the whole week his Dad was at the hospital. He'd barely been able to concentrate, checking his phone every two seconds until Blaine took it away and promised to tell him if there was an emergency. He'd raced to the hospital every afternoon and stayed there until Carole forced him home again. Blaine missed him but understood. Everyone understood, but it didn't make it any easier for Burt.

"Go to the shop, Kurt," Burt told him again quietly. "Go out on a date with Blaine. Hang out with the Crew. Be home late for curfew and I'll yell at you like everything is normal, I promise. Just go back to being a kid, not my nurse. I love you bud, but you're smothering me."

Kurt lowered his head, a small laugh mixing with tears that suddenly came to his eyes. "I'm sorry, I just love you-

"I know," Burt said and tugged on his arm to make Kurt look at him. "I love you too. Now scoot!"

Kurt went downstairs and told Carole he was off to the shop. His mind was racing driving the truck over but as he put some distance between himself and his Dad he couldn't help the flutter of excitement knowing he was going toward Blaine. It had been too long. 11 days of quick kisses and hugs and words between classes or texts sitting by his father's bedside. He felt bad leaving Blaine though Blaine assured him he was fine, especially with Cooper home more now. His arm was healing, his bruises were gone and everything seemed wonderful except he missed Kurt desperately.

He pulled up to the gas station in the full service lane and rolled down his window, watching Blaine approach in his rearview mirror with a huge grin. "Well, what can I get for you Sir?" Blaine asked playfully, his face bright with cold and delight.

"I think I need you to fill'er up," Kurt smirked confidently despite his face turning bright red.

"I think I need you to come inside for that," Blaine winked before grabbing Kurt's scarf and pulling them together for a passionate kiss. Kurt melted as the kiss rushed through him, setting his nerves ablaze, his skin burning mercilessly at Blaine's touch. "God I wanna fuck you right now," Blaine growled against his lips.

"Oh for Christ's sake guys, you're in the middle of the freakin' gas pumps!" Blaine turned and rested against the side of the truck, his face far more smug than Finn needed it to be. Kurt at least had the decency to look away from his brother with embarrassment. Finn glanced inside the window to see the gas gauge near empty. "Blaine, go help Puck with the oil change. Kurt, fill up your own damn truck."
Blaine smiled at Finn's scowl, leaned into the car and gave Kurt one last kiss before scooting around Finn with a wide berth and heading around the side to the mechanics bay. Finn shook his head and went around to set the pump himself. Kurt got out as well while Finn started to fill the tank. "Sorry," Kurt frowned leaning against the truck. He felt as though he'd been chastised by his father instead of his older brother.

"It's fine Dude, really, just…" Finn fumbled and looked away angrily. "Just not here, okay? It's Burt's business."

Kurt watched, confused, as his brother huffed off back inside. The heaviness in his chest, forgotten for a moment at the taste of Blaine, returned with a vengeance. He waited for the tank to fill then drove the truck around to the back and went inside. Finn was nowhere to be seen in the bay, but Kurt quickly spotted him in Burt's office, sitting at the desk. Glancing at Blaine hard at work beneath a 2005 Buick, he followed Finn. He opened the office door without permission and closed it softly behind him.

"Wanna talk about it?" Kurt said gently. He knew Finn well enough to know that anger covered pain and that no matter how hard he tried to hide it, Finn was not okay right now.

"Talk about what Kurt, I'm fine," Finn snapped, his eyes never meeting Kurt's. He swiveled in Burt's chair and began typing away at the keyboard. Kurt looked over. Payroll.

"You're not fine Finn," Kurt coaxed lightly, not wanting to make things worse but refusing to let him just go. He pulled the chair across the desk close and sat down. He reached a hand out and laid it softly on top of Finn's, halting his work. Finn bit his lip, trying to fight it but knowing it was a lost cause. There was one person who could always get him to talk and he wasn't backing down. "Talk to me, please."

Finn looked up, tears in his eyes and he took a breath. "What if we had lost him?" he asked brokenly.

Kurt blinked, surprised. He had thought this had been about Blaine not Burt. "But we didn't," Kurt tried to assure him. "But I wasn't there!" Finn yelled, shooting up from his seat. "He could have died Kurt. He could have died and you would have been there and Mom would have been there and hell even Blaine would have been there but I wouldn't have been!"

Kurt stared at him, but he didn't know what to say. It wouldn't have mattered if he'd been there or not, it didn't matter that any of them were there. In the end if his Dad hadn't made it he would have been in the operating room with Cooper and not surrounded by any of them. But he knew that's not what Finn needed to hear or what he needed to say so he came around the desk and hugged him. He hugged him tight enough that Finn couldn't fight against him and he felt his brother finally relax into his arms. "What would you have told him?" Kurt whispered.

Finn sniffed, wiped his eyes and pulled away from Kurt's arms, but not from Kurt. Kurt glanced out at the bay and saw Blaine watching them, his eyes soft and sad and Kurt offered him a simple blink to let him know he was okay before gazing back at his brother.

"I would have told him thank you. For believing in me. For loving me like a father loves a son..."
even though I wasn't his." Finn's voice was soft but strong, his eyes distant in memory, not space. "I
would have told him I loved him. And I'd try to make him as proud as I could because even though I
sometimes don't make the right decisions I always try."

"Oh Finn, he already knows all that," Kurt told him, rubbing Finn's arms up and down in comfort.
"But the good thing is that he's okay. He's still here, lying in bed hopefully, and you can go home
tonight and tell him all that."

"I think I should leave school," Finn said suddenly and Kurt had to take a step back to really stare
up at him.

"What?" he asked incredulous.

"I think I should leave school and run the garage. Maybe just for a semester, but I think that's what
I should do," Finn decided firmly. "I think that's what I'm going to do."

Kurt watched him and wanted to protest, but he looked so sure, so sincere, that he just nodded. "I
think you should do what you feel is right."

The door creaked open and Blaine stuck his head in, adorably so in Kurt's mind. "Um, guys, are we
done bonding because there's a customer out here that needs to speak to the Manager," Blaine
shrugged with apologetic amusement.

Finn's eyes shifted to Blaine's and he cleared his throat and stood up straight. "Yeah, definitely,
thanks..." he stammered before breezing past Blaine and out to the front desk.

"I don't think he likes me," Blaine pouted, but Kurt just laughed and wrapped his arms around
Blaine's waist.

"Well that's a very good thing because I want you all..." he kissed Blaine's neck beneath his right
ear, "to..." he kissed Blaine's neck beneath the left ear, "myself," he finished as he kissed Blaine's
eagerly waiting lips.

Blaine slipped his hands lower to squeeze Kurt's ass. Kurt laughed as Blaine brought their hips
together, pressing against him, inching them back to Burt's desk. "I believe I was saying something
about fucking you," he smirked heatedly.

"Don't you dare even think about it on my father's desk Blaine," Kurt warned, his tone firm.

"Get it, Anderson!" the heard shouted from across the bay.

Both boys snapped around to see Puck watching them, gesturing obscenely with his hands. Blaine
grinned at Puck with amusement, while Kurt scowled at them both and shook his head.

"Come on," Kurt said, tapping Blaine lightly on the leg. "I think Puckerman needs a lesson in
respecting the boss." Kurt sauntered out, Blaine following close behind now with a smirk as he
watched his boyfriend turn on the sass. "Puckerman! Get your ass over here!" he ordered.

Puck wiped his hands on the towel as he walked over to Kurt. "Sup Hummel?"

"What's 'up' is that you're wasting time screwing around instead of working on that Buick like you
were hired to do." Puck scoffed and crossed his arms. "Don't huff at me, Puckerman. I highly
suspect it's a damn good thing I came in to check in on you guys or nothing would be getting
done."
"Get real, Hummel. You came in because you wanted Blaine to bend you over the desk and-

"Dude, don't you dare finish that sentence," Finn interrupted as he walked past them and towards the office. "And you better listen to Kurt. He's the boss while Burt's out."

Puck's mouth went slack for only a moment before he shut it tightly following Finn to the office. "I thought you were the boss."

Finn smirked. "Nope. It's a Hummel business. Technically I'm a Hudson. Think of me more as the cool manager that buys everyone pizza for lunch and stuff."

"But you're older than he is!" Puck argued. "Shouldn't you be in charge anyway? I mean, Mr. Hummel is your pops too."

Finn sighed and shook his head, draping an arm over Puck's shoulder and leading him back towards the Buick. "Yeah but dude, I'm too chill to be in charge," he said in a hushed tone. "To be the boss of this place, ya gotta be a major hard-ass and that's just not me. But Kurt," Finn turned them around to look at Kurt who was arms deep in the hood of a Ford. "Kurt's as tough as they come. Don't let the innocent face fool you."

Puck raised a brow and looked up at Finn. "Are you being serious right now?" he asked dryly and Finn nodded adamantly. "But you're huge! You're like the jolly green giant huge. You can't honestly tell me you're scared of him."

"Have you not seen his bitch face?" Finn asked.

"Oh, he has," Jake piped in, watching the whole scene from a few feet away working on a motorcycle. "He's just ignores it."

Finn pursed his lips and patted Puck on the back. "You're braver than me, man."

"Or stupider," Jake chimed in with a smirk.

Puck shrugged Finn's hand away. "Whatever," he mumbled and walked away, muttering to himself how everyone was whipped by Kurt except him. Finn snorted in amusement. If Puck only knew just how scary Kurt could be.

Just as Kurt went to close the garage hub doors for the night, Jeff's car pulled up into the driveway. Kurt smiled at his friends as Jeff and Nick climbed out. "What are you two doing here?"

"Kidnapping you," Jeff answered with a wide grin.

"Pardon?" Kurt took an instinctual step back.

"We're all meeting up at Quinn's house for some Chinese food and movies," Nick smiled, nodding at Blaine, Puck, and Jake who were walking towards them. "We figured you wouldn't come unless we kidnapped you so here we are."

Kurt gave them a small smile and shook his head. "I can't. I gotta get home. My dad-

"It's Burt approved," Finn cut in wiggling his phone as he walked to them. "You should go. Get out for a little while."

"But-" Kurt tried to protest. It may be okay with his Dad, but it wasn't okay with him.
"No buts. Don't even try to argue," Finn said, smirking at the scowl Kurt sent him. "Burt's fine. He's resting and all you're going to do is baby him which is driving him crazy. Go have fun with your friends. You need a break too."

Kurt huffed and crossed his arms. "Finn-"

"I'm the older brother so you gotta do what I say," Finn interrupted. "I'll finish closing. Go have some fun, dude."

Kurt glanced around at the guys, all of them wearing the same pout with the exception of Blaine whose face somehow held way more connotation, and Puck who was smirking with amusement. With a sigh, Kurt relented. "Fine."

Jeff clapped giddily and bounced on his feet. "Yay!"

The minute Kurt and Blaine entered Quinn's home, Marley and Harmony attacked Kurt, throwing their arms around him and whisking him away to snuggle on the loveseat together. Blaine merely laughed and sprawled out on the other couch. He was really glad that Kurt had decided to come.

"How's your Dad?" Marley asked quietly.

Kurt shrugged. "I suppose he's doing pretty well all things considered, but I'm still worried about him all the time. I didn't even want to come here, but my Dad and Finn insisted."

"Well I'm glad they did," Harmony said, squeezing Kurt's hand. "You've been a stranger too long mister and we miss you."

Kurt smiled softly and pulled them both close to him. "I've missed my girls too."

"Working blows and I can't even get myself a cold glass of beer!" Puck complained walking in from the kitchen with a can of soda. He tossed himself on the couch. "Between Hummel's tyrant ass and Blaine tryna get that ass, I swear the whole day was just one giant blowjob."

"Don't you talk about my father's business like that," Kurt snapped angrily. "You don't want to work? Fine. I'll be happy to give your paycheck at the end of the week to someone else."

"Just ignore him," Marley said, glaring at Jake to get his brother under control while squeezing Kurt protectively. Jake though had no control over Puck whatsoever.

Puck scoffed. "Get real, Hummel. It's not like you even worked today. All you did was boss us around and let Blaine get away with practically fucking you right on the car as we worked," he retorted and Blaine snickered.

"Mm, garage sex. Wanky," Santana purred, sending Blaine a wink.

"Car sex is fun and all, Puckerman, but it's kinda been there done that. It's the desk sex I'm looking forward to," Blaine said, smiling deviously at Kurt, ignoring the warning glare he was being thrown. He lowered his voice and leaned close to his best friend. "What I wouldn't do to bend that sexy ass over and just pound into it, right there all over Mr. Hummel's papers."

"That does sound hot," Puck whispered, nodding with approval. "Why don't you get on that, Anderson?"

"Oh, I plan to, but someone is a little resistant," Blaine explained, nudging his head in Kurt's
"Alright that's enough," Kurt snapped, grabbing Blaine's hand and pulling him away from his friends and up the stairs.

"Get it Anderson!" Puck yelled in their direction as everyone whistled and hooted and hollered after them.

Blaine threw a winning grin down at them as his arm was nearly pulled out of his socket, hiding the fact that he was pretty sure he was going to get it, but not necessarily in a good way. He glanced back at Kurt as soon as the Crew was out of sight and pointed nervously to the room on the right. "The guest room's over here." Kurt pulled him inside immediately closing the door to the room and locking it. "Kurt-" Blaine began to apologize but he was immediately shut down.

"I don't think Puck's the only one who needs a lesson in respecting the boss," Kurt admonished as he paced back and forth trying to figure out how he wanted to handle this.

"Kurt, I got carried away, I'm sorry," Blaine begged.

Kurt turned on his heel. "Oh you will be," he hissed, but after a stare that Blaine was sure lasted lasted hours, Kurt's lips turned up in a smirk and his eyes sparkled with mischief. Blaine's heart raced the moment he saw the shift in Kurt's face and his limbs went weak with anticipation. "Kneel," Kurt ordered and Blaine was utterly relieved for the command. Kurt walked slowly over to him, flipping open his jeans and pulling down the zipper just before reaching Blaine whose hazel eyes grew wild with desire, his mouth watering with need. "Now listen well. My father overcame a thousand odds to keep you off that desk and I expect you to respect that is that understood?"

Blaine nodded, licked his lips and managed a very guttural, "Yes."

"And you may be the leader of the Crew but I've told you before and I'll tell again, you are not the boss of me. Is that understood?" Kurt asked, reaching out to thread his fingers in Blaine's hair. Blaine nodded vigorously, but said nothing. "I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. I think maybe you need a lesson in when to open your mouth and when not to." Kurt cocked his head teasingly. "Would you like that lesson?"

"Yes please," Blaine whispered, his eyes raised to Kurt then falling to his open fly. Kurt gave him an approving nod and Blaine reached out, sliding his hands beneath Kurt's waistline and pulling the jeans down. He leaned forward the moment Kurt's cock sprung free and took the head gently in his lips, swirling his tongue delightfully. He felt Kurt pulse in his mouth and Blaine slid further down then licked up the vein back to the tip. His own erection throbbed in his too tight jeans and he reached down to adjust himself.

"Don't touch," Kurt suddenly ordered and Blaine snatched his hand away looking up. "Don't touch and don't you dare cum until I tell you."

Blaine wasn't sure if he had ever been more aroused in his life. His hands flew to cup Kurt's ass, his cock aching, wanting nothing more than to give himself the stimulation he craved. Nothing more but to obey Kurt, that was. He swirled his tongue again, knowing Kurt loved it, then swallowed around him. Kurt's breathtaking moans assured Blaine he was giving Kurt exactly what he wanted and he smiled to himself, loving that he could drive his boyfriend absolutely wild. He held him tight in his firm grasp, letting Kurt fist his hair and finally fuck his mouth. He waited, ready and willing to take whatever Kurt gave him for however long he wanted to torture him because seeing Kurt like this, so sure and in command, was the hottest fucking thing he had ever witnessed.
He closed his eyes, shutting out everything else in the world beside the taste and sensation of Kurt in his mouth, filling his whole body with only him, in and out, harder and faster. He felt Kurt clench and then spill down his throat and Blaine swallowed eagerly around him until Kurt was completely spent. He finally opened his eyes, looking up at his boyfriend who was the most gorgeously wrecked creature in the whole world, breathing hard to catch his breath while his heartbeat slowed. It was only then, letting Kurt slip reluctantly from his lips, that Blaine remembered how hard and desperate he was for his own release.

"Kurt please," he whispered, his eyes begging. Kurt focused and looked down at him, knowingly, smiling slyly.

"I don't know if I should let you," Kurt smirked, brushing his fingers tenderly through Blaine's hair. He knelt down to mirror Blaine and kissed him softly, stealing just a small taste of himself on Blaine's tongue before pulling away. "I'm still angry at you," he said, but his gleaming eyes betrayed his words for mere play.

"Make me wait as long as you want just for the love of god Kurt, please touch me," Blaine implored.

Kurt mulled it over for a moment and came to a decision. He let his lips ghost over Blaine's before whispering. "I think I will make you wait. Maybe then you'll remember exactly who is in charge, peasant."

Kurt straightened his clothes and walked out of the room with a content hum, using all of his willpower to ignore the whine from his boyfriend. Blaine groaned, turning to let his head fall onto the cool sheets of the bed behind him, unable to believe that Kurt had actually left him hard and wanting. He never should have said that he always got his way. Kurt was out to prove otherwise and he was in for a long afternoon.

Kurt got home just minutes before his curfew. He had to admit that it was nice hanging out with his friends for a few hours. They argued over what dishes to order, they argued over which movies to watch, and they argued over who was sitting where, all the while picking on each other for their choices. It had been weeks since he'd laughed so hard and he was admittedly feeling more relaxed. He was also proud of himself for holding out as long as he had. Blaine had returned to the living room minutes after him, completely subdued and attaching himself to Kurt's side with near desperation. Kurt lasted until the second movie before giving into Blaine's pleading eyes and excusing himself to the bathroom with a smirk. No one was surprised when Blaine rushed off to "make a phone call" soon after and quietly joined Kurt in the bathroom. Kurt rewarded him for waiting with fervor and decided that he would definitely have to make Blaine wait more often.

Kurt walked into the house, expecting the place to be quiet, only to hear the end of an argument between Carole and Finn.

"But Mom-"

"I said no, Finn and that is final."

Kurt walked into the living room just in time to see Finn storm off to his room. Carole sighed tiredly and turned towards Kurt. "Hey sweetie. Did you have a good time?"

"Yeah, it was fun," he nodded. "Everything ok?"

Carole smiled gently. "Everything's fine. Your dad's already asleep. It's late. You should get some
Kurt gave her a kiss on the cheek as he walked past, told her goodnight, and headed up to his room. He stopped by Finn's room on the way, peaking his head in to see Finn sulking on his bed. "I take it they said no?"

"What gave that away," Finn grumbled, looking more like a petulant child than a 19 year old. "You wanna play video games or something? I don't really feel like going to bed."

Kurt chuckled as he walked into the room and sat down next to Finn. "Why not? Because you know your mom wants you to go to bed?" he asked teasingly.


"In your dreams, Hudson," Kurt scoffed but Finn noticed his eyes were brighter and his shoulders more relaxed than they had been earlier that day. Finn narrowed his eyes at him and Kurt blushed as he stared back. "What?" he asked reaching for two game remotes.

"Nothing," Finn shrugged but he reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone.

**To Puck:**
**Did Kurt and Blaine…you know…tonight?**

**From Puck:**
**Pretty sure Dude. Twice.**

"Put your phone away and play," Kurt insisted and Finn tossed his phone to the side. He'd gone away for three months and suddenly his little brother was all grown up.

Christmas was a very subdued affair. Despite Kurt's protestations, Burt had insisted on getting out of the house and giving everyone a break so for the first time since Kurt's mother's death they spent the holiday somewhere else. Cooper and Blaine were eager to have them, more than weary of the lonely Christmas present exchanges and dinners they had endured, just the two of them, for the past few years.

When the doorbell rang Blaine raced to it, his face beaming with delight. He couldn't help but sweep Kurt into his arms and swing him over the threshold. He crashed their lips together, happier than he had ever been on Christmas Day before. Kurt giggled beneath him and Burt cleared his throat. Blaine didn't care.

"Thank you for coming," a far more polite Cooper called, walking over to the Hummels and shaking Burt's hand. He gave Carole a quick kiss on the cheek and nodded to Finn who was hanging back shyly, his hands shoved in his pockets. "Come in everyone. Blaine and Kurt, get some air," he chastised as he took the Hudmels coats and hung them up in the hallway. The teens ignored him and he swatted Blaine on the arm.

"Ow!" Blaine pouted, pulling away and grabbing his arm for drama's sake.

"Air. Now," Cooper repeated with a warning eyebrow raise and Blaine mumbled an apology and took Kurt's coat. "Much better. Now see, is being a gentleman really so difficult?" he teased.

"It is for Blaine," Kurt smirked and Blaine's pout grew into a frown.
Cooper grinned and slapped Kurt on the back. "Brunch is ready," he told everyone.

The Anderson's had laid it all out buffet style for people to grab. Bread and bagels were by the toaster, scrambled eggs and bacon were for the taking staying warm in the oven. Blaine had cooked some muffins and potatoes and chopped up a fruit salad. Cooper just tried not to burn anything. They made small talk over the table and laughed more than any of them had in a long time. Kurt tried to hold his father back but Cooper assured him that laughter was the best medicine.

"Present time!" Blaine yelled, clapping his hands furtively once the dishes were cleared.

They all gathered in the living room while Blaine excitedly handed out presents. "Ok so the way it works in the Anderson house is we open presents from youngest to oldest."

"Been pretty boring the last few years," Cooper quipped with a smile and Blaine agreed completely.

"Okay Kurt, you're up first," Blaine grinned. Kurt looked through the pile and chose his father's present first. He opened the paper on the small box with care, ensuring that it remained in one piece.

"Oh god you're one of those," Blaine groaned and Kurt flipped him the bird behind his back. "Later love," Blaine whispered in his ear. Kurt shivered.

Kurt knew what it was before he even opened it. Every Christmas his dad gave him one more brooch from his mother's collection. He took off the lid and found the most beautiful enameled butterfly, rainbow in color and shimmering with glitter. "It's a beautiful one this year Dad, I love it!"

Burt beamed with delight. "I've been saving that one until the time was right. You've truly emerged this year Kurt and I thought it was perfect."

"It is," he said. Kurt leaned over and gave his Dad a hug, pouring in all his love for his father and mother. When they pulled apart, Kurt put the brooch on and turned to Blaine. "You're turn."

Blaine eagerly chose the large heavy box from Kurt and ripped the paper off with ferocity. A garment box lay inside and he opened it to reveal the most amazing leather jacket he had ever seen.

"I know I said we would pick it together," Kurt blurted in a nervous explanation, "But it's Kenneth Cole and it's faux leather and it's positively smoking and I couldn't resist."

"I love it," Blaine assured him, his eyes sparkling as he tried it on. He kissed Kurt softly on the lips and smiled. "Thank you."

Kurt relaxed and smiled. "You're very welcome."

Finn was next and opened light up drum sticks from Kurt. His eyes grew wide like a child's. "These are amazing Kurt, I can't wait to try them!"

Cooper opened the gift from Burt, a framed poem that he read out loud.

For A Wonderful Doctor

To earn the title "Doctor,"
Is an honor, it is true...
Fruition of a lifelong dream,
Achieved by just a few.

It's a journey that has brought you,
To this time and to this place,
Where you can make a difference
With each challenge that you face.

But, still, the wisdom you acquired,
Each step along the way,
Is not all that defines you,
As you travel through each day.

For knowledge in and of itself,
Is only just a part...
The thing that makes you special,
Is your kind and gentle heart.

And when a Doctor cares as much,
As you "sincerely" do,
The world becomes a better place,
No doubt, because of you!

Cooper wiped away the tears, as did every other person in the room. "It's beautiful Burt," he choked.

"I didn't write it, but I mean every word," Burt answered. Cooper nodded and placed the gift gently aside. "Alright Carole, your turn."

She grabbed an envelope from Kurt, Blaine, Finn and Burt and inside found a gift certificate for a full out spa day. "Oh boys, this is wonderful, thank you so much!"

"We figured if we pooled our resources you could get everything you've ever wanted in one day or split it up into a bunch of different days," Finn told his mom.

"That's so thoughtful of you, thank you guys, truly," she said.

"Okay Dad, your turn," Kurt called.

"Finally," he smirked rolling his eyes. He glanced around at his pile and chose the one with Blaine's name on it. "This way I can get it over with from the beginning if it's some sort of bribe for my desk," he mumbled under his breath.

"It's not sir, I promise," Blaine responded with sincerity. Burt raised a suspicious brow anyway and pulled the paper off the medium size box. Inside he found a model kit for a 1968 Ford Mustang GT. "I know how much you miss the shop and working on cars, so I thought you could work on this one," he said. "If you like it Kurt and I can get you more until you're ready to come back to work."

Burt took a breath and wiped his glistening eyes. "This is really considerate Blaine. Thank you."

Blaine beamed. "You're welcome."

Kurt squeezed Blaine's hand, so proud of how much care Blaine had put into the gift for his Dad and Blaine smiled softly back. He'd do anything for Burt. "Guess it's my turn again," Kurt said and reached for the present from Blaine leaning in close. "Is it safe to open this in front of my family?"
he asked slyly.

"Why do you all think the worst of me?" Blaine protested but five sets of eyebrow raises proved the question was futile. "Okay, okay fine, but yes, I promise it's safe to open in front of your family." Kurt peeled the paper off the box and opened it, his eyes softening as soon as he saw what was inside. Three rows of black leather cord came together in a beautiful silver heart. The bracelet took his breath away. "I know you don't like wearing the leather jacket all the time," Blaine explained, "but I thought you could wear this-

"I love it," Kurt shouted and threw his arms around Blaine's neck. They held each other for a moment before separating so Blaine could help put the bracelet on his wrist. When it was in place, Kurt nudged Blaine with a shy smile. "You're turn."

Blaine reached for a present just as the doorbell rang. They all stopped and stared at it curiously. "Go get the door Squirt," Cooper said, and Blaine threw him a look as he got up.

"Are we expecting anyone? Is this my present or are you just sending me because I'm young and nimble?" he quipped until he opened the door and suddenly froze. The cold air wafted in as silence filled the doorway.

"Who is it Blaine?" Cooper shouted from the living room and got up to join his brother at the door. When he saw who it was his hand immediately reached for Blaine's shoulder and squeezed protectively. "Mom? What are you doing here?"

She stood in the doorway, bundled in a coat and scarf, shivering as if she'd been standing there for far longer than it took to ring a doorbell. The car was parked out on the street at the base of the driveway. It was empty. "Your father was working," she stammered, her eyes a bit lost as if she wasn't really sure what had brought her there at all. "And it was Christmas, and I thought…"

"You thought what mother?" Blaine snapped harshly. He felt two arms wrap around his waist and he relaxed slightly into Kurt's embrace.

"I thought maybe I'd come see my boys?" she answered, her voice small and obviously second guessing her decision. "I'm sorry, maybe I should go," she said turning away.

"No," Cooper whispered, his eyes falling on his brother and Kurt. If she had come this far, tried this hard, then now, with their newfound family all around them, was perhaps the perfect time to see if their relationship had any hope of repair. After all, it was Christmas. "Maybe you should stay."

"Coop," Blaine pleaded, his eyes broken with fear and the inability to hope anymore. But Burt had restored Cooper's faith in second chances.

He reached up, brushing a soothing hand through his brother's hair like he used to when he was young. "She came all this way," he said, asking for permission. "Give her a chance?"

"Maybe she's had a change of heart," Kurt whispered in Blaine's ear and the words, his words, floated around inside him until they settled in his chest.

"Okay," he answered softly, pulling Kurt's arms tight around him. "One chance."

A week later, Cooper, Blaine, Kurt, and Burt went out to a fancy restaurant as a belated birthday dinner for Blaine. They'd invited their Mom but there was no way she could get away from their father who still didn't know she was back in touch. Things were far from ok with them, years of
neglect still simmering beneath the surface. But she was trying at least and that counted for something.

Blaine had never been one to enjoy fancy restaurants, having to endure one too many uncomfortable dinners in his childhood, but he had to admit that with the people he loved most in the world, it was actually really nice. It was fun watching Cooper and Kurt fuss over Burt about what he ate. His steak had been cooked so perfectly that he couldn't control the obscene moans from leaving his lips, all the while Burt glared at him in jealousy. But the icing on the proverbial cake was the waitress who had fallen for Cooper's charm, barely paying attention to the others as she tried to subtly flirt with Cooper. Cooper was not as subtle.

Blaine smirked with delight any time the young woman walked away and Cooper had the decency to blush at his forwardness in front of Burt. Seeing his brother like this was the best birthday present ever. Cooper hadn't truly dated in ages, worrying too much about work and caring for Blaine, so it was moments like these that he could let go and feel young again. He did have the decency to flush at Burt's amused glances, which Blaine found entirely too hilarious. But when she slipped him her number with the check Cooper blew it off, knowing once again where his priorities lie. Kurt though said nothing when Cooper looked wistfully back behind him as they left and settled into the car to go home.

But Blaine quickly noticed that Cooper took the turn for the highway instead of their route back to the house. "Where are we going?" Blaine questioned. Cooper glanced sideways at Burt, then at Kurt through the rearview mirror before looking silently at Blaine with a smirk. "Coop, what's going on?" Blaine tried again.

"What makes you think that something is going on?" Cooper asked way too innocently. Burt chuckled in the front seat and Kurt pursed his lips, looking out the window to avoid eye contact with Blaine.

"Because we're going in the opposite direction of home," he argued but still no one said a word. "Don't give me that crap. I know you Coop, you're hiding something and these two are in on it," Blaine accused.

Kurt gasped dramatically. "I'm appalled by your accusation, Anderson. I would never hide anything from you," Kurt said feigning offense.

Blaine rolled his eyes with a scoff and looked at his brother. "Seriously, where are we going?"

Cooper glanced at Burt next to him and raised a brow.

"You might as well tell him, Cooper," Burt said with a shrug. "Apparently he's not any more patient with a surprise than Kurt is and if you don't he'll keep hounding us for the next twenty minutes until we get there."

"Get where?" Blaine hounded as predicted over Kurt's protestation of "Hey!"

Cooper hummed for a moment before relenting. "We are going to the Guitar Center, Blaine."

"What for?" Blaine asked, excitement growing in his chest.

"To buy a new car obviously," Kurt retorted and Blaine mock glared at him.

"I thought you could use a new guitar for your birthday," Cooper explained. "You know, before you head off to college."
"Coop that's awesome, I could use a new acoustic, my old one's getting pretty worn," Blaine grinned.

"Well you can get that if you want, but I was thinking more along the lines of Platinum edition electric guitar with an amp and speakers." He paused, his eyes sparkling as he took a glance through the rear view mirror into the backseat.

Blaine's mouth had fallen open in shock. "Coop," Blaine started, his voice appreciative but reluctant. "You don't have to do that. The dinner was great and a new acoustic would be more than enough, I don't need an electric-"

"You may not need one but I know you want one," Cooper replied, cutting Blaine off before he could finish his sentence. "Besides, dinner was dinner. I feed you all the time. You need an actual gift."

"An acoustic is an actual gift Coop, don't think I don't know how much the Platinum guitars are," Blaine argued.

"Squirt, please," Cooper pleaded gently. "You're 18 now, you'll be going off to college soon and you need to be able to keep up with the big boys. Besides, after how much you've grown this year you deserve it."

Blaine beamd with pride. "I guess you're right," he teased but his smile quickly turned to a pout when Kurt smacked him on the arm. "Ow!" he shouted and rubbed his arm watching Kurt glare at him expectantly. "It was a joke! I'm sorry! Thank you Cooper, you're the best brother in the whole world. A god really. It's amazing that anyone else on the earth can even- OW!." Cooper laughed and Kurt shook his head. "I have no idea what you're talking about Cooper, I don't think he's grown a bit," Kurt muttered before leaning over to kiss Blaine quickly on the lips.

The remainder of the drive was spent listening to Blaine go on and on about the various types of guitars and amps there were and which ones would be best suited for him. Cooper watched Blaine through the rearview mirror happily as he and Kurt chatted with unending enthusiasm about music and performing. He didn't know what his or Blaine's life would have been like if Kurt hadn't chosen to give his little brother a chance, but he didn't take that kind of kindness for granted.

It was one of the reasons he'd let his mother in on Christmas and why he kept letting her in bit by bit. But it was his parent's legacy that truly drove him to make this birthday extra special for Blaine. 18 was important, everything Blaine had been through was reason enough to go all out, but Cooper had been around long enough to know that too many of his birthdays had been forgotten. And though this one had been delayed because of his accident and Burt's surgery, Cooper was going to make up for it tenfold. And after that he was going to make damn sure that there wasn't another moment in Blaine's life that he felt for a second that he wasn't there for him in every way he needed Cooper to be.

Cooper barely parked the car before Blaine hopped out. "He is such a puppy," Kurt said to his father teasingly as they followed after Blaine.

Blaine whipped his head around. "We're getting a puppy too?" he asked with childlike hope.

"You're the puppy, idiot," Kurt laughed, taking Blaine's hand as they entered the store.

"More like a bulldog," Burt joked with Cooper.

"But a cute bulldog," Cooper joked back then turned serious. "Let's go look around a bit while they
search for his guitar. Tell me if you feel tired and we'll take a seat somewhere."

"Oh not you too," Burt grumbled good-naturedly scanning the store. "Oh, look at that drum set! Finn's been hinting at wanting a new one ever since Kurt got him those new drumsticks. Let's go look."

Cooper chuckled and placed a hand on Burt's back as they walked over to the drums. "Do you even know anything about picking out drums?"

"Nope," Burt said with a laugh. "But it can't be too hard, right?" Cooper shrugged and followed Burt to the back of the store.

Kurt walked with Blaine through the rows of guitars, smirking with fondness at the critical look in Blaine's eyes. Blaine had told him in the car that finding the right guitar was a lot like Harry Potter finding the right wand. The guitar had to choose him, not the other way around. Kurt simply nodded and let Blaine take the lead. He glanced around the store for his father, smiling when he saw that he was attempting to play drums while Cooper begged him to save the hearing of the other people in the store. He loved the burgeoning relationship Cooper and his dad had and he couldn't wait for the time they could truly be friends and stop being doctor and patient.

Blaine stopped walking abruptly and Kurt nearly ran into him. He looked at Blaine, noticing the awe on his face, and grinned. "Has one called out to you?" he teased gently.

Blaine nodded slowly as he stepped closer to the guitar. "That one. That's the one," he said, pointing to a sapphire electric guitar. "It matches your eyes," he said with a wink.

Kurt inwardly swooned for just a moment before coming to his senses. "You are not seriously choosing this one because of its color, are you?" Kurt questioned unimpressed.

Blaine shook his head at his boyfriend. "I didn't choose this one, it chose me," he argued and Kurt rolled his eyes. "The color is just a beautiful bonus," he grinned as he tried to gather Kurt into his arms.

"Uh, huh," Kurt said pushing him away just as an employee walked their way.

"Can I help you boys with something?" the older man asked, eyeing Blaine and Kurt with slight disdain.

"Yes, thank you. I would like to see that guitar, please," Blaine replied, his tone firm. He put his arm around Kurt and pulled him close as if daring the man to say something.

The employee raised a brow as he pulled the guitar down. "This is a 25th Anniversary Ted McCarty, kid. It's not for beginners."

"Well luckily, I'm not a beginner," Blaine retorted as he took hold of the guitar, feeling its perfect weight in his hands. He walked over to the nearby amp, Kurt and the employee following him. He took a seat on a stool, plugged in and began to strum the strings, tuning it by ear to perfection.

The scowl on the man's face disappeared as an effortlessly perfect melody filled the store at Blaine's fingertips. "Not bad, kid. Not bad at all. I can't tell you how many youngsters come in here and buy one of our guitars because it looks cool only to bring it back a few weeks later because they realized they had no idea how to play it."

"You chose a good one."

Blaine smirked and sent Kurt a wink. "I didn't choose it. It chose me," he said and the man
"Now that, is how I know you're a true musician," the man nodded approvingly. Blaine puffed out his chest and stuck his tongue out at Kurt in triumph. "You need an amp too?"

"Yeah," Blaine nodded eagerly then glanced across the room at Cooper. Cooper's smile back at him was filled with love. "Oh and I'll need some headphones so I don't drive my brother crazy," he added with a wink across the room.

"Alright. Follow me."

"I'm going to drop Burt off and then I'll be right back," Cooper said as he pulled into their driveway. "Behave yourself Blaine."

"Always," Blaine said, feigning innocence. "Thanks for coming along with us Burt. It was really fun."

"I'm glad you got the perfect guitar. Oh, and thanks for helping me narrow down the drum sets for Finn. I'll talk with Carole about it tonight. No squealing, alright?" Burt warned him, finger wagging.

"My lips are sealed," Blaine promised then smirked at Kurt. "Well…"

"And that would be our cue to leave," Cooper drawled.

"Or stay," Burt muttered, but Cooper just smiled and helped Blaine out of the car with his new guitar. Burt huffed. "I'll see you at home, son."

"Bye, Dad," Kurt said, hugging him from the backseat and Cooper climbed back in. "We'll see you in a little while, Cooper," he said with a sly wink and got out of the car with Blaine's amp.

"Bye, Burt. Later, Coop," Blaine waved from outside following after Kurt.

Cooper rolled up the windows and slipped the car into reverse. "How surprised do you think he'll be?" Burt asked curiously as they drove out of the driveway.

Cooper chuckled. "Very, I'm sure. I just hope they haven't destroyed the place by the time I get back."

As soon as Kurt and Blaine entered the Anderson home, Blaine had Kurt pinned against the wall, his lips firmly attached to Kurt's neck.

"Blaine," Kurt protested weakly. "Don't you want to play your guitar?"

"I will when Coop gets back," Blaine replied, slotting his leg in-between Kurt's thighs. "Right now I want you and we have fifteen minutes at most so we gotta make it quick."

Kurt chuckled softly and pushed Blaine back. "Why don't you put your stuff in your room then meet me in the basement?"

Blaine quirked a confused brow. "Why?"

"Cooper's not the only one with late birthday surprises," Kurt whispered hotly in his ear before pulling out of Blaine's grasp. "I'll see you downstairs," he said with a sultry wink before walking away.
Blaine bit his lip, his eyes scanning Kurt's backside before quickly running his stuff upstairs. He started out the door but then returned to grab a handful of condoms and some packets of lube, shoving them in his pockets. He couldn't wait to see what Kurt had in store.

He walked down the basement stairs, hoping to find Kurt in some devilishly sexy outfit. Or maybe tied up and waiting for him. When he was plunged into darkness halfway down, he took the last set of steps cautiously. "You should have told me you like the dark Kurt, I could have bought us some blindfolds," he called out seductively.

"SURPRISE!"

The lights turned back on and Blaine gasped, not only at the presence of his friends but at the complete transformation of the basement into a kingdom. On one side there was a makeshift dungeon, on the other was a castle, and in the middle stood a jousting ring. Gone was the leather typically donned by The Crew, replaced for the occasion by princesses, knights, and jester costumes. Kurt was dressed as the Prince, Harmony and Marley ladies in waiting by his side. Finn stood tall in the back in a troll costume.

"What the hell is this?" Blaine questioned with a laugh looking around until his eyes fell on his best friend. "Are you wearing tights, Puckerman?"

Puck squatted uncomfortably. "Hummel made me the jester," he scowled.

Blaine made his way to Kurt, who was smirking with amusement, but stopped when Finn jumped in the way, preventing him from going any further. "Kurt, what's going on?"

Kurt looked away. "I only speak to royals and knights. A mere peasant cannot hold court with me."

Blaine scoffed and Brittany walked over to him. "His Highness is cold and mean," Brittany said softly. "He needs to be won over by a kind hearted knight but alas, we have none and the Frankenteen Giant has control over him. Could you be the one that saves him from the treacherous giant?"

A slow smile crept up Blaine's face as he glanced at his friends. As a kid, he'd always wanted some kind of role-play birthday party but his parents had never let him. He asked for it every year, changing the theme each time to something more manly in hopes that they would finally say yes. But they never did and Blaine had learned to stop asking. Now here were his friends and the love of his life, dressed up and prepared to have a ridiculous birthday party, just for him.

Blaine looked back at Brittany and gave her his best sorrowful look. "But I am but a mere peasant. How could I possibly win His Highness or beat the big ugly giant?"

"Hey!" Finn exclaimed with a pout, falling out of character. "I'm not ugly."

Everyone laughed and Santana walked over in her Knight's armor. "You must become a Knight like me!" she said exuberantly. "We must duel and proclaim you the victor before you can take on Frakenteen!"

"But I have no weapons and no armor," Blaine frowned forlornly. "How can I even begin to defeat thee?" Blaine questioned.

"We must craft you armor!" Quinn said, grabbing hold of Blaine's arm and walking him over to the bar where the costumes were. "A suit that is strong enough to defeat the giant but also lovely enough to win His Highness's heart."
Blaine looked over at Kurt and smiled brightly. "Well then, let's craft me an armor His Highness cannot resist," he winked but Kurt turned away with a haughty grin.

"Just get naked," Puck said, doing a jester's dance that Kurt taught him. "That'll make Frankenteen run to hills and the Prince fall to his knees!"

"Dude, no!" Finn said, covering his eyes as if Blaine was actually going to drop all of his clothes right there.

"Jester," Kurt shouted loud and clear over the chatter while Quinn and Nick helped Blaine don his armor. "I demand entertainment."

"Damn, Hummel," Puck griped. "You are enjoying this way too much."

"Dance, fool! Dance!" Kurt ordered, flicking his wrist as if to whip Puck.

Finn chuckled. "Looks like he's got you whipped too, Puckerman." Puck made a face at him but danced goofily nonetheless. There was no one but Blaine that he would completely humiliate himself like this for and his best friend had better love the hell out of him for it, he thought.

No one saw Cooper arrive once the fighting was in full affect in the jousting ring, and he sat at the top of the stairs watching, his heart full with the love Blaine's friends had for him. Blaine had already beaten Nick and Jake easily, and was dueling Jeff. Without a word, Cooper descended the stairs in silence and grabbed his own armor, standing on the sidelines next to Blaine's next opponent, Santana. Mid swing Blaine noticed his brother and his grin grew wider. Jeff took advantage of his distraction and stole a swing with his foam sword, but Blaine was too fast, ducking out of the way and striking Jeff hard.

Brittany raised a red flag and pointed at Blaine. "Winner, Blaine the peasant."

They all clapped as Blaine bowed, eyeing Kurt with seductive eyes while Kurt looked bored. "All this is for you, Your Highness. I will win thy heart, just wait and see."

"You have a long way to go, young knight," Kurt reproached, though his eyes sparkling with desire. "Don't get cocky."

Santana stepped into the ring with a fierce look in her eyes and lifted her blade. Blaine sent Kurt a wink before turning to Santana. "Too late," he answered Kurt back and lunged at her.

Defeating Santana proved to be tougher that the rest, but his clash with Cooper was a true battle, their sibling rivalry fueling them as they enjoyed every block and thrust and moment of reclaiming childhood moments they had both sorely missed.

"You are a worthy opponent," Blaine said with a bow when he'd been declared the winner. "An amazing brother, and a worthy opponent."

"You're not half bad yourself Squirt," Cooper grinned and ruffled Blaine's hair.

Finally the time to fight Franketeen the Giant arrived, but Blaine knew better than to try and fight the monster. Instead, he aimed to trick him into forgetting his sword entirely. "Dear Giant, are you sure you want to fight me? I have defeated all the others. Surely you must know I'll defeat you too," Blaine said as he and Finn circled around each other.

"I must protect His Highness," Finn replied with a grin. He couldn't wait to tell Rachel about this. She was going to be so jealous that she wasn't able to participate.
"Ah yes, but can you protect him on an empty stomach?" Blaine questioned and Finn stopped.

"What do you mean?" Finn asked.

"Well, a giant such as yourself must eat a lot. And it's been a while since you've eaten last, seeing as how you've been watching over His Highness throughout all the battles," Blaine pointed out so seriously that Finn momentarily forgot his role in the game.

"Oh yeah, I guess that's true," Finn said with a nod. "Let me grab a snack real quick."

Blaine held back his grin and Finn walked out the circle, leaving Kurt completely unprotected.

"Finn!" Kurt yelled at him as everyone laughed. "You aren't supposed to leave the fighting circle! You forfeit if you do!"

Realization dawned on Finn but it was too late. Blaine was already by Kurt's side swooping him into his arms."Damn, I can't believe I fell for that," Finn whined though a smile played at his lips.

"Have I won His Highness over?" Blaine asked Kurt lowly.

Kurt blushed and nodded, then fell quickly back into character. "Take a knee." Blaine narrowed his eyes, memories of other days on his knees tingling his nerves, but he did as he was told. Kurt reached a hand out. "My sword," he ordered and Harmony grabbed one and handed him the hilt. Kurt circled Blaine then came around to face him. He placed the sword edge on Blaine's left shoulder and looked down into adoring eyes, his own sparkling with joy. "Your men love you. If I knew nothing else about you that would be enough," Kurt started and Blaine smiled softly at the quote from one of his favorite movies. "But you also tilt when you should withdraw, and that is knightly too." Blaine bowed his head, his heart swelling with love for this boy who knew him better than anyone. "I hereby dub thee Sir Blaine Devon Anderson. You may rise."

Blaine did so and met his eye. "And may I kiss His Highness now?" he asked demurely.

Kurt smiled, but sobered his face in haste. "Yes you may," he nodded regally. Blaine leaned forward but Kurt met him first, capturing his lips in a passionate kiss.

"Nicely played, Anderson," Puck said proudly and everyone cheered until they parted.

"Cake!" Jeff shouted as Cooper walked over with Blaine's birthday cake.

Blaine took one look at it and laughed. "A Harry Potter cake? We should have been fighting with wands then."

"To be fair, I ordered this cake before I knew the theme," Cooper defended. "And a one, two, three!"

Everyone gathered around Blaine to sing Happy Birthday and he could only laugh as his friends sang purposely off key. Gathering Kurt in his arms, kissing him softly on the cheek, he knew he'd have to change his birthday wish this year. All of his previous ones had already come true.

Chapter End Notes

The doctor poem is written by Genie Graveline. The quote is of course from "A
Knight's Tale."
"Are you sure you want to do this?" Blaine asked, holding Kurt's trembling hand. "You don't have to, it's not like I'll hold it against you. I mean, I'm not changing my mind, but just because I have one doesn't mean you have to also."

"No way, I'm in Anderson." Kurt swallowed as they entered the parlor. "I'm terrified, but I'm in. I promised after all and it's Valentine's Day. After everything we've been through I can't stop being brave now."

The first thing Kurt noticed was how clean and professional it was. He took in the artwork covering the walls and he had to admit it was beautiful. He and Blaine had scoured the internet looking for just the right symbols they wanted forever imprinted on their skin and they'd found the ones they wanted, but Kurt looked anyway to see if there was something better. He felt Blaine rub soft circles on his back.

"We found the perfect ones, don't overthink it or second guess yourself. It'll just make you more nervous," Blaine said.

"Easy for you to say," Kurt chuckled anxiously. "You've done this before." He'd seen the gorgeous motorcycle tattoo Blaine had gotten with Puck back when Blaine had first become the official leader of the Crew. Tucked secretly away on his hip so Cooper wouldn't find out he and Puck had forged his signature, Kurt had been delighted to uncover it their first time together. And he'd thought about getting his own since that moment, but now that his moment was here his heart raced uncontrollably. "Just don't let me run away once I'm in the chair okay?"

Blaine pulled Kurt to him, wrapping him safely in his arms and softly kissing away the fear. "I've got you Kurt," he whispered his promise. "No more running away anymore, for either of us."

"Kurt Hummel?" The tattoo artist stepped out into the lobby calling his name and Kurt took a step back from Blaine and looked up.

"Um, that would be me," Kurt stammered a bit as he waved his hand then laughed at his childishness.

"Nice to meet you, my name's Guy." The artist held out his hand and Kurt reached over to shake it. "Great, if you're ready we'll go in the back and you can show me what you want done. Good to see you again Blaine," he said as they walked, patting Blaine on the back. He'd returned many times to support Puck and Santana since that first day. "You up next?"

"You know it!" Blaine grinned.

Clinging to Blaine's hand, Kurt followed the artist. Guy was 30-something, tall with thick black hair framing a handsome face. He wore a blue tank and Kurt could see both arms and the hint of his chest covered in his own tattoos. The work was beautiful. "Did you design those yourself?" Kurt asked, nodding to the man's tattoos.

"Yeah," he answered, his tone friendly and Kurt relaxed a bit. "My cousin did the ink but I designed them on my own." He led Kurt to a curtained off area with a single table that could be hitched up as a chair or laid flat. Guy motioned for Kurt to take a seat on it while he perched on his own stool and offered Blaine a chair. "So what are we doing for you today?"

Kurt reached into his pocket and pulled out the tattoos that he and Blaine had found online. They'd
looked at hearts, for so many reasons, and they'd searched through probably hundreds, but two
drew their attention as soon as they saw them and they'd known right away that they were right.
"So the colored one is mine, and the black and white is Blaine's," Kurt explained.

Guy looked the tattoos over. Kurt had chosen a small but intricate design of a three dimensional red
heart wrapped in white ribbon where a name or phrase would typically be scripted. "Did you want
anything written in the ribbon?"

Kurt peeked over to Blaine, who bowed his head with a shy smirk, and he smiled softly. "Not
today, as long as it can be added later." They'd talked about it and they'd both agreed. There was no
use tempting fate. No one knew what tomorrow would bring. If one day they wanted their names
permanently etched, they would come back for it in the future. For now, they would just revel in
the love they'd found in one another.

"Sure, that would be an easy add," Guy agreed. He reached over to the table and grabbed the
clipboard with all the documentation of risks and consent. It reminded Kurt of the hospital but he
quickly wiped away the memory. This was totally different. "Alright take a look through these and
sign at the X's when you're ready while I look over Blaine's tat."

Blaine pulled up next to Guy, showing him his choice. It was a black treble clef heart with two
notes shaded in blue and red. It was the perfect reminder of Kurt, the boy who had brought music
back into his heart and inspired some of the most beautiful songs he had ever written in the past
few months. This tattoo though there would be no hiding. He would wear it big and proud on his
upper arm. "This looks fantastic Blaine," Guy approved.

Blaine signed his documents while Kurt removed his shirt and got situated, turning around on the
table so Guy could easily reach his back right shoulder. By the time Guy washed his hands and
disinfecte Kurt's skin, Blaine was standing in front of him, eyes on him the whole time. "You got
this," he soothed, kissing him softly, and brushed a hand lovingly through Kurt's hair.

With the first prick of the needle Kurt winced, tears coming to his eyes as Guy worked on the
outline of his tattoo. He kept his gaze firmly on Blaine though who reminded him to breathe. By
the time he didn't think he could take anymore, the outline was done and being cleaned. "You're
doing great, that was the hard part," Blaine praised him and Kurt offered a brave smile up before
bracing himself for the shading and color. It wasn't as bad though, feeling more like a cat's tongue
scraping over and over at his skin than anything piercing like before. His skin went a little numb,
but it was over far sooner than he would have imagined. Blaine went around and held up a mirror
for Kurt to see before it was covered by the bandage. "It looks amazing, Kurt, and you are
amazing, and I just love you so damn much." Blaine grabbed him carefully around the waist and
pulled him in for a kiss. "I'm so proud of you."

"Thank you," Kurt beamed, proud of himself and feeling a rush of adrenaline that he hadn't
expected. Now that it was done it was almost intoxicating and he was pretty certain he'd be back
again. Which reminded him. "You're turn," he nudged, smacking Blaine lightly on the backside
ward the table with a confident grin.

Blaine took his seat and bared his right arm. He'd been through it all before and the pain didn't
bother him in the slightest, in a way it felt good, like knowing for sure he was alive. This tattoo was
even better that the first, because it was for Kurt but also for Burt and Cooper and himself. It was
for all the people he had learned to love and loved him in return.

"It's beautiful," Kurt breathed when it was all done.

"You're beautiful," Blaine responded and Kurt just shook his head, delirious with happiness at this
They listened to and took written copies of the care instructions, paid and tipped, promising to be back another time. They grabbed hands and walked down the street to where they had reservations for a romantic dinner.

"Happy Valentine's Day, Blaine," Kurt grinned beneath the trellis outside the restaurant.


The minute he saw the letter from NYU in his mailbox, he dropped the rest of the mail on the kitchen table and flew out the door. He hopped his motorcycle and raced to the shop, only letting his thoughts catch up with him once he was on the open road. He slowed, his heart pounding once again in his throat. Last time had been a false alarm. His rejection from Columbia had soured his spirits but Kurt reminded him that the Ivy League college had been a long shot and there were other applications still in the mail. Kurt had tucked his envelope from Parsons, sure to be an acceptance given the size, back into his bag until better news came along for Blaine.

He sped into the shop and removed his helmet before striding into the bay.

"You're late," Kurt scolded with an impish grin but Blaine merely pulled the envelope out of the pocket of his leather jacket and wrapped Kurt in his arms.

"I'm terrified," Blaine whispered his confession.

Kurt instantly sobered and grabbed Blaine's hand. "Come on." Kurt led him to the break room and closed the door behind him. He went to his bag and grabbed his own letter, throwing it on the table. "Okay, Blaine, you first." Kurt wrung his hands nervously. Though the envelope Blaine held was small, it was also thick and Kurt had hope, but he didn't want to get it too high.

Blaine shook his head though. "No, I went first last time. Open yours, maybe it will be good luck for both of us."

Kurt gulped and nodded. "Alright." With a shaky hand, he grabbed the envelope and ripped it open, pulling out the cover letter. Blaine watched with bated breath, heart pounding in his chest, while Kurt read it. "Well?" he asked after a moment.

"I did it," Kurt said just above a whisper. He looked up from his letter, his eyes glistening with tears. "I did it. I got into Parsons!"

Blaine grabbed Kurt's face and kissed him hard. "I knew you would, baby. I'm so proud of you."

Kurt laughed with relief and hugged Blaine tightly. "I can't believe I actually got in."

"Oh please, we knew the minute that letter came that you'd gotten in. Besides, who wouldn't want Kurt Hummel at their school? Pretty soon everyone will be wearing your designs and Parsons wants their name written in bold next to yours."

"You know you're absolutely right," Kurt quipped smugly and exhaled slowly. "Okay, your turn."

Blaine nodded and took a deep breath preparing himself for the possibility of another rejection. He knew Kurt wanted them both to go to New York anyway, no matter what, and Blaine would never say it aloud, but he thought Kurt was being naïve. He had to do something after high school but going to New York with no plan and no direction seemed to be playing right into every belief his
father had about him. No, if he was rejected from all the schools he'd have to seriously talk to Cooper about what to do next.

"Come on Blaine, open it!" Kurt clapped his hands with excitement.

Blaine realized he'd been staring at the envelope, his finger slipped into the side but not moving and he laughed nervously. "Okay, here goes nothing." He ripped open the envelope and pulled out the letter. His eyes went wide with shock. "Dear Mr. Anderson," Blaine read aloud.

"Congratulations! I am pleased to inform you that you have been offered a place in the Department of Music and Performing Professions at the New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development for the Fall 2013 term." He looked up at Kurt, his face a picture of disbelief. "Holy shit. I actually got in," he mumbled.

Kurt laughed as Blaine picked him up and spun him around. "I knew you could do it!"

"Holy shit, holy shit, oh my god!" Blaine shouted excitedly. "I fucking did it! I'm going to college Kurt!" He set Kurt down, grabbed his face and kissed him hard. "We did it! We're going to college!"

Kurt nodded in Blaine's hands with a laugh. "Look out New York City, here we come!"

For a month before final exams, the Crew gathered after school at Kurt's house every day they weren't working at the shop. Though Blaine was the one who insisted they all attend, much to Puck's chagrin, Kurt was very much in charge and he was worse than any of the teachers at Shaker Hills. He watched them like a hawk and made certain they weren't screwing around. Even when Blaine had finally had enough and tried his best to seduce his boyfriend into giving them a break, Kurt stood strong and refused. Puck was certain that Kurt had been a slave driver in another life.

"Alright, let's take a 10 minute break," Kurt said and the crew groaned in exhausted appreciation.

"I need a damn smoke," Quinn grumbled as she threw her books aside and stood up from her seat.

Kurt sent her a cold glare. "What did I say about smoking, Fabray?"

"Oh come on," Quinn griped, grabbing her purse. "One cigarette, Hummel. Just one!"

"No," Kurt ordered as he held his hand out for the purse.

Quinn tried to hold on but Kurt's face grew even sterner than Quinn thought possible and she finally smacked it down into his hands. "Why! Why must he torture me?!"

Jeff shook his head in amusement. He had absolutely no problem with Kurt's no smoking rule. "Come on, babydoll," he cooed, beckoning her over to him. "I'll give you a shoulder rub to relax you."

Quinn rolled her eyes though a smirk played at her lips. "Don't act like you're upset that I'm not smoking," she said as she reached for his hand and kissed him softly.

Jeff chuckled. "I don't know what you mean," he replied with innocence and led her to the living room.

"You know, I think I might actually ace this Chemistry exam," Santana said with a proud grin as she stood to stretch.
Brittany stood with her and pecked her cheek. "I'm sure you will. Come on, get a drink with me?" Santana nodded and Britt took her hand and led her into the kitchen.

Kurt smiled proudly after them before turning his head to Blaine and Puck, both of whom had their heads resting on their arms. "You two doing ok over there?" he asked teasingly, walking over to Blaine and gently rubbing the back of his neck.

"I hate you, Hummel," Puck mumbled into his arms. "I hate you with a fucking passion."

"Language, Puckerman," Burt reprimanded as he walked through the dining room and towards the kitchen.

"But he's killing me, Mr. H.!!" Puck snapped his head up to look at Burt who was smirking at him. "He's purposefully torturing me! I haven't studied this hard in like…ever!"

Burt's face turned serious. "Do you want to graduate or do you want to stay at Shaker Hills for the rest of your life?"

"But…but…ugh!" Puck stood up from his seat and stormed out.

"No smoking, Puckerman!" Kurt called out after him.

"Screw you, Hummel!" Puck shouted back before slamming the door behind him. Burt snorted with amusement and walked off.

Kurt shook his head and sat down next to Blaine. "Are you alright?"

Blaine turned his head to the side and peeked up at him. "Have I mentioned how much I hate Math? Cause I really freaking hate Math," he whined.

Kurt pouted and leaned forward, kissing Blaine softly. "I know you do, baby. But just think of the smug grin you can give your teacher when you ace the test."

Blaine leaned his head on his hand and gave Kurt a look that sent a shiver down his spine. "The only thing I'm thinking about is the reward you promised me."

"Isn't graduating reward enough?" Kurt asked, his tone low and seductive.

Blaine shook his head slowly, a sultry look in his eyes. "Call me selfish but I want all my rewards."

"Well then you better ace your exams," Kurt whispered before capturing Blaine's lips in a heated kiss.

Nick and Harmony glanced at each other with raised brows. "I think they forgot we were here," she said with a small giggle.

Nick laughed lightly. "Don't they always?"

Burt walked back in with a bottle of water and huffed when he saw Kurt and Blaine practically making out. "Come up for air, boys," he told them as he walked past.

Blaine and Kurt pulled apart, both flushed and wanting for more. "Sorry, sir," Blaine apologized though Burt knew by the look on his face that he wasn't at all. "I'm gonna go get Puckerman, make sure he didn't make a run for it."

"Don't you dare bum a cigarette from him, Anderson, I will know," Kurt warned.
"I wouldn't dream of it," Blaine winked, kissing Kurt once more before jogging out the door.

Kurt let his eyes linger on Blaine's ass, his lip caught in-between his teeth. "Hate to see him leave but love to watch him walk away, right Hummel?" Santana purred from the doorway where she and Britt had suddenly reappeared.

Kurt rolled his eyes and chuckled. "Always, Satan. Always."

Blaine found Puck leaning against the garage door with a cigarette to his lips. "You know Kurt's gonna throw a fit, right?" he asked teasingly, leaning on the hood of the car across from Puck.

Puck scoffed and took a slow, deep drag. "I don't give a shit. He can suck it for all I care. Pack's over there if you want one."

Blaine chuckled and shook his head. "If I come back smelling like cigarettes he will never 'suck it' again, and that is something I refuse to give up."

"You are so whipped." Puck rolled his eyes though a smirk played at his lips. "Whatever. I don't even know what the hell I'm doing here. It's not like I'm going to pass any of my classes anyway," he grumbled.

"Oh come on, have a little faith, Puck," Blaine encouraged.

"Faith ain't gonna do shit for me man. I have to ace every single exam just to be able to pass my classes with a D. Ain't no way I'm gonna pull that off." Puck took his final drag and dropped the butt on the ground, stomping the ember out with his foot.

Blaine sighed as he walked over to Puck and picked the cigarette up off the ground, dropping it in the trash. Puck rolled his eyes again for good measure and Blaine grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him a little. "Do you want to stay at Shaker Hills forever? Is that your plan? To stay at that fucking High School until they decide to make you the damn janitor? See your little brother graduate before you do?"

"Fuck no," Puck snapped pushing Blaine away.

"Then quit bitching and do something about it, Puckerman," Blaine replied seriously. "We spent four years screwing around and now we have to deal with the consequences. You think you're the only one who's worried about passing? Most of us are. The only difference is that we're doing our best to make sure we get our shit done."

"Oh please, you all fuck around and still get A's and B's. But I'm not smart like the rest of you," Puck argued, looking away from Blaine.

"That's bullshit and you know it. Come on, bro. I don't want to graduate without you," Blaine said softly. "Have more faith in yourself. You got this."

Puck sighed and looked back at Blaine. "You really think so?"

"Hell yeah," Blaine assured him with a punch to his Puck's arm. "You just gotta get out of your head. And listen to Kurt. He knows what he's doing."

"It always comes down to Kurt, doesn't it," Puck grumbled and sighed. "Alright, fine. Fuck, I better graduate man. I can't be at Shaker without you."
Blaine patted Puck on the back and headed back inside. "That's what I'm saying man. Let's get this shit done."

Kurt collapsed on the couch in a huff after the last of the Crew had gone home. "Oh thank goodness, your friends are exhausting," he sighed.

Blaine chuckled and slipped in next to him, wrapping Kurt up in his arms. "Come on now, they're your friends too." He rested his head on Kurt's chest and closed his eyes.

Kurt smiled softly. "Yeah, I suppose they are." He traced his fingers in Blaine's hair, twirling a curl absentmindedly. "How did that even happen?"

"It happened because you loved me," Blaine said.

"That's all it took?" Kurt asked with quiet amusement.

"That's all it took."

They sat in silence, the quiet hum of the house surrounding them. Burt and Carole had gone to bed. Blaine listened to Kurt's heart beat beneath his ear. He brushed his thumb over Kurt's chest softly sinking in to his warmth. There was no place else that felt like Kurt, no one else that had ever offered him the quiet comfort that just settled every nerve in his body and freed his mind of all the pain of his past. So much had changed since Kurt came into his life. He had things now, people in his life that he never as a child had even allowed himself to dream.

Kurt pressed a kiss to Blaine's head, and squeezed him close. It was rare that Blaine was this quiet. "Penny for your thoughts?" he asked.

Blaine looked up roguishly, resting his chin on Kurt's chest. "My thoughts are worth far more than a penny."

Ah, there was the Blaine that Kurt knew and loved. "Kiss for your thoughts then?" he grinned.

"Now that's better," Blaine smiled in agreement and Kurt leaned down and captured his lips in a tender kiss. Blaine tried to pull him in for more but Kurt recognized Blaine's all too familiar diversion tactics and pulled away, looking down at him expectantly. Blaine sighed and laid his head back down, hugging him close once again. "I was just thinking how it wasn't always like that; that someone loving me would have mattered to anyone. I didn't have friends like that back in Westerville. My parents wouldn't have cared less that you loved me. That wasn't the kind of love I grew up with. It wasn't until I found you that I learned that love could be that powerful."

"I didn't teach you that," Kurt told him and Blaine looked up, brow furrowed. "Cooper and the Crew did. I just took advantage of what you had learned from then."

"Then what did I learn from you?" Blaine asked.

Kurt eyed him mischievously. "You know very well what you learned from me." Blaine shuddered under Kurt's darkened gaze and the playful fingers that slid down to squeeze his backside. But he held firm, not giving in to the quickening of his heart or the swelling in his jeans. Kurt realized turnabout was fair play and sighed. "I guess you learned how to trust from me. How to break down the walls of your heart and truly let in the people who love you. But you taught me the same thing."

"You did, I didn't just show up that day you were smoking in the boys' room," Kurt reminded him. Blaine's mind suddenly flashed back to every time he'd walked right by Kurt in school with nothing but a roll of the eyes or a sideways smirk and he regretted every missed moment. Kurt though understood. "You just weren't ready for me yet."

"Well I'm ready now," Blaine said. "I'm not sure what I would do without you."

"You'd be doing community service at the hospital, dressed in far less stylish clothing and you'd be horny all the time," Kurt smirked.

Blaine's bright golden eyes crinkled with laughter as he looked up at Kurt. "Well then it's a really good thing that you came into my life."

"Yes," Kurt punctuated with a kiss. "Yes it is."

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I've heard it said,
That people come into our lives for a reason
Bringing something we must learn.
And we are led to those
Who help us most to grow if we let them.
And we help them in return.

Kurt drummed his fingers on his laptop, spinning his cursor in circles while he tried to decide. Should he or shouldn't he? He'd been thinking about it for three months now, ever since he and Harmony and Nick had started practicing *For Good* with the choir for graduation. He'd put it off, knowing that Blaine wouldn't understand, but every time they sang the thoughts came back to him, and he'd realized tonight that the curiosity would never stop until he knew for sure if he was okay. Because despite everything that had happened between them, Dave had once upon a time been Kurt's best friend, and he couldn't leave Ohio and his high school years behind him without knowing what had become of him.

Between his father and the shop and studying for finals, Kurt had barely checked into Facebook for the past few months. He clicked on Dave's page and glanced over it quickly. His profile picture had changed but that was only the start. Dave had moved to San Francisco and was in a relationship with a boy named Zack who was clearly the boy with Dave in his picture. Kurt couldn't help but smile. Dave was out of the closet and an initial surge of unbidden pride went through Kurt before the questions started. Why had they moved? How long had he been out? And why had someone else been good enough to come out for when he had not been?

Kurt shook that last thought from his mind. It didn't matter, he had Blaine now and whatever was in the past was in the past. Still, he couldn't keep his curiosity in check enough to simply click away. Instead he looked through Dave's recent posts to find out how his new life was treating him. It didn't take too long for him to learn that Dave was doing really well in California and it made any residual guilt or anger in his heart lessen. It was good to see that Dave was okay, maybe even a relief to know that he could put that bit of his past behind him, and he found himself hoping that Dave's struggle since Kurt had left him hadn't been too hard. Then a post caught his attention and his breath.

Had a long talk with Zack about guilt today and I'm happy to say that it really helped me move on. I've done things I'm not proud of, things I regret, things I'm angry at myself for. But I can't let it eat away at me. It's not healthy for my soul to hold onto a grudge and it's not healthy for me to stay angry at the mistakes I've made. So I've decided I'm not going to be angry. I'm not going to hold on
to the past. I can't. I can only learn from my mistakes and move forward. I hurt someone close to me and for that I will always be sorry. And maybe one day I'll be able to tell him. But for now I will continue to work on myself with the love and support of my friends and family, and most importantly Zack, the angel I needed in my darkest hour.

Kurt read Dave's words over and over again. Amazement and pride once again filled him, this time to stay. He was amazed by how much Dave had grown and was proud that his old best friend was finally being true to himself. Maybe he hadn't been the right one. Maybe he'd only been in Dave's life to help him learn enough to allow Zack to help him grow. It made him sad to know that, to have missed so much and for things to have ended so badly. But then he realized that while the relationship had led Dave to Zack it had also led Kurt to Blaine. He couldn't have any regrets because Blaine was worth everything that had happened and more.

He considered messaging Dave but decided against it. The time wasn't right, but he hoped that some day they could talk again so they could make their own peace with one another. As he went back to his own Facebook Home, another name caught his eye and Kurt realized he had his own amends to make beyond Dave. If he could forgive the boy that had hurt him the most, he most certainly could let go of one other needless grudge before he graduated. It was time.

The next morning he met Blaine in the parking lot with a kiss good morning. "Looking good beautiful," Blaine said, raking his eyes over his gorgeous boyfriend as he did every morning.

"It's all for you," Kurt promised, slipping his hand in Blaine's. They walked up to the school and stopped at Blaine's locker before Kurt's eyes drifted down the hall.

Blaine watched him. "You sure you want to do this?"

Kurt nodded firmly. "I'm certain. I know you don't agree, but as long as you're okay with it I'm going to do it."

"I respect your decisions even if I don't agree with them," Blaine assured him adding in one more kiss for good measure. "Life's too short I guess, right?"

"Love you," Kurt breathed. Blaine smiled as he watched Kurt head off Chandler's locker. He trusted Kurt, but he'd keep an eye out nonetheless. An invisible eye of course, he thought, as he rounded the corner just out of sight.

Chandler froze in the middle of the hallway the moment he saw Kurt waiting for him. Kurt had to squash the anger he felt at seeing him and it reminded him why he was there.

"Hi," Chandler said meekly, unsure how Kurt was going to treat him. "W-what's u-up?" he stammered.

Kurt took a deep breath and leaned off the locker. "I need to say something and you need to listen with no interruptions, okay?" Chandler gulped and nodded. "I hate what you did. You used me and you hurt me and you refused to accept the fact that we would never be together. You were my friend and you betrayed me."

"Kurt, I-"

Kurt held his hand up and Chandler stopped. "After what you did, I don't think we can ever be friends again. But I've decided to forgive you," he said his tone softening. "It's not good for me to hold onto this anger anymore and continue hating you. We're about to graduate and I don't want to look back with regrets and I don't want there to be bad blood between us. I need to let this go, for
"I really am sorry, Kurt." Though Chandler spoke only just above a whisper he meant it every word. "I never meant for things to get so out of control and I've missed you so much."

"I know you didn't. But they did and you did a lot of damage, not least of which was to our friendship. I just wanted you to know that I don't hate you. And who knows, maybe one day, after we both grow up a bit, we could try and start again. But for right now, I'm just done being your enemy." Chandler's eyes filled with tears but he nodded in acceptance. "I'll see you around. Good luck on your exams this week." Kurt started to walk away but stopped when Chandler called out to him.

"I'm glad you're happy. With Blaine I mean," he said quietly. "I didn't think he'd be good for you but I guess he is and I'm…I'm happy for you."

Kurt offered a tight smile. "Thanks. I hope you find someone that loves you, Chandler. Everyone deserves that." Chandler smiled appreciatively and nodded. He hoped to find someone someday too.

The hotel room was nothing special. The lies to Burt and Cooper had been nothing great and Kurt and Blaine were certain that the men had seen through them anyway. They knew there was no chance that they'd get permission to rent a room after a prom. And Burt and Cooper knew there was no chance they could stop the boys from doing exactly that.

They'd deal with the consequences tomorrow. Tonight was just for them.

They watched one another, sheepishly from across the room, standing on their sides of the bed. Without a sound they slowly removed their jackets and ties and unbuttoned their shirts just half way down. "You're acting like this is our first time Kurt," Blaine teased, though he was doing the same.

"Well it may not be our first time making love but it is our first time literally sleeping together," Kurt shrugged self-consciously. "What if I do something stupid like talk in my sleep or sleepwalk or molest you unknowingly…"

"I give you permission right now to molest me unknowingly." Blaine got up on the bed and crawled across it to Kurt, pulling him in for a hug. "Or knowingly," he said with a kiss. "Or any which way you want, doesn't matter to me," he grinned.

"I vaguely remember Dad and Cooper telling us to be good right after they snapped a million pictures of us at your house," Kurt argued with a smirk.

"I will be very, very good." Blaine undid the remaining buttons on Kurt's shirt. "I promise," he whispered hotly in Kurt's ear.

Kurt shivered, his arousal suddenly grew and he went to work on Blaine's buttons. All hesitation gone, Blaine attacked Kurt's neck, suckling sure to be noticed hickeys into whatever skin he could reach. "Pants, Blaine, I need your pants off," Kurt hissed as he pushed Blaine back on the bed and straddled him.

"They're all yours." Blaine leaned up on his elbows to watch his gorgeous boyfriend undo his tuxedo pants. He lifted his hips so Kurt could slide them off. His already hard cock sprung up to his belly and Kurt smiled.
"Is that all mine too?" he asked, eyes twinkling.

"Fuck yes," Blaine nearly growled. Kurt immediately lowered his lips to Blaine's thigh, teasing him with rough kisses and soft nips and kitten-like licks of the tongue. Blaine closed his eyes, arching his back into Kurt's touch, begging for more, but knowing it was no use. Kurt enjoyed taking his time. "My god, Kurt you're trying to kill me slowly aren't you?"

"As slow as possible," Kurt taunted and looked up at him with lust blown eyes. "Tell me what you want."

"Fuck Kurt, I want my cock in your mouth."

Kurt smiled and complied, brushing his thumb along Blaine's balls and licking up the underside before twirling his tongue around the head and sinking down around him. Blaine cried out with pleasure, thrusting hard but Kurt placed a gentle hand on Blaine's thigh to settle him. "Sorry," Blaine whispered. Kurt hummed around him, accepting his apology and sending another surge of pure bliss through Blaine. "God, Kurt, I wanna fuck you, please let me fuck you," Blaine staggered breathlessly.

Kurt swallowed around Blaine once, Blaine's begging going straight to his own cock. He slid off him and quickly rid himself of his trousers, climbing back on top of Blaine. Kurt kissed him desperately, his fingers flying to dark curls he could grip and pull. Each pull went straight to Blaine's cock and he thrust their hips together sending jolts of electricity through them both. "God I need you. Where's the stuff?" Kurt asked between kisses.

"In the bag by the door," Blaine grunted.

Kurt stopped and sat up. He looked over to the bag then stared back down at Blaine. "Well that was terribly poor planning," he frowned.


Kurt sighed and scurried off to the overnight bag, grabbing the condoms and lube. Blaine in the meantime pulled down the bedspread and comforter and wiggled into the sheets to make himself comfortable.

"You are such a puppy," Kurt chuckled before straddling him once again and tracing the hairs on Blaine's chest down to the beautiful trail and then further. He wrapped his fingers around Blaine and began pumping him up and down at an infuriatingly slow pace. "You know when we were dancing at Prom tonight all I wanted to do was take you away from everyone so I could have you all for myself."

"You should have," Blaine said, swallowing thickly. His cock was already hard and aching. The light was hitting Kurt from behind, making him glow like the angel that he was and Blaine needed him now. "The Crew would have survived without us."

But Kurt frowned and shook his head, softly caressing Blaine's side with his free hand. He kept on his poker face when Blaine shivered beneath him. He loved the feel of goosebumps on Blaine's skin. "Brittany would have been sad if she couldn't dance with her unicorns," Kurt chattered. "Quinn and Jeff might have had sex on the dance floor and Nick and Harmony may have actually taken over the stage for the evening instead of just threatening."

"Would that have been such a bad thing?" Kurt twisted his wrist and watched Blaine muffle a
scream. Blaine took a deep breath and road out the wave in his belly before smirking at Kurt like nothing had happened. "The band was terrible."

Kurt smiled and took his hand from Blaine, leaning back nonchalantly. "Well, somebody needed to keep Santana from killing Puck and Puck from stealing every girl away from her date or he would have been expelled quicker than you could count to-"

"Kurt?" Blaine interrupted with a roll of his hips hitting his boyfriend just right.

This time it was Kurt's turn to catch his breath. "What?" he squeaked.

Blaine gazed at him with a fire burning in his eyes that even Kurt couldn't ignore. "Shut up and let me fuck you already."

Kurt bit his lip and reached a hand out for the lube. "I think that can be arranged."

"Blaine come on! If we don't meet Kurt in time you know he's gonna kill both of us!" Cooper yelled up the stairs. "We don't want to die on your graduation day, hurry up!"

"If this even really is my graduation day," Blaine muttered under his breath trudging heavily down the stairs.

"Well look at you, Squirt!" Cooper grinned at Blaine, looking fabulous in his charcoal gray suit, his blue graduation gown draped on his shoulders unzipped. Cooper grabbed him and pulled him into a celebratory hug. "Now what's this attitude all about?"

Blaine sighed. "I just keep worrying that my diploma won't be in the pile, or that Dad will show up and make a scene or that stupid beach balls being thrown by everyone will accidentally brush my fingertips and I'll be thrown out by the Principal who doesn't want me to graduate in the first place."

Cooper rested his hands on Blaine's shoulders and smiled, forcing their eyes to meet. "Relax Blaine. Your diploma will be there, I won't let Dad mess anything up if he even comes, which I highly doubt, and for goodness sake sit on your hands if you have to but don't touch the beach balls." Blaine let out a small chuckle at that and Cooper felt his shoulders relax just a touch beneath his hands. Cooper took it. He knew it was the best he would get until the day was over and done. "Okay now, are you ready?"

Blaine took a deep breath. "Yeah."

"Good. Grab your cap and your tassel. Last thing you want to do is forget those," Cooper instructed. Blaine went to the table and grabbed his things, finding an envelope hidden beneath them.

"What's this?" he turned suspiciously to his brother, who just shrugged innocently.

"Open it," Cooper said.

Blaine did as he was told and a check fell out of a graduation card from his brother. "Cooper, you didn't have to, you've done more than enough for me already," Blaine protested. "I wouldn't be graduating at all if it weren't for you."

"You remember at the beginning of the year? When you first got suspended and I told you that until you started respecting yourself and knowing how amazing you were that you weren't going to
stop screwing up?" Cooper said.

Blaine huffed and smirked. He remembered that day like it was yesterday. It had been the start of everything. The first day of the rest of his life. "Yeah, I remember."

"That's what this is for," Cooper said nodding to the check in Blaine's hand. "I didn't do anything Blaine that every good parent in the world doesn't do. I loved you, and hoped, and gave you a safe place to fall. You did the rest. In the last few months you brought yourself from jail to NYU and for that I wish I could give you a million dollars, but that check will just have to be enough."

Blaine pinched his nose against the tears that escaped and crashed into Cooper's arms. "It's more than enough," Blaine choked.

Cooper squeezed him tight then patted him on the back. "Good. Enough of that," he said pulling away, wiping away some of his own tears. "Get in the damn car before Kurt starts calling us both."

"I much prefer you unzipping me to zipping me," Blaine smirked with a wag of his eyebrows.

Kurt shook his head at him. "Shut up," he admonished before kissing him square on the lips. "They aren't going to let you walk unless your gown is zipped.

"What if my fly is unzipped underneath my gown," Blaine whispered gruffly pulling Kurt close.

"I am not even going to dignify that with a remark," Kurt said and pushed him away. Blaine pouted but was suddenly grabbed from behind by an overly exuberant Puck.

"Dude, can you fucking believe we are graduating?" Puck yelled.

"Keep up the language dumbass and they'll take your diploma back," Santana warned him, smacking him sharply on the head.

"Ow, woman, keep your damn hands to yourself," Puck snapped back, rubbing his head.

"Man, you guys are in rare form today," Kurt huffed. He grabbed Blaine back and straightened his tie one more time.

"It's their nerves," Brittany explained, holding Santana close. "It brings out the worst in all of them."

"Good to know it's not just Blaine then," Kurt smiled smartly and Blaine elbowed him playfully.

"Alright seniors, take your spots please, just like in rehearsal," the assistant principal shouted. "A-M to the right, N-Z to the left. That means opposite sides of the building Anderson and Puckerman, thank heavens." Puck rolled his eyes and went to meet Jeff on the other side.

"Kurt," Harmony came running with Nick just before he headed back to his place in line. "Mrs. Jenkins says to walk in with the rest but to go straight to the bleachers instead of sitting down. We're performing right after the senior class president opening."

"Thanks Harm," Kurt said and turned back to Blaine. "Love you," he said, kissing him quickly on the cheek before leaving him at the front of the line and heading toward the middle.

The music of Pomp and Circumstance started and instantly Blaine's heart started pounding again. He knew Cooper and maybe his mother were out there for him. Burt, Carole, and Finn were also cheering him on. But there were others who had little faith he'd ever reach this day, and maybe had
hoped that he never would. The Principal, the teachers, those he had tormented and been tormented by in return, he worried they would be angered by his accomplishment. And then there was his father.

As he marched, close to leading the pack of seniors at Shaker Hills High School, he scanned the audience. His mother had said she was going to try and have him come. Blaine was torn between wanting him there to prove him wrong and being terrified that he'd ruin the day. Everything was such a blur though and it was hard to find anyone in the humungous crowd of well wishers. He'd have to wait until after.

Kurt couldn't stop grinning as he marched, thrilled that he'd survived high school when at some points he wasn't even sure he would survive to the next day. When he arrived at the front row he crossed in front of the stage to the bleachers, reaching a hand out for Blaine as he passed by. It was a quick touch, but it was reassuring. He stood in the front of the choir next to Harmony, Nick right behind them with his gold Salutatorian sash that had surprised them all. And when they sang *For Good*, though his eyes were on Harmony for the solos, his heart was with Blaine and every other member of the Crew in the audience smiling up at him.

They sat through the speeches by the Principal and the School Board and the mayor of Shaker Hills, clapping wearily but appropriately between each one. Then Nick took the podium to rousing applause if from no one else than at least from every member of Anderson's Crew. Nick shook his head and chuckled, his face and his shoulders visibly relaxing. The quietest member of the Crew, the one who felt the most often like he belonged the least, his friends were there for him on his day to shine.

"Good morning." Nick shuffled his paper only slightly before gripping the edges of the podium. The speech was very personal and he'd had Blaine read it over the day before just to make sure he and the rest of the Crew would be okay with it. He checked in one more time with Blaine who nodded to him and sent him confidence. It seemed to help and Nick continued. "When you go to school your parents tell you how much you're going to learn about reading and writing, math and science, history and humanities. They stress the numbers, the letters, the analysis and composition. But they don't tell you about the most important subject you learn in High School. Friendship."

Nick's eyes drifted over the graduates, taking them each in. Some of these kids he had grown up with since kindergarten, others had come into his life later. Some had bullied him. Some had protected him. Many he had little to no relationship with but as a member of Anderson's Crew they all knew him, and he wanted them to know what he had learned.

"Friendship is that tricky sometimes elusive thing that is the hardest to navigate throughout your childhood, and nowhere is it harder than in High School. Sure they say the middle school years are the worst, and maybe they are. But High School is the most important because High School friendships truly *matter*. Those are the people who change you for good. Sometimes for the better. But always for good."

The crowd was quiet, attentive, every eye was on him. But there were only eight pairs of eyes that mattered to him now.

"I have been blessed, in my life, to have the best friends in the world. All of you know them. Some of you fear them, some of you hate them, some of you long to be like them. But I'm here today to give away the secret we've held on to so tightly for the past four years. And that secret is, we're absolutely no different from any of you. We are bookworms, and artists, and athletes, and musicians, and theater geeks. We love and we lose. We laugh and we cry. We hurt when someone hurts us or the ones we love. We have hopes and dreams and we're scared that those things aren't
going to happen for us. We are the same as every single one of you. Some of us met in kindergarten. He sought out Puck and Santana and smiled down on them as he shared their story. "I remember when this little boy with a Mohawk and his hot tempered best girl ran down some 5th grader who had stolen my pencil." Next he found Brittany and Quinn who grinned proudly back at him. "Some of us met later when my 4th grade English teacher paired me with two highfalutin blonde BFFs who had teased me mercilessly since first grade. But when they decided to try to humiliate me by turning our project into a music video, they suddenly determined we could be best friends when I proved I could keep up with their dance moves. One of you I found alone in the library on his first day of school after transferring and…" His grin fell with his eyes as he looked down at Blaine in the front row fondly. "Well, you know the rest of that story. And then freshman year entered the guy who will someday be the best man at my wedding." He smiled at Jeff, who threw up a fist in reply.

"My point is, whether you head off to college or the work force or the military, you'll meet people at every stage. And they may seem different from you. You may fear them, or hate them, or look up to them, at first. They may seem so completely different from you that your first instinct is to shut them out. Don't. Because Moby Dick or algebra, or the period table or the Korean War may never be something that's important in your life again. But the people who touch your life and your heart, they are important forever." His gaze fell to two final people, Kurt and Harmony, sitting nearly side by side. "The most important thing I learned here at Shaker Hills was taught to me by two very special people I only got to know this year but who will be in my heart forever. Stay open to everyone you meet, accept them for who they are, and don't worry about what anyone else will think. Because the best friendships in your life just might be the ones that nobody else understands. Thank you."

As they began calling the graduates to receive their diplomas, the beach balls started bouncing and the bubbles started blowing. Blaine stood with his row and filed onto the stage his nerves buzzing just praying that his diploma would be there and this hadn't all been one big mistake. He stepped closer and closer, catching Cooper and Burt's encouraging eye. Neither his mother nor his father was with them and Blaine couldn't search the room because suddenly his name was being called.

"Blaine Devon Anderson."

He stepped to the podium shakily, looking squarely at Principal Williams, trying to keep any smugness he felt to himself. "Do what you need to do for the rest of the school year and graduate. That will be your best revenge," Cooper had told him the day he'd returned from his suspension and every moment he had spent in school since that day he had done exactly that. Now he stood before the man who had never believed in him, and who hadn't wanted him back after Cuyahoga. Blaine's diploma was in his hand.

He could still withhold it, Blaine thought.

Mr. Williams held the diploma out with his left hand, and held his right hand out for Blaine. Shake and take, they had all practiced at the rehearsal. But when he reached out for Mr. Williams's hand, the Principal gripped it firmly and pulled him in. "Congratulations, Mr. Anderson. I would have bet against you, but you and Puckerman both proved me wrong." He let Blaine go and held out the diploma for him. In a bit of a daze Blaine took it, hearing the cheers of his family and friends in the audience, and he walked back to his seat.

Kurt had no idea how much someone else could come to matter to him in his life, but the pride that swelled in his heart as he watched Blaine in his cap and gown take the diploma from Mr. William's hand was nearly overwhelming. He let out a breath he didn't even know he'd been holding and had
to anchor himself to the chair to stop from jumping out and hugging him. Receiving his own diploma didn't even match his excitement. When he stepped off the stage he couldn't help but run to Blaine in the front row and Blaine picked him up and twirled him around.

"Congratulations, Blaine," Kurt whispered, knowing already they were causing more of a scene than they should. "You are officially a high school graduate."

It was a big muddle of graduates and parents everywhere after the ceremony and Kurt and Blaine stuck together hand-in-hand so as not to lose each other as much as not wanting to let go. Once they finally reached Cooper and the Hudmel family they were bombarded with congratulations and hugs and Cooper refused to let go of his little brother.

"I've never been prouder of anyone or anything in my life, Blaine," Cooper told him. "Even graduating from medical school didn't matter this much."

"Don't set the bar so low Cooper, it's only high school," a harsh voice said from behind.

Blaine pulled away slowly, resting on his heels, but Cooper kept a strong arm around him. Kurt slipped his hand into Blaine's. "Father," Blaine said cautiously. His eyes shifted to his Mom, who smiled thinly, then returned to his father.

"Your mother thought it would be good for me to come," Mr. Anderson said. He was dressed in a suit and tie, his jacket draped over his arm. His eyes were permanently harsh, but there was a look on his face that Blaine had never seen before. He didn't know how to define it. "She said there are moments in life that you don't miss, no matter what. That when you're old you'll regret not going even if you can't see it now."

Blaine's brow creased and he pursed his lips together. "Thank you?" He didn't understand if he was supposed to be grateful for that or offended. As it was he was halfway between laughing and crying.

"A High School diploma's important, but it's not going to get you far on its own. If you can't keep it together at NYU you'll find yourself right back here, or even worse, in jail," he lectured.

Blaine shuffled his feet, not at all sure what to say, but Cooper saved him. "Blaine's gonna do amazing things in his life. And whether you sit there and judge him or get out of his way I'm glad you came Dad. Mom's right, it's important that you see what Blaine can accomplish when he's surrounded by people who love him. Maybe one day you can be one of those people," Cooper said. "In fact, I hope you are one of those people one day. But for now we're all going to go out and celebrate and I suggest that you go home."

Before things could get any more heated, Blaine's mom stepped in and hugged him, whispering "Congratulations," in his ear. Blaine whispered back that he loved her and then she took her husband's arm and led him away.

"Dad," Blaine called, not sure if he'd ever see his father again. Mr. Anderson turned around. "Thank you for coming. It means a lot."

"Congratulations Blaine," he said curtly before turning back around and leaving.

Everyone was silent for a minute trying to process what had just happened. "Well that was interesting," Kurt quipped and the nervous tension died in laughter.

"Certainly could have been worse," Blaine agreed.
Cooper ruffled Blaine's hair before he could duck away. "Go find your friends boys, it's time to head out to the restaurant. We have a party room booked and they won't look too kindly on us being late."

They had the upstairs of the restaurant to themselves, a small function hall that Cooper and some of the other parents had gone in on for the Crew to have one last goodbye before everyone started going their separate ways. Sure there was summer, but Nick and Harmony were already packed for different summer stock jobs and would be leaving in only a few days. Puck was heading out to California in a week's time as well with no real reason to hang around Ohio any more. Some of the rest had summer jobs; Kurt and Blaine at the shop, Santana at a local vintage clothing store. Brittany was volunteering at the hospital as a candy striper and Jeff was going to Europe with the family. Quinn though was floundering.

The parents gathered downstairs after things got too crazy for them to be able to hear over the Crew's shouting. Cooper and Burt left instructions not to destroy anything or give the staff a hard time and headed down with the rest.

"When Blaine first came to live with me I sometimes counted the days until I'd 'get my life back,'" Cooper confessed. "Now I don't want him to go."

Burt just laughed in solidarity and slapped him on the back. "Join the club, Kid. Just think, someday maybe you'll get to do it all over again with your own kid." He picked up a menu and looked through.

Cooper ordered a glass of chardonnay and turned to Burt. "You gonna be alright without Kurt around?" he asked quietly. He wasn't sure if Burt had talked anything through with Carole yet. "What are your plans for the shop?"

Burt shrugged. "I'll get to hiring and training this summer. If I can get the staff we need we'll keep things going as is. If not, I'll look at cutting back on the repairs. Gas station will stay open though."

Cooper frowned. The hospital staff loved him and the work that he did. "You'll be missed if you close up shop. Doctors won't know where to take their cars anymore."

Burt looked at him out of the corner of his eye and smirked. "Well I'll have to just stay in business then, won't I?"

Cooper smiled and nodded, once again marveling at Burt's strength and determination. "Yes, I think you will."

"Everybody shut up!" Puck shouted, clinking his glass as he stood on top of the chair. The crew's boisterous laughter died down and they turned their attention to Puck. "Now I know that it's gonna be hard not seeing my sexy ass everyday but you bitches need to calm down. The Puckasaurus can't be having his peeps crying for him."

"Sit yo ass down, Puckerman," Santana said, tossing a piece of bread at him. "Ain't nobody crying for you."

"I'd cry a little bit," Brittany leaned over and whispered just to her.

Puck scoffed and stepped off the chair. "You say that now but wait till I'm gone. You're gonna be all like, 'Oh no! Puck's gone and I never sucked his cock! How will I go on?!'" he mock cried, falling into a fit of laughter when Santana flipped him off.
"The only person crying is going to be you when you're all by your lonesome in California," Quinn teased with a smirk.

Puck scoffed. "As if. I'm gonna have all kinds of sexy ladies trying to get up on moi." He gestured smugly to himself. "During the day, I'm gonna be all up in the pool cleaning business and in the lonely housewife business, and then at night I'm gonna be writing my screenplay."

Kurt rolled his eyes and popped a sweet potato fry in his mouth. "And what exactly is this screenplay about?" he asked and not for the first time.

"Don't worry about it, Hummel," Puck snapped. "You'll see it when it's done."

Kurt scoffed then turned his attention to Quinn. "So what about you? I know you were still talking to your parents about everything, but I kinda need to know," he said somewhat apologetically. "Have you decided what you're going to do yet?"

Quinn nodded and avoided Jeff's sad gaze. She'd told him last night but he still refused to believe it. He'd been trying to change her mind all day. "I'm going to defer my acceptance and crash with you in New York. I'm just not ready for college yet."

"Yes, you are," Jeff cut in seriously. "Come on, baby. Just think of how amazing it would be if you were in Boston with me and Nicky. I mean, we'll be at different schools but at least we'll be in the same state. You'll do great in college! I'm sure of it!"

"I don't want to go yet," Quinn huffed, walking away in irritation. She leaned up against the wall, folding her arms in on herself. Jeff knew she wanted space but he couldn't help but follow her. "I just need a year off, ok? And then I'll be up there with you, I promise."

Jeff reached out to take her in his arms. She hesitated for a moment but then fell into them. "I'm just going to miss you so much," he said a little brokenly. "I wish you'd at least consider taking the year off in Boston."

Quinn smiled and brushed his cheek. "I'm going to miss you too. But we'll be ok. Besides, Hummel needs my rent money."

"True Dat!" Kurt yelled, raising a glass to her.

"Did you seriously just say True Dat?" Blaine stared at his boyfriend in disbelief. He sniffed Kurt's drink to make sure Puck hadn't slipped anything in it.

"I still can't believe that you're getting your own apartment while the rest of us are stuck at the dorms," Santana griped. "My roommate best not be a bitch cause Tana don't play."

"We're in the same building, all we have to do is set up your roommate and mine," Blaine plotted. "That way we could sleep in one room and they could have the other."

"Mmmm…Blaintana cuddles all year long," Santana nodded with a smirk. "I like the way you think, Anderson."

"Don't be cuddling my man too much Satan, or I will come after you," Kurt warned her with a glare.

"Oh please, you can have him every weekend at Chateau Hummel while me and my girl get it on in my private room," she said, winking at Brittany.
"I don't know why you're complaining about the dorms," Harmony said. "It's like Nick said in his speech. Meeting new people and being in the dorms is one of the most important parts of the college experience. It's where you meet the best friends you'll have for the rest of your life. If anything I feel bad that Kurt won't experience everything college life has to offer."

Kurt hummed in contemplation. "My own bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, and living room to share with Quinn and Quinn alone unless I invite the rest of you lot over? You're right. I'm truly missing out," he said sarcastically. "Besides, I've already got the only best friend I need," he grinned and reached a hand out for Blaine. He ignored Santana's gagging from across the table.

"I'm sure Julliard's bathrooms are beautiful," Brittany chimed in, trying to make her new dorm mate feel better. "Harmony and I are going to have an amazing time."

Harmony nodded enthusiastically. "That we are." She turned to Nick with a small smile. They had a date planned tomorrow, their last before they went their separate ways. They'd had a wonderful year together, but they were realistic about the chance of a future together and they both were actually really okay with ending things on a positive note. "What about you? Are you excited for what college life has to offer, Harvard man?"

"Yeah baby! Harvard!" Jeff cheered, giving a blushing Nick a high-five that nearly knocked him off his chair.

"No, no, dear Jeffery. It's Hahvad," Blaine said in an awful Bostonian accent. "You must pronounce it correctly or you shan't dare say it all! Have'n't you seen Good Will Hunting?"

Jeff cleared his throat and sat upright. "Hahvad," he repeated just as badly as Blaine.

"Hahvad," the rest of the table joined in before devolving in laughter.

"Shut up," Nick groaned into his hands which made the Crew only laugh harder. "None of you are ever invited to visit me."

"Liar!" Blaine shouted as he threw a napkin at him. A throat cleared at the door and everyone turned to see Finn in the doorway. Blaine smiled and waved him over. "Hey dude, pull up a chair. Ditch the grownups and come join the real party."

Finn shuffled a bit nervously a small smile playing at his lips. "Actually dude I was wondering if you had a minute," he asked, tipping his head toward the door.

Kurt immediately buried his head in his hands. "Oh god, don't you dare give him the take care of my brother in New York or else speech."

Blaine just smiled fondly and gave Kurt a quick peck on the cheek before following Finn out of the room into the hall. "What's up?" he asked.

"I just wanted to say that I'm proud of you," Finn spoke softly and Blaine raised a surprised brow. "I know this year was tough for you and I'm really glad that you made it, ya know. I'm glad that you proved everyone wrong, myself included. You're a good guy, Blaine and people don't give you enough credit."

"Um, thanks, I guess." Blaine lowered his head, a mix of embarrassment and pride bringing color to his face.

"I also wanted to thank you," Finn continued, glancing back into the room. Blaine followed his gaze. Kurt seemed to be in a heated argument with Puck, but threw his head back in a laugh when
Santana smacked Puck across the back of the head. Kurt reached up to soothe Puck's head with a huge grin on his face. "I've never seen Kurt as happy as he is with you and your crew. I feel like we lost him there for a little while and you're the reason he's found his way back." Finn looked back at Blaine and smiled when he saw nothing but love in the way Blaine was staring at Kurt.

"If anyone found anyone, it was Kurt finding me." Blaine looked back at Finn, his eyes turned serious. "I don't know where I would be right now without him."

"I guess you found each other then." Finn reached into his pocket and pulled out a pin. "I uh, I also wanted to give you this. In my fraternity, when a pledge becomes a full-fledged brother their older brother gives them this. But my pledge dropped out and I didn't get to give it to him. So I wanted you to have it instead."

Blaine took the pin tentatively. "Isn't it like against the rules to give this to someone who isn't in your frat?"

"Technically," Finn smirked. "But I doubt my big brother is going to find out and it's not like you have to actually wear it. I just, I don't know, I wanted you to have it because you're kinda like my brother now and maybe someday for real, who knows, and like I said, I'm proud of you."

Blaine smiled, running his thumb over the pin before pocketing it. "Thanks, Finn."

Finn patted his shoulder. "No prob, bro. Now I'm going back downstairs before I miss dessert."

Blaine watched Finn go back downstairs, wondering just how much more the Hudmel family could possibly do for him. He let out a small chuckle then turned to go back inside. He watched them all for a minute. They'd been through so much in the last four years. Grief and love. Tears and laughter. He hadn't brought them together but he had kept them together through all of it. Through the best of times but more importantly through the worst of times. He loved them all more than he ever could have imagined the day Puck and Brittany had accepted him in the park. The day Nick had found him nearly crying in the library. The day Jeff had rallied with them to fight off the jocks attacking him and Puck. The day he walked into a simple auto repair shop and found the finest piece of ass ever to grace coveralls chest deep in the hood of a Mustang.

Kurt looked up and caught Blaine staring, only unlike the first time Kurt's face was all smiles. Blaine smiled back, just for a minute feeling full of gratitude for everything that life had given him so far. He knew it was only the start of amazing things to come.

He strode back into the room and jumped up on his chair near the head of the table. "Alright, everybody shut up for a minute."

"This better not be a, don't cry for me, speech because I already did that and nothing you say is topping it," Puck said and Blaine rolled his eyes.

"No sappy speeches from me," Blaine promised. "I just want you to remember this moment, all of us here together goofing off and teasing one another." He reached a hand down for Kurt and Kurt took it, squeezing hard.

"Because soon, we're all entering the real world and not everybody is as nice as we are. We may be going to different places, we may be separating for a little while, but no matter what we're family. We'll always be family and we'll always have each other's backs. Because family isn't always blood. It's the people in your life who want you in theirs; the ones who accept you for who you are. The ones who would do anything to see you smile, or keep you safe, and who love you no matter what."
"So much for no sappy speeches," Santana teased though her eyes glistened with tears.

Blaine smiled at her as he climbed down off his chair and held up his glass. "I love you guys so much. To Anderson's Crew."

Each and everyone one of them held their drinks up with pride. "To Anderson's Crew!"
May 1, 2016

Kurt sat at his drafting table, his pencils and pastels strewn out in front of him, the black worn down to close to the nub. Their New York apartment was small of course, but this second room, all his own where he could work on his designs in silence, had been a deal breaker. He was so engrossed in his current sketch that he didn't hear the door open or the footsteps cross the room. But Blaine's intent was not to scare him and he came up behind him softly, wrapping his arms around Kurt and sneaking a peak at the secret drawing.

"It looks like a tuxedo for our wedding at the Ritz, not my senior project at NYU," Blaine mused with a smirk.

Kurt put his pencil down. "First of all, your senior presentation will have both faculty and industry people at it, you need to look your best and if someone should just so happen to ask who you're wearing it wouldn't hurt at all to drop my name. And second of all," Kurt said, turning slightly to gaze at Blaine over his shoulder, "I don't remember saying yes to any proposal of marriage or even hearing you propose in the first place, so I have no wedding to design for."

"You're absolutely right," Blaine grinned, grasping Kurt's chin with his left hand and giving him a soft but lengthy kiss.

Kurt lost himself in the taste and feel of Blaine's lips for a moment, but he couldn't allow Blaine to distract him while he still had so much work to do. He pulled away from Blaine with a small reluctant smile and turned back to his rendering.

He froze at the sight of a small velvet blue box sitting atop his sketch and his heart leapt into his throat while every nerve in his body immediately started tingling. "Blaine?" he squeaked, not daring to touch the box for fear it would disappear in his hands that were now shaking. "What the hell is this?"

Kurt turned all the way around in his chair and his hand flew to his mouth at the sight of Blaine in the middle of the floor. "Oh my god, you're kneeling," he mumbled into his hand, tears welling in shock-filled eyes.

"This is certainly not the first time I've knelt for you," Blaine said, full blown mischief glowing in his eyes.

"That was two knees Blaine!" Kurt yelled. "This is one knee, that is completely different!"

Blaine smiled, but said nothing, instead reaching behind him for his guitar. He swung it around, onto his knee, and began to play.

You think I'm pretty, without any makeup on
You think I'm funny
When I tell the punchline wrong
I know you get me,
So I let my walls come down.
Blaine strummed the chords with delicate precision, singing with his heart full of emotion, soft and slow, remembering himself and their journey with every single word.

*Before you met me I was alright*
*But things were kinda heavy*
*You brought me to life,*
*Now every February*
*You'll be my Valentine*
*Valentine*

He remembered back to the child that he was, so scared and confused, afraid to lose everything just for loving Kurt. He remembered learning that he had nothing important to lose, and everything worth living to gain.

*Let's go all the way tonight*
*No regrets, just love*
*We can dance until we die*
*You and I, we'll be young forever*

Blaine regretted nothing. Not the mistakes or the fights. Not the time in jail or the motorcycle accident. He didn't regret singing in the middle of school or the moments that led to the video Puck and Quinn had taken. And he certainly didn't regret the first time or anytime that he and Kurt had made love to one another. He didn't regret finding Kurt and he knew he wouldn't regret living the rest of his life with him.

*You make me*
*Feel like I'm living a*
*Teenage dream*
*The way you turn me on*
*I can't sleep*
*Let's run away and*
*Don't ever look back*
*Don't ever look back*

"I thought we weren't going to run away anymore," Kurt interrupted at Blaine's pause in the lyrics.

Blaine shrugged with a hint of shyness. "I thought if we ran away together it might be okay?" Blaine watched Kurt, who stared at him with shining blue eyes but said nothing. Blaine felt his confidence slowly fading. He put the guitar down behind him and sat back on his heels, biting his lip. "You're very quiet," Blaine said, his voice hopeful for a response.

"I just…I mean…I'm just in shock," Kurt stammered, trying to form words in the middle of his entire world changing. "I mean, you've never brought up marriage yourself, you change the subject
every time I mention it, You can't even say-"

"I guess I just realized that I'm ready," Blaine said. "I want to be the man you think I am, Kurt. And you think I can do this, so I thought, maybe it's time I trust myself to be able to do it too." He held his own shaky hand out for the box and Kurt handed it to him. Blaine turned it and opened it to reveal the most gorgeous platinum diamond solitaire Kurt had ever seen. Blaine's heart filled with hope and longing. "I love you Kurt. Will you marry me?"

"Say the word Blaine," Kurt whispered.

Blaine closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Kurt believed in him. It was time for him to believe in himself. "Kurt, will you allow me to be your…" He swallowed hard. Old habits die hard.

"I won't say yes until you say the word," Kurt prompted with a small smile.

Blaine took one more breath and looked into blue eyes filled with faith in him, and suddenly he wasn't so afraid. "Kurt, will you allow me to be your…husband?"

Kurt jumped out of his seat and flew to Blaine, kneeling in front of him and wrapping his arms around him, never prouder in his life. "Yes! Yes, Blaine Anderson I will absolutely allow you to be my husband." Kurt kissed him, a passionate spicy kiss filled with excitement and promise that Blaine returned with fervor. Their heartbeats continued to race against one another but for an entirely different reason now as the passion between them sparked. They finally parted, both desperate for breath and Blaine for one last request.

"So, I can stay a fiancé for a while, right? Maybe even after we marry?" he asked with a nervous bite of his lip.

Kurt stared at him for a minute then threw his head back and laughed. "Oh my gosh Blaine, what am I going to do with you?"

Blaine tightened his arms around Kurt and pulled him close. "Fuck me?" Blaine suggested playfully though his lust blown eyes betrayed his desire.

Kurt chuckled again and shook his head. Blaine had grown so much over the years, but some things would never change and that was what he loved the most. "I think that can be arranged."

June 1, 2017

"I still can't believe you wanted to come all the way back to Ohio to get the tattoos done," Kurt laughed as they stepped off the airplane in Cleveland. He already missed the palm trees at the Honolulu airport. Their perfect honeymoon had indeed been perfect, but Blaine insisted on returning to Ohio instead of home. "There are only a thousand tattoo parlors in the city."

"But there's only one place we got these done," Blaine said and he pulled his husband into his arms. "Call me sentimental."

"I call you a peasant," Kurt smirked and pecked him on the lips. "And a liar, because your real reason is to surprise the family before we go back to New York."

Blaine took Kurt's hand as they made their way to baggage claim. "Who knows when we're going to get a chance to visit again. Things are going to be crazy once we get back. I've got a lot of work to do to start moving on my shows in August, not to mention getting out again and networking. And you start a new job on Monday, Mr. Assistant Designer," Blaine beamed proudly.
Kurt blushed as he often did when people liked to heap praise on him. Parsons had been incredibly hard and one of the most rewarding experiences of his life at the same time and he drunk in any tidbit of praise he received like a man lost in the desert without drink. "It's not that big a deal," he protested, knowing that Blaine would argue. When one of his professors had put in a good word for him at Jessilyn, Kurt had been ecstatic. Still, he didn't want to gloat about his early success with Blaine. The songwriting business was proving to be a much slower climb. "It's just sportswear, it's not like it's top of the line men's fashion or couture."

"It's a step in the door, babe and you know it," Blaine said. "Couture is right around the corner, don't you worry. Someday I will be on the Grammy red carpet in a gorgeous original Kurt Hummel tuxedo and the world will be breaking down our door."

"Hummel Anderson," Kurt corrected casually.

Blaine stopped in his tracks and looked at Kurt. "What?"

Kurt's smile was beautiful and his eyes sparkled with love. "Hummel Anderson Designs. That's the name of my line."

Blaine blinked. "But I thought…we talked about this…"

Kurt shrugged and his face tinged with mischief. "I changed my mind." Kurt started walking again and a dumbfounded Blaine had to jog to catch up with him once his feet started working again. "It's a Prince's prerogative you know," Kurt threw over his shoulder.

"I just…” and Blaine shook his head, knowing better than to say a word. "I love you."

They waited at baggage claim, checking the messages from friends they hadn't seen since leaving for their honeymoon ten days ago. There was an email from the photographer with the website for their digital prints. Harmony telling them that their apartment was still fine. Business calls they both saved for later. And of course there were the obligatory ones from Cooper and Burt telling them to call when they got back home. They ignored those for now as well. They'd do much better then call.

First stop though was the tattoo parlor. Blaine had talked to Guy during the wedding planning, setting up the exact date and time with some wiggle room for missed flights or other random mishaps. They drove into Cleveland center, getting coffee at a nearby shop to waste some time before their appointment. It was a nice transition home as they reminisced about the honeymoon filled with palm trees, beaches and one crazy jeep ride on a treacherously tiny mountain trail.

"My favorite part was standing beneath the waterfall and barely getting wet." Blaine took Kurt's hand in his, twirling the wedding ring between his fingers.

Kurt took a sip of his mocha. "My favorite part was the amazingly romantic luau. Watching you do the hula was worth the price of admission itself."

"My favorite part was snorkeling in the Pacific. I wish you'd come in Kurt, the water was so clear and the fish were gorgeous."

"My favorite part was eating at all the local establishments. The food was so much better there than the resorts."

"My favorite part was skinning dipping in the hot tub beneath the stars," Kurt's voice dropped and his face colored.
"My favorite part was making love to you under those stars," Blaine purred low.

"My favorite part was making love to you under those stars," Kurt arched a playful eyebrow.

Blaine leaned over and whispered so only Kurt could hear. "My favorite part was fucking you into the mattress."

Kurt ducked his head and laughed, conceding to Blaine. "Ah, I remember it well," Kurt sang.

They checked the time and finished their drinks, tossing them in the trash on their way out. They arrived just in time for their appointment and Guy invited them both in right away.

"Long time no see boys, how's New York treating you?" Guy got the clipboards and supplies ready. Neither Kurt or Blaine were strangers to the process at this point. Kurt had added two more tattoos since the first, small ones on his ankle and his hip. Blaine had tattooed some of his favorite lyrics on his back.

They each grabbed a clipboard and filled out the information, signing their consent. "New York is loud and expensive and dirty and everything I wanted it to be and more," Kurt grinned.

"I'm just happy when he's happy," Blaine added with a wink.

Guy smiled and took the clipboards back. "Alright guys, what are we doing exactly?"

Kurt took Blaine's hand in his, unable to stop the smile that spread across his face. "Blaine's name in the ribbon we left blank with our wedding date curved underneath."

"May 21, 2017, right?" Kurt nodded and Guy turned to Blaine. "You?"

"Kurt's name above the heart and the date below," Blaine grinned.

"Alright sounds good," Guy said as he stood to wash his hands and prepare everything. "Who's first?"

They left the tattoo parlor bandaged and smiling from ear to ear, their tattoos finally complete after five years. It truly marked for them an end of an era. Married. On paper, in their hearts and on their skin.

"Beth says Cooper's still at the hospital," Blaine said, hanging up the phone as they got into their rental car. "Not that I'm surprised. If I worked at the same place as my gorgeous spouse I'd never leave either."

"You would when I kicked you the hell out," Kurt said. "You're even worse than you were in high school, I can't get a damn thing done when you're around."

"Then maybe you're the one who's worse, not me," Blaine teased, an eyebrow raised.

Kurt considered that but said nothing. It was probably true. Living separately for their first two years of college had taught them to cherish the time they had together. It had also taught them to be adventurous with it. While Kurt had opened his apartment up to any of the Crew who needed a safe place to crash or just a night to hang out with friends, there were nights that even Quinn knew to stay away. On those evenings Kurt would exchange the needle and thread for pots and pans and cook a gourmet meal for the man he loved. Blaine would free up the dorm room for Santana and Brittany and take the subway to Greenwich Village, looking up at Kurt's apartment from the
outside, dreaming of one day coming home to him each night. Kurt would peer down at him from the window, a small smile on his face as he watched the rogue slowly become a gentleman. But only sometimes, Kurt thought with a wicked grin.

"I know what you're thinking," Blaine said, slinking his hand over to brush a thumb against the increasing bulge in Kurt's jeans.

Kurt leaned back for a moment, eyes closed, enjoying the sensations that crept up his spine. He thrust softly, discreetly, into Blaine's palm. Blaine kept his eyes on the road, but his grin was devilish as he squeezed just right, to drive Kurt wild.

"I can't decide if you're planning to leave me hanging or wet, but either way I hate you," Kurt moaned with an instant intake of breath as Blaine stroked him harder.

"Which one would make you hate me less?" Blaine chuckled.

"Can't decide," Kurt breathed, losing his grip on his words. "Either way you're screwed."

"Well if I'm screwed then so are you," Blaine made up his mind.

Blaine increased the pressure and the speed and Kurt slumped down in the seat, opening his legs wider begging for more. Blaine obliged as best he could with one hand while keeping his attention on driving. Kurt thrust desperate and fierce, into his hand, unable to hold himself back even though anyone pulling next to them might see him. With everything they had done before, Kurt letting loose in broad daylight may have been one of the hottest things that Blaine had ever seen. Kurt gripped the door handle in his right hand and the headrest with his left, his groans and quiet swearing filling the small car's silence.

"Holy shit, Kurt, you are so fucking hot right now. I wish I could stop the car and suck you. Rip off all your clothes and fuck you so hard until I make you come all over this rental-"

Blaine was interrupted by Kurt's screams as he bucked into Blaine's palm, the fire in his belly coiling tighter and tighter until it exploded and he shuddered with waves of pleasure that seemed to never want to cease. Blaine stroked him through it until Kurt came down off the high, and Blaine removed his hand and pulled into the hospital parking lot.

"We're here, Babe," he said as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

"You are such an asshole and I hate you," Kurt muttered, but the bliss on his blushed and glistening face proved quite the contrary. "You are in so much trouble tonight," he promised.

Blaine grinned with excitement and kissed Kurt on the cheek. "I'm looking forward to it," he said and quickly jumped out of the car.

Kurt was slower, not quite steady on his feet yet and his head was still spinning. "I need a bathroom. Stat."

Blaine laughed and hooked his arm in Kurt's, leading him inside the hospital and to the nearest men's room. Kurt went in the stall to clean up and Blaine wet his hands, scrunching the curls that had gone frizzy on the plane.

Kurt flushed and stepped out taking a look in the mirror. "Oh my god I look completely disheveled."

"You look hot as fuck," Blaine corrected, grabbing Kurt from behind and pressing his hardness into
Kurt's ass. "See what you do to me?"

Kurt stopped straightening his hair and sent a hard glare at Blaine in the mirror. "Oh you have no idea what I'm going to do to you," he threatened.

Blaine growled in his ear and nibbled at his neck, sending new chills up Kurt's spine. "I can't wait to find out," he whispered.

Kurt turned in his arms and smacked him hard on the ass. "You are incorrigible. Now let's go before Cooper leaves and we miss him completely."

Blaine texted Beth once more and she responded that he was just getting out of surgery and should be in his office in ten minutes. Kurt and Blaine raced upstairs to beat him and with a bit of smooth talking the new receptionist slipped into Cooper's office.

Kurt traced his hand along the edge of Cooper's desk. "Remember last time," he said, his eyes sparkling.

Blaine's heart skipped a beat but didn't have time to answer before they heard Cooper's voice. "Janet see if you can get those records down to radiology as soon as possible I just need to...holy shit!" Cooper stopped in his tracks at the doorway seeing his little brother and boyfr...husband in his office. "What the hell are you two doing here? Aren't you supposed to be on a plane to New York?"

Blaine shrugged. "We took a detour," he grinned and Cooper quickly gathered them both up in his arms.

"But why, for how long?" Cooper asked.

"Well, we knew we wouldn't get to see you guys as much as we wanted to at the wedding and we had a few extra days between the honeymoon and starting work so I thought we'd spend a few days here before we headed back." He looked at his brother and smirked. "That is unless you don't want us."

"Of course I want you," Cooper huffed and started gathering his paperwork from his desk into his bag. "Let me just get my things and find Beth and we can go out to dinner."

"Sounds like a plan," Kurt said. "We just have to pick up one more person..."

"Well damn boys why didn't you tell me you were coming?" Burt yelled, pulling Kurt in for a hug.

"Because that would take the element of surprise out of the, ya know, surprise," Kurt answered.

Burt held a hand out to Blaine who shook it firmly, but Burt pulled him in as well. "Come on son, I think all formality is over and done with at this point. You already married him there's not much I can do at this point."

"Finish up Dad, we were gonna go out to dinner," Kurt said.

"Oh forget that," Burt waved a hand then draped his arm over Kurt's shoulder. "We'll order in and relax in our own living room. I want to hear all about the honeymoon."

"And I want to hear all about the wedding," Kurt said with a grin. "I honestly don't remember a thing."
Blaine rolled his eyes. "I told you all that planning was just going to waste." He hurried out of the way of Kurt's swat and said hello to the workers there he still knew. "Where's Puck?"

"Off today," Burt said wiping his hands on a towel before going to the office to get his things. "Even the manager needs time off on occasion. You can invite him over if you want."

Blaine looked quickly to Kurt gave a quick shake of his head. "Nah, we'll keep it just family tonight. We'll go see Puck and Marley tomorrow."

"Sounds like a plan. Why don't you four head over to the house. I'll call Carole and warn her you're coming and I'll meet you there in a few minutes. Just gotta close things up."

Kurt and Blaine did as they were told and they all rendezvoused at the Hudmel home. The smell of dessert cooking in the oven was already filling the air.

Very little had changed in the small house since Kurt had left for college. His room remained the same though year by year more of his belongings were brought to New York. Now all that was left behind were the memories of his childhood, the shell of what existed before he'd met Blaine.

In the doorway of his bedroom, Blaine wrapped his arms around Kurt and rested his chin on his shoulder. "Doesn't feel like home anymore, does it?"

"Home is with you," Kurt said softly. He took Blaine's left hand in his and twirled the diamond studded wedding ring on his finger. "I think it always was. We just didn't know it yet."

"Where are my boys?" Burt yelled from downstairs and the smell of Chinese food drifted up to their noses. Neither had realized how hungry they were and as if they were 17 again they came running down the stairs ready to dive in. "Some things never change, huh?"

Kurt kissed his Dad softly on the cheek. "You wouldn't want it any other way." He started to unpack the bags, putting the cartons on the already set dining room table. Conversation flowed quickly and easily, everyone excited to hear all about their honeymoon adventures in Honolulu.

"See I told you we should have gone there instead of Los Angeles," Beth nudged Cooper fondly.

Cooper pouted. "But I'd always wanted to go to L.A. You know if I hadn't become a doctor I'd be a famous actor by now," he said proudly.

"Playing a doctor on TV no doubt," Blaine said and narrowed his eyes. "Though I'm not so sure if you're handsome enough for that gig."

"And I think you are the only one at this table that would doubt that Anderson," Kurt smirked.

"Oh yeah, Anderson?" Blaine challenged, raising an eyebrow. "Marry the wrong brother did ya?"

"No!" Kurt and Cooper both shouted at the same time and the entire table devolved into laughter.

They cleared the table when they were done, Burt and Blaine agreeing to finish cleaning up while everyone else chatted in the living room.

"Go load up the pictures from the wedding, we'll be in in a minute," Blaine said with a quick kiss to Kurt's cheek.

Kurt smiled and pinched Blaine's ass discretely before heading into the living room. Blaine grinned watching him leave until he felt Burt's amused eyes on him and his grin turned to nervous
"You two don't ever change do you?" Burt mused as he started the water in the sink and grabbed the pan from the oven.

"I hope not Sir," Blaine said, picking up a towel and leaning against the counter. "Though I'm sure kids will cramp our style a little bit someday."

Burt chuckled and handed Blaine the clean pan. "They do tend to do that a little bit." Burt turned an arched brow to Blaine. "You guys talking about that? Having kids I mean?"

"Yeah we are." Blaine was glad for the steady flow of the water and stream of dishes coming at him. Even after all these years, talking to Burt about his life choices could still sometimes be overwhelming for him. "I mean, we haven't planned anything at all. When or how. But we agreed that we want kids and we want them while we're still young, so we'll have to start figuring things out soon. Takes a lot more than 9 months for us," he smirked.

"I suppose it does," Burt said thoughtfully with a smile that crinkled at his eyes. He had to admit that he'd always been worried Blaine wouldn't want kids cramping his style. And though he was sure Finn would have children some day, it wasn't the same as seeing Kurt raise a son or daughter, something he'd been looking forward to his whole life. Still, he knew that the idea of being a father couldn't be too easy for Blaine. "I'm proud of you," Burt said, looking at Blaine out of the corner of his eye. "I can't imagine it was an easy decision for you."

Blaine looked down and bit his lip, his hand freezing on the pan he was drying. Finally he shrugged. "He ruined enough of my life. I can't let him ruin this."

Burt nodded, not for the first time wishing he could go back and change things for Blaine. But then maybe he wouldn't have been the boy to save his son. Everything happens for a reason. "I'm sorry your father didn't come to the wedding. Your mom and I both tried, but-"

"It doesn't matter," Blaine said, his voice harsh and cold. Any chance of forgiveness he might have given his father in the past was gone. "We're all better off without his poison in our lives. I loved seeing Mom so happy and carefree without him weighing her down. Divorcing him was the best thing she ever did."

Burt handed Blaine the last dish and turned the water off. He had an urge to brush Blaine's curls out of his eyes and take him into his arms, but he held back. He knew it would be too much for him right now.

Kurt's beaming face broke the tension in the room. "Blaine, hurry up, these pictures are amazing!" Blaine instantly brightened. He put the last dish away and rushed to Kurt, needing to rest for just a moment in his husband's arms. Kurt held him close raising a brow. "Everything okay?" he whispered.

"It is now," Blaine breathed.

"Come on Squirt," Cooper yelled from the other room. "You need to see how fabulous I look in this tuxedo!"

Blaine laughed, took Kurt's hand in his and joined the people who loved him.

"Look Blaine, here's us walking down the aisle," Cooper said. Blaine gathered around Burt's computer with the rest. The pictures were gorgeous. Everyone looked amazing. As they stepped through the photos it all came back to them. Blaine was walked down the aisle with his mother on
one arm and his brother on the other. At the front they met his best man Puck, along with Nick, Jeff and his two best friends from Columbia. Then Kurt followed, escorted by his father and Carole. Kurt remembered smiling at Finn, standing proudly as his best man, then his best gals standing up for him, Harmony, Marley, and Brittany and his two best friends from Parsons. Quinn and Santana looked gorgeous when they were called to the front for readings. Jake was handsome as ever. Seeing the photos that had been taken at the party after they'd left for the hotel was the best part.

"Okay, I hate to break up this brief trip down short-term memory lane, but the Missus and I have theater tickets tonight," Cooper said, getting up and holding a hand out for Beth.

Blaine immediately took his cue and yawned. "Oh my goodness, I didn't realize how tired I was. Kurt and I better be heading in early tonight."

Kurt merely looked at him with crinkled eyes and a sly smirk. With the place to themselves until 11, Blaine had no intention of sleeping once they got back to Cooper's apartment and neither did Kurt. He turned back to his dad who pretended he had no idea what was actually going on. "Lunch tomorrow Dad?" he asked getting up.

"Just call me when you finally wake up," Burt answered knowingly. "Night all."

They were giddy with excitement during the ride back to Cooper and Beth's new apartment and Blaine's skin started prickling in anticipation the moment he crossed the threshold. Kurt's earlier threat rang in his ear. You are in so much trouble tonight, he'd promised. Blaine's pants tightened at the memory alone.

Apparently Kurt's did as well. The door closed behind him and Kurt instantly embraced Blaine from behind. In the soft glow of the setting sun streaming in through the windows, Blaine could feel the bulge pressing against him. Kurt brushed his fingertips across the skin of Blaine's neck and leaned in with the hint of a whisper. "You're already so hot for me aren't you?" Shivers raced through Blaine's body answering wordlessly. "Want me to touch you?"

Blaine nodded desperately, his mouth already parched with need. He closed his eyes and laid his head back on Kurt's shoulder. Kurt stroked a hand on Blaine's inner thigh, tracing up and down and round and round, tantalizing his cock but never touching.

"Want me to suck you?" Kurt whispered finally.

"Yes," Blaine gasped, thrusting his hips into nothing.

Kurt took Blaine's earlobe between his lips, working it gently, teasingly. He licked and sucked and nibbled with such seduction that Blaine wasn't sure he could stand on his feet much longer.

"Want me to fuck you?"


Kurt cupped his backside, squeezing, massaging, marking out his territory but ignoring his ultimate goal by just inches. "I didn't hear you say please," Kurt growled viciously.

"Please," Blaine begged, nearly violently. "Touch me, suck me, fuck me, need you, god Kurt, Fuck.

"You forgot Your Highness," Kurt whispered, ghosting over Blaine's cock with his palm but never
"God Kurt, Your Highness, whoever the fuck you are, please just touch me." Kurt had never before brought Blaine to tears but he was coming awfully close now.

Kurt smiled and spanked him hard enough to make it sting, just one more thing that went straight to Blaine's groin. "Go upstairs and get naked, I'll be right there." Blaine wasted no time asking questions and raced up the stairs. "Oh and Blaine?" He turned and looked at Kurt, holding on to the railing for dear life. "Don't touch," Kurt ordered before disappearing out of Blaine's sight.

Blaine groaned, but made it to the bedroom and did as he was told. He removed his clothes in a flash but folded them neatly so Kurt wouldn't find one more thing to help him stall. He pulled the covers down on the bed and crawled in, trying to reduce his suffering by rubbing his hands on his chest and his thighs but keeping them off his already hard and weeping cock. He waited and waited but Kurt took his sweet time. Instead of staving off his erection, it only grew with every second he remained in glorious anticipation. Giving up, he gripped the headboard tight above his head and squeezed his eyes shut just to keep himself from disobeying.

Kurt sucked in a breath walking in on the scene. Blaine's muscles were taut, rigid with tension, his nipples tight and erect and his long soft lashes fell beautifully over his eyes. "Shit Blaine, you are the most gorgeous fucking thing I have ever seen in my life." Blaine turned his head to look at Kurt, but Kurt stopped him. "No. Stay just like that. Eyes closed."

He walked over to the bed, continuing to take in the sight of Blaine splayed out just for him, his cock visibly pulsing against his chest, looking for friction, teasing Kurt deliciously. He closed his own eyes and took a breath. He'd have to stay strong if he was going to do this just right. He took his time removing his own clothes, doing so just loud enough for Blaine to hear and imagine. He couldn't help but smile at the thrust of Blaine's hips when he lowered his zipper. Poor Blaine had been in such a hurry for Kurt's orgasm this afternoon. Now he'd have to wait all night for his own.

Kurt stepped on to the bed and stood above him, feet hugging Blaine's chest. "Open your eyes," Kurt said and Blaine's lids fluttered open, a moan escaping his lips already. Kurt's lithe body was incredible, muscled and freckled to perfection from the Hawaiian sun. His cock was hard and pink and ready for Blaine. "You said you wanted to pull over and suck me. Now's your chance," Kurt offered.

"Come here," Blaine pleaded and Kurt knelt down using the headboard for support, lining himself up with Blaine's lips already open and so very wanting. Blaine started to let go of the bed and Kurt pulled away. "No hands," he reprimanded. Blaine whimpered but nodded his agreement and Kurt gently placed his head to his lips.

Blaine immediately swirled at the head and sucked him in, eager and needy. He worked Kurt over with his tongue while Kurt slowly, all too slowly, fucked Blaine's mouth for what felt like eternity. Kurt felt Blaine's hips buck up, just looking for any kind of contact he could get but Kurt shook his head. "Don't come until I tell you."

The fire in Blaine's body was blazing hot, he was sweating and swearing in agonizing hums that had Kurt trembling above him. Kurt's motions sped up, the strength of dancer's thighs allowing him to fuck Blaine's mouth with relentless abandon. Blaine wasn't sure he'd be able to stop himself when Kurt inevitably came down his throat and he focused hard on just Kurt, only Kurt in his mouth, and tried desperately to forget his own throbbing because the short-term pay off was nothing compared to the agonizing pleasure of waiting until Kurt said he could. Then suddenly it was out of his hands and Kurt was screaming, convulsing with pleasure, shooting himself into Blaine's mouth and Blaine swallowed unhesitatingly over and over again until Kurt was spent.
When Kurt could finally breathe again he slipped off of Blaine and they both looked down at Blaine's still hard and begging erection. Kurt smiled and kissed Blaine fiercely, tasting himself on Blaine's tongue and suddenly already yearning for more. "You are such a good boy for me," he praised and Blaine was caught between blushing proudly and telling Kurt to go fuck himself. "Ah, I know that look well," Kurt said and reached over to a cup he'd put on the nightstand. "I think you need to cool down a bit."

"No, Kurt, please, just fuck me, please-"

But it was too late because Kurt was already drinking the cold liquid and slipping the ice into his mouth and Blaine knew his wait was going to be far, far longer. He closed his eyes and readied himself and it came before he could count to five, the cold against his shaft as Kurt expertly dragged the ice up and down, bit tightly between his teeth. Kurt traced it on his skin until it melted then took Blaine in his mouth, letting the heat of his throat with the cold of his tongue play madly on his senses. The intensity of it nearly made him forget that he finally had the friction he wanted until he thrust up into Kurt's mouth and was then firmly held down. "We'll have none of that, Anderson," Kurt said, looking up at him sinfully. "This is just a little cold shower." Kurt took another drink, and another piece of ice, and held Blaine down gently before once again enveloping him. Blaine hissed, the cold against him warding off his desperation for a time, but gradually the heat grew stronger and Kurt's tongue twirled perfectly and he shivered with cold and heat as if in fever and he begged for mercy, "Please, Kurt I'm going to-" but he didn't even know exactly what he was asking for.

Kurt pulled off, grabbing another chunk of ice and tracing it along Blaine's scrotum, settling the impending orgasm back where he wanted it. "Not yet Baby," he cooed, rubbing his hips soothingly. "You're doing so good."

"You want to kill me," Blaine sighed, throwing his head and breathing heavily.

"You started it," Kurt smirked.

Blaine turned his head, wiping his sweating brow on his arm and glancing at the clock. "Come on Kurt, Cooper and Beth will be home soon."

Kurt grinned wickedly. "I know." And suddenly it all made sense to Blaine It wasn't just about making him get off in the car, it was about doing in the light of day where anyone could see moments before they were going up to see his brother.

"Fuck," Blaine cursed. Kurt was going to make him wait. And make him scream.

"Fuck is right Blaine," Kurt responded and leaned over to open the drawer and grab the condoms and lube. "Now we're going to take this nice and slow," he drawled.

Slow was an understatement. Kurt teased at Blaine's hole for what felt like hours before he finally slipped one finger inside. As if it was their very first time all over again, Kurt inched his way in and out, taking his time to gently open him up, driving Blaine insane with it.

"I hate you," Blaine groaned, bucking his hips for the hundredth time. "I hate you with the fiery passion of a billion suns. I hate you with every aching muscle in my body. I hate you-"

Kurt pressed his lips to Blaine's and silenced them, kissing him deeply until Blaine relaxed beneath him. "You hate me almost as much as you love me," Kurt finished for him.

"Yes," Blaine grinned, kissing him once more. "That much."
"I thought so," Kurt said, and pressed another finger inside.

That kept Blaine quiet for another few minutes as Kurt scissored and brushed against his prostate. Mercifully he added a third then sat up, allowing Blaine to roll the condom on him. "Ready?" Kurt asked and Blaine just huffed and rolled his eyes.

Kurt pushed in gently, Blaine expected no less. Though he wanted nothing more than for Kurt to pound into him he knew that wasn't anywhere near happening. "Don't come until you hear the front door open and close," Kurt told him. "Understood?"

Willing to agree to anything at this point, Blaine nodded his head vigorously. "Yes," he whispered.

"Yes what?"

"Yes Your Highness," Blaine answered.

Kurt started a slow and steady pace, pushing smoothly in and dragging himself out with practiced care. He kept his eyes fixed on Blaine and despite the heat and desperation and tantalizing of the last two hours, this was one of their favorite things, time spent on nothing but the profound connection of two people madly in love with one another mind, body and soul.

Blaine's arms finally lowered, sore and heavy, to Kurt's hips and ass and he rode the beautiful waves of Kurt's movement. "You're my favorite thing in the whole world, Kurt Hummel Anderson. Your sweetness and your fire. This, tonight, is everything I love about you, and I love absolutely everything about you."

Kurt reached down for the first time, wrapping one hand around the base of Blaine and stroking him in rhythm with the other. Every once in a while he'd brush a thumb over the head and Blaine would hiss in a breath as the fire inside would flash again. Over and over as they waited for the door Kurt would bring him to the edge and back down again. No more words were spoken, they were both absolutely wrecked, delaying their release minute by minute, second by second. The thought crossed their minds, what would they do if they didn't come home for hours, just as Kurt saw the headlights in the window and Blaine heard a car door slam.

Kurt suddenly picked up the pace, leaning over Blaine and slamming into him with all his power. Blaine sat up to capture his lips but Kurt pulled away. "I want to hear you Anderson. I want them to hear you," Kurt ordered.

"Fuck Kurt." Blaine slapped his hips up to meet Kurt, waiting, wanting, needing to hear the goddamn front door open and close. He was so close, had been for two hours, and the last 60 seconds, knowing release was right there just out of touch, were absolute hell. "Open the damn door Cooper," he whimpered under his breath.

Kurt answered Blaine with a laugh and a slight twist of the hips and hit Blaine's prostate perfectly. Blaine muffled his scream but Kurt did it again and again and Blaine wasn't sure he'd be able to hear the door through the ringing in his ears though he had them concentrated on that sound and that sound alone. His entire body was ablaze and he felt the rush of blood in his veins and he knew he couldn't hold off any longer as he held his breath and-

"Hey guys, we're home!" Cooper yelled.

Blaine screamed, louder and longer than he ever had before as his orgasm exploded between his chest and Kurt's. Kurt's face was glowing as he too finally let go inside of Blaine, his heart flooding with love, light-headed and giddy. He fell heavy into Blaine's arms, their hearts beating wildly.
together, their breath easing as they both started laughing and couldn't stop.

"I love you so much," Kurt said, kissing him beneath a grin that would not die.

"I love you too," Blaine answered with a laugh.

"I love you three!" Cooper yelled from outside the door. "But if you do that again I'm sending you the hell out of my house and right back to New York!"

Cooper heard nothing but more laughter behind the door and he couldn't help but smile himself. It was nice to have his brothers home.

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**July 1, 2022**

Blaine was staring into the bedroom mirror, fumbling with his bowtie trying to get it just right. He eyed Kurt in the reflection watching him with the fondest of smiles but keeping his distance. Determined, he kept tying and retrying until finally frustration won out over pride and he huffed and turned. "Fine, you do it," Blaine grumbled and Kurt walked over to tie it for him. "Don't know why you make me where these damn bowties anyway, I look like a five year old kid from the 50's. Puckerman would kill you if he saw this."

"Well maybe it's because you act like a five year old kid from the 50's sometimes and I've never given a damn about what Puckerman thinks and I'm not going to start now." Kurt chuckled and kissed him softly on the nose. "But mostly it's because you look hot in them."

Blaine frowned. "I'm not hot, I'm nearly 30 years old with two kids and."

"Dad!" a voice yelled not even two seconds before barging into the room.

"I thought you would have learned how to knock by now," Kurt smirked at their son who had walked in on them one too many times before they all realized to lock doors and properly knock. Suddenly having a teenager had been a learning curve for all of them.

"It's 4 in the afternoon, we're supposed to leave in half an hour and you know both of us are home. I thought the odds were in my favor." If you ignored the gorgeous mocha skin that he was blessed with by his biological parents, Jason was the spitting image of his fathers. He had Kurt's quick wit and Blaine's penchant for swearing, Kurt's love of fashion and Blaine's love of trouble. His hair was a beautiful mess of chocolate brown curls but it was clear even at 14 that he was going to have Kurt's height. He was a masterful violinist, but only if you asked Blaine because Jason just wanted to be on the football field. That last fact had come from his bio dad, but Kurt and Blaine loved him despite his favoring athletics over arts. "Auntie Tana just called, she said that she and Aunt Britt would be over in ten minutes and since you're forcing them to go to Harmony's opening night performance you better be on time."

"Thanks," Kurt smiled as he slipped his suit jacket on and gave his son a once over, nodding with approval. "You look very handsome. Can you make sure your sister is getting dressed and not writing another musical with her stuffed animals?" 6 year old Lilly had Blaine's love of writing. They'd thought for a while that it had just been from all the silly songs Blaine used to sing to her when she'd first moved in, but Jason told them their mother had always sung to them as well.

Blaine sunk onto the bed after Jason left, looking up at Kurt with worry in his eyes. "We promised the girls an answer tonight," Blaine reminded his husband. "It's not fair to leave them hanging."

Kurt sighed and bowed his head, leaning back against the dresser. He folded his arms. They'd been
talking about it for weeks and were still really no further along in a decision than they had been when Santana and Brittany had first asked. "Tell me again your reservations."

Blaine shrugged, embarrassed by his feelings. It should be an easy answer, but he was finding it wasn't easy at all. "I don't know how to explain it. I'm just not sure how I feel about having a little Blaine Anderson and Kurt Hummel running around that don't belong to us."

"Children don't belong to anyone but themselves," Kurt pointed out.

Blaine scowled. "You know what I mean."

"Yes, I do," Kurt conceded. "But you didn't want to go the surrogacy route when we were deciding because…"

"I just wanted a chance to give to some other kid what Cooper gave to me," Blaine said. "That doesn't mean that I wouldn't want to be involved in my kid's life if I had one. I don't know if I can even imagine that. And what about Jason and Lilly, wouldn't it be confusing?"

Kurt frowned and sat next to his husband, needing to be close to him. He took Blaine's hand in his and wrapped the other around his waist. Blaine turned to him and the tears that shone in his honey glazed eyes nearly broke Kurt's heart. "Okay, first of all, I love you no matter what we decide and so will Santana and Brittany. They'll find someone else if we don't want to do it, but they love us and want us to forever be a part of their family. And on that note, you know that they would never shut us out of those children's lives. We'd be their Dads, they'd know that, we just wouldn't live with them." Blaine looked away and he dropped Kurt's hand. "That's it, isn't it?"

"It's just me and my father…I don't want that for my kid." Blaine got up and paced, trying to work off some of the still lingering anger that all too frequently flared even after all these years.

It broke Kurt's heart every time he saw Blaine this way. "Then we won't do it," he resolved.

"But how can I do that to Santana?" Blaine stopped and ran a hand through his curls. "She doesn't want some stranger's baby, she wants this, I know she does, I could see it in her eyes. And Brittany wants you. How can we deny them the family they want because I'm afraid?"

Kurt went to his husband and he kissed him softly, wishing that it was that simple to just kiss away his fears and doubt. "I think you're forgetting something, Love. We know better than most that family comes in all shapes and sizes. You have your Mom and Cooper and the Crew. I have Dad and Carole but my mom is still in my heart. Jason and Lilly have us now but their bio parents will always be a part of them."

"Your children will know you Blaine," a familiar voice said. Kurt and Blaine turned to see Santana standing in the bedroom doorway in a sexy little black dress, smiling with soft reassurance. Brittany stood behind her in red. Jason must have let them in. "They'll love you and know you. We promise."

Brittany crossed the room and took Kurt and Blaine's hands. "We've been family for years. If we didn't want our kids' fathers in their lives we'd just get random donors," Brittany said then added cautiously. "But we don't want to push you. If you're not comfortable, if you don't want to-"

"We want to," Blaine interrupted and he looked back at Kurt to make sure. Kurt bit his lip, tears forming as he nodded enthusiastically. Blaine looked up at Santana and their eyes met. It was rare to see tears in her eyes, but it was undeniable.

"You're sure?" Santana's voice was barely above a whisper, filled with more emotion than she ever
would have believed. This was the start of everything she'd wanted since she and Brittany had moved in together.

Blaine walked slowly over to her, leaving Kurt and Brittany hand in hand behind him. He wiped the wetness from her cheeks, nodding near imperceptibly but like a shout to Santana. "Other than Kurt I can't imagine anyone else I would rather make a baby with," he said, sniffing himself a bit.

A little curly haired cherub came running into the room and jumped between Blaine and Santana. "Who's making a baby Daddy?"

Blaine raised a brow and stared at Santana before they both cracked up laughing. Kurt came to the rescue and swept Lilly into his arms. "How are we going to explain this one?" he whispered into Blaine's ear.

Blaine shook his head and took his husband's hand as they all walked to the living room and got ready to leave. "Beat's the fuck out me," Blaine murmured.

"Daddy owes five dollars!" Lilly started singing and Kurt put her down to grab the swear jar they'd set up when the kids had come to stay.

Blaine rolled his eyes, but Kurt just smirked with his hand out. "Five dollars or five minutes time out, those are the rules."

"Pay up Anderson, I'm not standing here waiting while you sit in the time out chair," Santana growled. It was amusing when they were just hanging out, but they were already running late for their dinner reservations.

Blaine reached into his wallet and pulled out a five. He hardly ever carried cash to spend these days but fives he kept in abundance. He tickled Lilly's nose with it and she giggled as he slipped it in.

"Do we have enough for Disney yet?" she asked excitedly.

"Not yet angel," Kurt told her and took her hand. "But don't worry, between your Dad and your brother, I'm sure we'll be going real soon."

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**September 5, 2024**

Blaine waited outside the venue for Puck to show up. He'd promised Kurt before he'd left at 5am that morning that he'd make sure Puck was dressed properly so as not to embarrass him. His last fashion show Puck had shown up in ripped jeans, a t-shirt and of course, his leather jacket. That had been bad enough, but this was fashion week. It was his first real line in the big time and he'd be damned if Noah Puckerman would mess that up for him. Puck would, after all, be in the spotlight himself.

Blaine had told Puck every day for the last week to be there early, he'd even made him swear it on his mother's grave, not that that counted for anything since she was still alive but Blaine was hoping Puck didn't realize that. The others would be there at one o'clock but noon was a necessity for Puck just in case a wardrobe change was in need. He'd hid that fact from his best friend of course. As far as Puck was aware, he was going early to keep Blaine from bothering Kurt with his overenthusiastic nervous energy, and maybe flirt with a model or two, all of whom had been warned not to dare give Puck the time of day. Besides, the backstage was off limits to anyone not directly involved with the show.

A yellow cab pulled up to the curb and out stepped Puck dressed in probably the fanciest suit he
owned. Puck paid the man his cab fare but left out the tip, practically throwing the money in the driver's face. "Here's a tip for you asshole: next time you wanna bitch about the Jews, make sure your passenger isn't Jewish!" Puck slammed the cab door and turned to Blaine with a wide grin. "Wassup, bro?"

Blaine chuckled and shook his head as he walked over to Puck. "How do you always manage to get anti-semetic cabbies that like to talk shit?" he asked as they bro hugged.

Puck scoffed. "Dude, I don't even know but that shit pisses me off more each time."

Blaine stepped back and took a good look at Puck's suit. It was nice but it wasn't flashy, which was fine. He was glad that Puck had at least worn a suit. The problem however, was the three unfastened buttons at the top showing off way more chest hair than Kurt would ever want to see and the absence of not only a decent tie but any sort of tie. Blaine shook his head in disapproval. That would absolutely not do, not here and not today.

"Come on," Blaine said with a nod towards the building. Puck smoothed out his jacket and followed.

Blaine led him to the restrooms, passing the theater where the doors hadn't closed yet and the crew was still buzzing around like bees setting up the runway. Sneaking a peek inside, Puck had to admit he was impressed. The place looked amazing and he had no doubt in his mind that Kurt had worked his ass off to make sure the biggest day of his professional life went off with a bang.

"So where are these models you promised me?" Puck asked as the bathroom door closed behind them. Blaine said nothing and pulled out a bowtie that was folded neatly in his jacket pocket. It was a simple and classic tie, a signature black and gray skinny, but Puck was already balking and Blaine smirked at the horrified look in Puck's eyes. "No."

"Puck-"

"No," Puck said more firmly. "I refuse to wear that. I don't care if Hummel personally put it in your pocket and refused you blow jobs for the rest of your life if I didn't wear it. You can dress like a goddamn penguin all you want but there ain't no way in hell that I am wearing that."

Blaine stepped closer slowly, his eyes dark and forceful like in the old days. "You will wear this, Puckerman. You have no choice."

"Like hell I don't." Puck crossed his arms defiantly. "I ain't wearing it."

"This is your last chance, Puckerman," Blaine warned, already slipping his jacket off in anticipation of either Puck's right hook or attempt to bolt from the building. "Don't make this any uglier than it needs to be," he said as he set his jacket on the counter.

"The answer is f-u-c-k NO-"

Blaine shook his head and grabbed Puck's lapels, shoving him hard against the wall. "Look, Puckerman. If I were 17 years old I would wrestle you to the ground right now and force this around your neck, but somewhere deep down inside of you is an adult who can realize that this is the most important night of Kurt's life and if you fuck it up he is going to hate you and that is going to matter to you not because he's your bosses son but because you love him despite every bone in your immature little body trying to convince you not to."

Puck started to answer when Kurt's Assistant Michael walked into the bathroom. For a moment everybody froze. Then the young man finally found his voice and asked cautiously. "Is everything
"Ok? Do I need to call security?"

"Yes!" Puck shouted, quickly groaning in pain when Blaine subtly pushed him back into the wall.

"No Michael," Blaine replied with sickening sweetness, never taking his eyes from Puck. "There's no need for that. This is my best friend Puck," he said with a smile, "and I've got everything well in hand. Did you need something? Is Kurt doing okay?"

"He, um, he asked me to find you," Michael stammered, not sure at all what to make of everything he'd just walked in to. "He's just nervous, that's all. Wants to make sure nothing goes wrong."

"Tell him I'm with Noah and that I'm taking care of everything, nothing is going to go wrong," Blaine said, his lips smiling while his eyes glared.

Michael nodded in confusion and walked out. Blaine turned back to Puck when once again the door opened. "Hey, Dad. Sup Uncle Puck," Jason greeted.

"Jay man! Help me out!" Puck screeched.

Jason smirked and slid his hands in pocket. He knew better than to get in the middle of an argument between his Dad and Puck. He didn't see his father's best friend as often as he might like, watching the two of them together was better than any television sitcom, but when he did he knew that his Dad always won.

"As I was saying," Blaine continued. "Today is the most important day for Kurt, Puckerman. He's been dreaming about this day his entire life and he's been a major pain in the ass the last few months of planning, so if you think for a second that I am going to let you get away with fu…" he glanced at Jason and took a breath, "messing it up by not wearing the most subdued bowtie in the collection then you are dumber than I thought. We are not going to stress him out more than he already is."

"But what does my wearing that stupid bowtie have anything do with his show?" Puck argued. "It's not like I'm walking the damn catwalk!"

Blaine rolled his eyes. "But you are walking the catwalk in a figurative sense. The spotlight will be on us, all of us. This show has to be absolutely perfect. Nothing can go wrong, and if that includes you wearing that bowtie then you will wear it because Kurt wants you to wear it. Is that understood?"

Puck tried for one moment to hold his ground, but with a quick glance to Jason, who shrugged away his imminent defeat, he rolled his eyes. "Oh fine, fine," he gave in swiping the tie from Blaine's hand.

Blaine released him with a satisfied grin, brushing the shoulders of Puck's suit as if nothing had happened. He watched Puck struggle with the tie for a minute before grabbing it back and roughly turning Puck around. "You're gonna look fabulous," he said as he buttoned Puck's shirt and wrapped the bowtie around his neck.

"I hate you," Puck grumbled. "I hate you and I hate Kurt. I hate him more now than I ever have before."

Blaine tightened the bowtie a little too hard and then smacked Puck's cheek a couple of times. "I know. I'll see you out there," he smirked. Blaine grabbed his jacket, slipped it back on, and checked himself in the mirror before walking out of the bathroom.
Puck looked at himself and Jason in the mirror and scowled. "I'll pay you a hundred bucks if you convince your father not to make me wear this."

"No way," Jason shook his head. "Whatever Papa wants, Papa gets."

Puck whined like a child. "I look lame."

Jason patted his back and chuckled. "Yeah, ya kinda do. Sorry."


"So where's mini Blaintana and Kurttany?" Puck asked the two gorgeous ladies in stunning floor length gowns before embracing them lovingly. He didn't get to see his girls nearly often enough.

"It's nice to see you too Puckerman," Santana responded with sarcasm and a smile. "We haven't seen you since Katie was a week old but all you care about is them. Nice to know where we stand."

"Katie and Bailey are fine and with a sitter," Brittany said kissing him on the cheek. "And it's wonderful to see you again."

Santana grumbled. "We would've brought them but Kurt insisted they're too young. He's probably right, they wouldn't have been able to handle all this.

"So how's work been?" Puck asked the girls, keeping an eye on Lilly and Jason playing games on their phones. Blaine had gone inside with Kurt for sound check on the music.

"Things are really great," Santana said, her eyes brightening with pride. She loved talking about her work. "We've got music programs in half of the public schools in the Bronx using Latino music to get more students involved in the programs. Blaine's been a really big help too, getting some of his artists in to talk to the students about the importance of the arts in turning their lives around. It's been amazing."

"And our ballerina?" Puck turned to Brittany.

"It's modern dance Puck and I'm sure you would know exactly how things are going if you talked to your brother more," Brittany reprimanded.

"Yeah!" Jake yelled as he walked up to them at the bar and ordered a drink. He was dressed in a slick Armani suit and suddenly Puck wasn't so upset that Blaine had decided to dress him up a little more. After all, he couldn't look worse than his baby brother.

"Looking good, baby Puckerman," Santana greeted, giving him a quick peck on the cheek.

Jake kissed her back before turning to Brittany and doing the same. "You two look lovely as ever," he said and turned to Puck. "How you doing man?"

Puck pulled Jake into a big hug. "I'm doing good, bro. How are you twinkle toes? How's life been treatin ya? You got yourself a girl yet?" he asked teasingly.

Before Jake could answer though Santana chimed in. "You should see the girls flock to him. Your bro's got major game and he doesn't even know it."

Jake rolled his eyes and chuckled but didn't deny it. There were several girls he and Brittany danced with who tried to grab his attention and while he flirted a little, he never followed through. There
was always something missing. "What can I say? No one can resist the Puckerman charm," he joked lightly.

Puck nodded his approval and slapped his brother on the back. "Can I get a hell yeah!"

Blaine and Kurt slipped out through the stage door and into the lobby. Lilly immediately ran over to Kurt to give him hugs while Jason hung back, not wanting to appear too overly enthusiastic in public. Kurt walked over and ruffled his curls then turned to his friends.

"I'm so glad you guys could all come," Kurt said, kissing the girls on the cheeks and giving Puck a tight hug. "Especially, you," Kurt whispered in his ear. "You look quite dapper this evening."

Puck shrugged nonchalantly but he smiled, pleased with himself at being able to bring a smile to Kurt's face. Compliments from Kurt were few and far between and if he were honest with himself they meant a lot to him. He didn't want anyone else to know that though and completely ignored Blaine's arrogant smirk in the corner.

"Where's everyone else?" Kurt started to ask, wringing his hands together as he looked amongst the crowd.

Harmony and Marley rushed in at that moment and barely made it through the door before they had an armful of Kurt. "Oh thank heavens you're here," he breathed in relief as he hugged each of them.

"Sorry sweetie," Marley said quietly. "Harmony and I were so busy catching up this morning after staying out way too late last night and we lost track of the time."

Kurt huffed and checked the time on his phone again. "The show's about to start and I'm going crazy and I need you all to be here and Jeff-"

"Jeff, Quinn, and Nick are running late," Harmony supplied knowingly. "Nick just called me. They got stuck in traffic on the West Side Highway but they should be here any minute."

"This place looks incredible, Kurt," Marley said in awe taking in her surroundings. Her eyes landed on Jake and the others and her heart skipped a familiar beat. Even after all the years apart, Jake still somehow managed to make her melt. "My students did not for a second believe that I knew the great Kurt Hummel Anderson. They are going to flip when I get back with proof that I do."

Kurt chuckled softly. "I'll do you one better. Blaine, the kids, and I are heading to Ohio in a few days to celebrate my showing at Fashion Week with my family since they couldn't come in to the city. I'll stop by your classroom and say hi."

Marley smiled excitedly. "That would be amazing."

"You're not going to miss my opening night though, right?" Harmony asked frantically. "Just because you've been to all my shows doesn't mean I don't need you at this one."

"Don't worry, I'll be there," Kurt assured her. He looked around the room for Blaine and found him and the kids with the girls and the Puckerman's. "Blaine will show you guys to your seats. I'm going call Jeff and hurry his ass up." Marley and Harmony said goodbye and headed towards their friends.

Jake noticed her immediately when she arrived and held his breath as she headed for him now. Marley smiled softly at him and returned it. They only had a few moments to chat before taking their seats and he knew the quick hellos would not be enough to satisfy his curiosity about his high
school sweetheart. He asked if maybe they could catch up at the after party and she blushingly agreed. He often wondered what life would have been like had they not broken up after high school, but he had no regrets, knowing that their lives had taken them in very different directions. Still, the thrill he got when she smiled coyly at him was something he didn't want to let go of. Maybe, he thought, tonight would be the start of a new beginning.

Kurt pulled out his cell phone, checking the time once more. The show was starting in fifteen minutes and he needed to get backstage. Just as he dialed Jeff's number, he spotted a very irritated and pregnant Quinn headed his way.

"Oh my god Kurt, I'm so sorry we're late," she apologized as they hugged.

Kurt placed his hand on her large belly and smiled appreciatively. "I'm so glad you're here. I know you must be aching right now." Quinn waved her hand dismissively. She was six months pregnant and hated everything these days. But she wasn't about to miss Kurt's debut. "Did you guys run into traffic?"

Jeff laughed almost manically. "No, we just had to stop at almost every bathroom between Boston and here," he complained.

"You have a 20 pound baby pushing on your bladder and see how often you have to pee!" Quinn snapped.

Kurt bit back a laugh, glancing behind them to see Nick. "Did you have to listen to this the entire trip here?"

Nick held up his hands. "I plead the fifth Your Honor," he said.

Kurt smiled and gave his shoulder a squeeze. "An attorney always knows when to talk and when to stay silent," Kurt said with a wink. "Okay guys I have to go backstage. Blaine's over at the bar with everyone else and he'll show you guys where to sit."

The boys nodded and took off while Quinn smiled and gave him one more hug. "Thanks. Good luck tonight. I'm sure everything is beautiful."

The stage manager came out and whispered in Kurt's ear urging him backstage. Blaine rushed over to kiss him one more time, wondering whether "Break A Leg" was appropriate for a Fashion Show or not. "It's going to be a wonderful show, Beautiful."

"I love you," Kurt whispered before disappearing backstage.

Blaine gathered the Crew and his kids, honorary members of the Crew, and led them to their seats in the front row along the stage right side of the runway. The chatter in the theater was deafening as everyone began to take their seats. Blaine was remarkably proud of the turnout Kurt had gotten. It may have been his first show at Fashion Week but his name had been on the lips of some of the top designers and critics for a year now and everyone was looking forward to seeing the Hummel Anderson Crew Collection.

The lights dimmed, the audience quieted, and Kurt took the stage and headed to the microphone. "Good afternoon everyone," he greeted. "I want to thank you all for coming out today. We have a great show ahead for you and I know everyone's eager to begin so I won't take up much of your time. I just have some acknowledgements I want to make before we begin. First and foremost I need to thank my wonderful husband, Blaine Anderson, who provided the absolutely stunning music for tonight. My beautiful children for being so patient with me these past few months, and
for allowing me to dress them up, though not always willingly," he joked and the crowd laughed. "I want to thank everyone that has worked with me to get these designs done, Kayla, Jennifer, Charles, and Jane. Only certain people can handle my crazy and you four have been just as crazy as I am. I wouldn't have been able to do this without you. And I can't forget my ever so patient assistant Michael. I was sure you'd quit after the first few days but, young man, you are amazingly tolerant and if tonight goes well, you are in for a major raise," he teased. Michael smiled proudly backstage.

"Someone once said, the people who touch your life and your heart, are important forever and that the best friendships in your life just might be the ones that nobody else understands. My debut collection celebrates those people in my life who were just a little bit different, a little bit left of center. Because I know I'm not alone, we all have those people in our lives and we all want to be that person in someone else's life. That person who is loved irrationally. That person who changes someone else's heart for good."

Kurt turned to his friends and smiled, pointing them out to the audience and letting them have the spotlight for a moment. "So I need to thank my Crew. My life has forever been changed because of you. I couldn't have asked for a better set of people to share this moment with. You have each inspired me in one way or another, and my designs tonight have been inspired by each of you and our often crazy, sometimes tragic and always beautiful love for one another. Thank you for always being you, making me who I am, and letting me always know to whom I belong." The crew cheered louder than the rest, Puck going as far as standing up and fist pumping the air as he hollered Kurt's name. Kurt laughed and shook his head. "So, without further ado, I introduce to you The Hummel Anderson Crew Collection."

"Goodnight honey," Kurt kissed Lilly's forehead as Blaine tucked her in. "Sweet dreams."

"Goodnight Papa, I liked your clothes," Lilly yawned. Blaine came around the bed and kissed her cheek. "Goodnight Daddy, I liked your music."

"Goodnight Princess, we love you." Blaine turned Lilly's lamp on, her ceiling shining with stars, and Kurt turned out the light before closing the door behind them.

Blaine went to Jason's room, not surprised to find their teenager still on the phone. "-so then he says-

"Jay, lights out," Kurt said from the doorway.

"Just five more minutes," Jason pleaded. "I was telling Jen about Uncle Puck's epic fail with that model today."

Blaine chuckled and shook his head, walking into the room and grabbing Jason's phone from his hands. "Goodnight, Jennifer. Jason will call you tomorrow."

"Goodnight Mr. Hummel Anderson," a meek voice replied. Blaine hung up the phone and handed it back to Jason. "No texting or your phone becomes mine. You can tell her tomorrow."

Jason rolled his eyes. "Fine. Night, Dad."

"I will check," Blaine warned. "And I mean with the company, not on your half deleted phone."

"Fine!" Jason said and snapped the phone onto his charger.

"Goodnight son," Blaine said, ruffling Jason's hair as Kurt walked in. Blaine leaned in close. "If
"you ask me the models seemed a hell of a lot more interested in you than Uncle Puck," he whispered with a twinkle in his eye.

"Hey, hey, no whispering unless I'm involved," Kurt smirked as he walked into the room. He motioned for Jason to lie down, sitting down on the side of the bed.

"I'm too old to get tucked in Papa," Jason complained.

"You're never too old to get tucked in," Kurt retorted with a smirk. "Sleep well."

Kurt kissed the top of his head and started to walk out. "Papa," Kurt turned around at the doorway. "Tonight was incredible. I'm really proud of you."

Kurt smiled softly. "Thanks, Jay." He peaked around the corner to make sure Blaine was gone. "Go ahead and text that girlfriend of yours but don't stay up too late," he whispered.

"She's not my girlfriend!" Jason immediately argued though his cheeks flushed pink. "And Dad said..."

"Whatever you say," Kurt snorted then added, "And don't worry about your Dad. I'll keep him busy enough," he winked before closing the door behind him.

Kurt walked down the hall to the living room, humming with appreciation when he saw that Blaine had poured them two glasses of wine and was lighting a fire in the fireplace. The temperatures had dropped with the sun and a beautiful fall chill had been in the air on the walk home. He collapsed onto the couch and rested his head back.

"I'm exhausted," he sighed. "I think I could sleep for a week."

Blaine snuggled in next to his husband, reaching for their wine glasses and handing one to Kurt. "A toast to you and the incredible job you did tonight. I have never been prouder."

"A toast to you," Kurt continued, "for being an amazing husband and father. And composer and lyricist."

"The music was a big hit," Blaine beamed.

Kurt nodded with a soft smile. "Yes, it was."

"So a toast to us," Blaine leaned in and kissed Kurt sweetly. "For everything we've been through and everything we've overcome."

"And everything still awaiting us in the future," Kurt added.

They clinked their glasses and took a sip, Blaine slipping his arm around Kurt's waist, pulling him in close. Kurt rested his head on Blaine's chest, where he always belonged. "We made it," Kurt said quietly with a happy sigh.

Blaine kissed Kurt's forehead with a proud smile. "We made it."

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