Leaving The Liars In Lima (And Finding Truth In New York)

by Owl_Be_Writing

Summary

What if Elliott hadn't mysteriously disappeared in season six, and had instead been there for Kurt in New York, following Kurt's breakup with Blaine? Elliott introduces Kurt to three of his friends, and Kurt starts a new band and a new life in New York.

It's not only his life that changes.

I always include links to YouTube for the music, and to videos that I feel will enhance your reading experience, in the Author's Notes at the bottom.

Fair warning, the parts in this series that are separate from the main fic are mostly non-consecutive, with prequels and bonus scenes.
It was March 15; the Ides of March. ‘Beware the Ides of March’ was advice he should have heeded.

As Kurt slowly made his way back to his apartment, his heart was heavy. The things he'd said to Blaine, breaking up with Blaine; it had all felt right in the moment, but doubt and regret crept into his consciousness.

‘It's just shock,’ he reasoned with himself, ‘my life just dramatically changed. My mind and body don’t know what to do with the information yet.’

But it wasn’t just shock- his feelings of remorse mounted by the day, and he ran on autopilot through school and work that week.

'Not A Day Goes By' from Merrily We Roll Along haunted him, and it ran through his head in a loop by Saturday. His thoughts were interrupted when his phone chirped to let him know he had a text.

_Hey Kurt, I haven't heard from you in days. You missed Purim_

It was Elliott. Kurt had managed to isolate himself so thoroughly in his sorrow, he had forgotten that he yet had a friend that remained in New York.

And then a second text arrived.

_Are you okay??_

Kurt nearly cried. He had felt so alone this past week; like no one cared.

He texted back,

_Not really_

The reply came back,

_What happened?_

Kurt paused a moment before he texted,

_I'd rather not say over text_

And immediately, he received,

_Come over. There's something I need to tell you about too_

Kurt blinked. What could Elliott need to tell him?

_Coming right over_
Kurt knocked on the door to Elliott's apartment. After a moment, it was opened.

By someone who was decidedly not Elliott.

He had eyes of a sharp green (was his left pupil larger than his right, or was that a trick of the light?), a slim figure, an incredibly unruly and huge mop of red hair, pale skin, a face devastated with freckles, and he wore a dark blue t-shirt with a small tear in the collar, blue jeans that were about ripped to hell, dirty canvas sneakers, and a mischievous grin with chipped front teeth.

“You are not Elliott,” Kurt stated.

“Nah,” he answered, and revealed an Irish accent, “I'm his new flatmate.” He looked Kurt up and down. He met his eyes again. “You are exactly where you are supposed to be.”

Kurt stared wide eyed at Trouble, before he craned his neck to try to look over his shoulder, into the apartment, and cried out, “Elliott!”

Elliott emerged from the bathroom. As he walked over and assessed Kurt’s face, he looked at the other man with some mild exasperation. “What did you do?”

Offended, the man answered defensively, “Nothing! He was confused to see me, so I told him I was your flatmate and that he was at the right place.”

“And how did you say it, Keiran?”

“...in English.”

As Elliott sighed, Kurt asked him, “Elliott? Is he really your new roommate? Or should I call the police?”

Keiran’s head whipped over to look at Kurt with raised eyebrows that furrowed as he said, “The fuck?”

“This is already going badly,” Elliott muttered, before he addressed Kurt. “Hey, Kurt, this is my new roommate, Keiran. He's one of my best friends. Keiran, this is Kurt. He is also one of my best friends. I've wanted to introduce you two to each other for a long time, and I am now thinking that was a bad idea.”

“His name is Karen?”


Kurt couldn't help but glare. “Excuse me?”

“Yeah, this is going great,” sighed Elliott as he ushered Kurt inside and shut the door. Elliott then looked at them both with a hand on his hip and a raised eyebrow. “I'm sure you both know how I don't tolerate drama? Let it go and say hi.”

As Kurt tried to school his features, Keiran took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He was the first to speak,

“So, you're Kurt?” He smiled, clearly going for charming when he continued, “The Boring Broadway Boy?”
Kurt’s features flunked and dropped out. “What.”

Elliott’s hand went to his face. He pinched the bridge of his nose and closed his eyes. “G-ddammit, Keiran.” He looked at Kurt apologetically and said, “I never said you were boring.”

“Boring isn’t bad, you're pretty boring,” said Keiran to Elliott before he went on to say, “he can't even legally drink yet and he's getting married. To his high school sweetheart, no less. Not a life on the edge.”

Elliott looked at Keiran, tilted his head, and said in voice that sounded almost fond, if mildly confused, “You think I'm boring?”

“Boring isn't bad; interesting people are annoying as fuck.” Keiran gestured towards himself. “Exhibit A.”

Elliott laughed then, and reached and ruffled Keiran’s hair as he said, “Shut up, Keiran.”

“Fuck off,” Keiran returned with grin as he swatted Elliott’s hand away.

They were taken out of their bonding when they heard a shaky breath. They turned to look at Kurt, and saw eyes that stared at nothing, a lip that shook ever so slightly.

Elliott’s smile dropped off his face. “Kurt?” he asked.

Another shaky breath. “I'm not,” he said.

A short pause before Keiran asked, amusement also evaporated, “You're not what?

“Getting married. I'm not getting married,” he gasped, “I made a huge mistake, and I'm not getting married. I'm not getting married. I'm not.” Kurt broke off into sobs.

Elliott went to him immediately, wrapped one arm around Kurt's shoulders, and the other moved to gently press a hand over Kurt's heart. He guided him to the couch as he murmured, “Let's sit down, I'm here, we can sit here all night, cry as much as you need to, I'm here, I'm here.”

Keiran moved along towards the couch with them, and awkwardly stood by an arm rest. Until his expression wasn't awkward anymore. It was...speculative? ...angry? He moved to stand in front of the couch, by the corner of the coffee table, before them.

“So, Kurt,” he began, “what did he do?”

Chapter End Notes

The reason I came up with as to why Elliott was in New York when Kurt needed him in my timeline, and not in canon- Adam Lambert, when he was about Elliott's age, got a job as a singing waiter on a cruise ship. So my headcanon for why he was absent in canon is that he got that job, and in my timeline, he didn't.

Glee has always been vague as hell about timelines. Based on episode plotlines involving university with Blaine and Artie before it, and the clothing worn in this episode by the characters while they were outside, I have concluded that the most reasonable date for the finale episode of season five, The Untitled Rachel Berry
Project, was October 12th, 2013. So my story begins March 15, 2014. Trying to get everything in this fic as close to canon-compliant as possible, to satisfy my own obsessive mind, having to watch episodes that I hated for various reasons, wasn't fun. The rest wasn't trouble, in that I didn't mind it, but all of it was time consuming. All because I wanted this to be a proper alternate timeline; most things outside of New York would play out much the same, if not exactly.

If you come to wonder why it's written as 'G-d' when Elliott is the one saying it, I am writing him as Jewish. And Purim is a Jewish holiday.

I wrote this story with the format of the source material very much in mind. So I have a song selected for every significant scene, like the show we loved and came to hate. Links to the song(s) that relate to the chapter will be included in the author's notes for the chapter, with my encouragement that you listen and imagine the characters singing them.

(Incidentally, Kurt has some nerve reacting like that when he thinks Keiran’s name is ‘Karen’, when his own middle name is ‘Elizabeth’.)

This Chapter's Song-

Not A Day Goes By from Merrily We Roll Along.
“So, Kurt,” Keiran began, “what did he do?”

Kurt and Elliott both lifted their heads to look at Keiran, slightly caught off guard.

Through a sniffle, Kurt managed a “huh?”

“You said, ‘I made a mistake’, suggesting you're the one that broke it off, right?”

Kurt slowly nodded.

“Here's the thing about boring people. They don't break off year-long engagements on a whim. He did something, or several somethings. Tell us his sins, we'll sort out the sheep from the goats, and tell you if he should go to hell.”

“Keiran!” admonished Elliott, while Kurt stood up.

“I'm not telling you anything, you're insane,” Kurt huffed, “you've heard too much already, I'm leaving.”

But Keiran got in his way to the door, and put a hand on his shoulder as he said, “You're not going anywhere; you have the look like you'll do something stupid, like walk into traffic, or worse, call your ex.” Keiran guided him back to the couch, and nudged him to sit back down, as he stated, “You're going to stay here, and drink whisky until you don't have feelings anymore.”

“That...doesn't sound like a bad idea, actually,” Kurt acquiesced, as he sat back down.

Elliott shook his head. “You said it yourself, Keiran,” Elliott argued, “he can't drink legally yet.”

“What, you a cop?”

“I'll be 21 in two months, Elliott,” Kurt said, as he inclined his head towards him.

“Oh, right,” Elliott nodded, “I forgot. You're not that much younger than me.” He smiled as he gripped Kurt’s hand gently, and said, “And you clearly could use a drink.”

“Trust an Irishman’s view on the need for alcohol,” quipped Keiran as he walked back over. He had grabbed a large bottle of whiskey and three shot glasses, and he set them down on the coffee table as he sat down on the other side of Kurt.

Kurt side-eyed Keiran as he asked, “Isn't that the opposite of what one should do?”

Before Keiran could react to this statement, Elliott offhandedly said, “You're not really Irish.”

Kurt quickly turned his head to look at Elliott. “What?”

“His dad’s American. If one or both of your parents are American, you're an American, no matter where you're born.”
“Nobody fucking cares about that right now, Elliott; we're trying to get Broadway Boy drunk,”
Keiran dismissed, and as he poured shots he idly said, “you don't want to tell me anything, you
don't have to. Did you know that basically every creature that’s physically capable of being gay is
gay? I mean, not the whole species. Except these lizards that are all lesbians.”

Kurt chose to ignore the crazy man and the fact he hated whisky and gulped down his first shot.

It didn't take many shots, god, he was such a lightweight, before Kurt was sure that, no, this had
been a terrible idea. His pain was not numbed, but amplified, and he couldn't bear to hear any more
stories about gay animals.

As Kurt began to sob again, Keiran cursed, “Fuck. Had a feeling we should’ve smoked pot instead,
but I figured you wouldn't go for it.”

“I'm not a pothead!”

Keiran adopted a bemused smile. “And I was right.”

As he made choking sounds between pained cries, he gasped out, “...he was only late for dinner!”

Keiran and Elliott looked at each other. Keiran slightly shook his head, frown returned.

“That was it?” Elliott asked gently as he returned his gaze to Kurt, and rubbed circles between his
shoulders.

“Yes...well, no,” Kurt answered, and he suddenly sounded unsure, “it...it was a lot of things.”

Keiran gazed into his shot glass as he asked, “Lots of little things you'd just kept letting go?”

Kurt had stopped crying; he looked contemplative. “I'm not sure how little they were,” he
murmured, “...and at least one wasn't little at all.”

After a beat, Elliott asked, “What was it?”

Kurt took in a deep breath. “He cheated on me-”

“-okay, conversation over,” Keiran declared, putting his glass down on the coffee table with a
‘whack’, “don't need to say another word. Cheating cunt, time to take out the trash. Should have
ended the relationship right there.”

Kurt responded, with shoulders sagged, “I did. But, then-”

“-you took him back, thinking he'd be better, but he was worse. Mark me, never take a cheater
back. Whatever is miswired in their brain won't suddenly fix itself.”

Elliott sat up then, and he frowned at Keiran; he looked offended. “Don’t you believe in giving
people second chances, Keiran?”

“No.” Keiran said, as he first looked at Kurt, “he thinks Berkeley Boy wouldn't have done it again,
but cheaters are never one-time offenders.” He switched his gaze to Elliott, “He would have hurt
you again, Elliott; you're damned lucky he moved to California and the two of you broke it off.”

“I believe in second chances, Keiran,” Elliott said, defensive, “if someone apologizes sincerely,
taking all the blame, promising not to-”

“-he didn't.”
Elliott and Keiran snapped their eyes from each other back to Kurt, startled.

“He didn’t?” asked Keiran. He didn't sound surprised.

“He did say he was sorry, but that he was lonely,” Kurt swallowed, “...he basically said it was my fault. ...I'm pretty sure he still thinks it's my fault.”

“Yeah, alright,” said Elliott, “I'm no longer trying to be neutral. That's toxic, Kurt. ...I wish you had told me all this, before.”

“...I don't like to air my dirty laundry in public.”

Keiran nodded. “Yeah,” he said, “that's how they get you.”

Elliott looked at him, again. “Keiran?”

That was when Kurt softly said, “I think I'll sleep, now.”

Keiran and Elliott both attempted to jump into action, Keiran saying “Wait!” while Elliott cried, “We should get some water in you, first,” but Kurt was out.

“Well,” sighed Keiran, “he'll have a hangover.”

Elliott huffed out through his nose. “I'll take first shift watching him.”

Keiran rolled his eyes. “We should've smoked pot.”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter's song-
Take Out The Trash, by They Might Be Giants
Kurt was woken up by what sounded to him like a series of loud clangs, and morning sun stabbed at his eyes. He groaned loudly.

He heard an Irish voice declare, “He lives!” but it was Elliott's face he saw when his eyes focused.

“Hey,” said Elliott, softly. He leaned slightly over the back of the couch, concern etched across his face. “How do you feel?”

“I had a dream,” Kurt murmured. “You and Keiran were garbagemen, singing 'Take Out The Trash' by They Might Be Giants.”

Elliott blinked a couple times. “Take Out The Trash by They Might Be Giants?”

“Oh, that old classic,” quipped Keiran as he appeared, and draped himself over the back of the couch next to Elliott.

Elliott gave him a bit of side eye. “Keiran.”

“What, you’ve heard of that song before?” When Elliott continued to stare, Keiran relented, “I'm sure it's a fine tune; I like their song about Istanbul.”

Elliott quirked a smile at him. “Not Constantinople?”

Keiran grinned. “Cause it's Istanbul, not Constantinople.”

“So, if you have a date in Constantinople-”

“-she’ll be waiting in Istanbul!”

They might have continued, if Kurt had not moaned,

“Oh god, please, not that now.”

“Oh,” said Keiran, “right.” He stood back up, and left for the kitchen.

Elliott watched him go for a moment, before he looked back at Kurt, and asked, “So I was wearing that uniform garbagemen wear?”

Kurt squinted, trying to remember. “No,” he answered after moment, “not exactly. You were in the uniform, but it was tailored, and black. With silver buttons and bright blue trim at the collar.”

As he frowned thoughtfully, Elliott nodded. “Alright. Yeah. I could work with that.”

When Keiran returned at that moment, Kurt continued, in his direction, in a deadpan, “You were just a garbage man.”

He stared at Kurt for a beat with a flat expression, before he thwacked down a plate and a glass, the
noise making Kurt flinch.


Kurt looked at what was a plate of scrambled eggs and a glass of some sort of red-orange mystery beverage. He turned his gaze to Elliott, who smiled encouragingly. “It's real, Kurt,” he promised, “a miracle.”

Kurt looked back at this ‘hangover cure’. He decided to try the eggs first, they looked normal enough. He took a bite-

Oh my god.

After he had chewed and swallowed, he cried, “These are perfect. I want them when I'm sober.”

Keiran crossed his arms and lifted his chin, closed his eyes as he smirked.

After several more bites of the wonderful eggs, Kurt paused for a moment to look at the tall glass with trepidation. “That's the bad part, isn't it?” he asked Elliott, and pointed with his fork.

Elliott shook his head. “No...it's not bad.”

After a second’s hesitation, Kurt shrugged, set his fork down, and lifted the glass, took a gulp. Huh. It wasn't bad.

It wasn't good, but it wasn't bad.

Elliott and Keiran sat down on the couch, Elliott to the left of Kurt and Keiran next to Elliott. They each quietly took out their phones and texted each other, notifications on mute, while they waited for Kurt to finish eating. Kurt was grateful for the silence.

After a little over ten minutes, the plate was clean and the glass was drained, and Kurt had already begin to feel better.

A miracle, as promised.

“What was that,” Kurt asked, “some family remedy?”

Keiran guffed out a little laugh. “No. I did some research after a particularly horrible hangover and put together the recipes based on the info I found. Google is amazing, d'ya know what I mean?”

He leaned forward so as to have a better look at him, and Kurt questioned Keiran, “So what's in it? The eggs and the drink?”

He linked his hands, and Keiran had a self-satisfied stretch at the ceiling before he answered, “The eggs have fresh ginger, hot sauce, vinegar, Worcestershire, and salt and pepper. The drink is orange juice, tomato juice, Sprite, and Red Bull.”

“The eggs are amazing.”

“I know.”

Elliott grinned and shook his head at that, while Kurt oh-so-slightly frowned. There was a moment of silence, broken by Elliott.

“You remember what we talked about last night, Kurt?” He turned his body slightly to better face
Kurt, eyes soft.

Kurt turned his head to the side. “Yeah…” Silence returned for a few seconds, before Kurt looked at the two of them again. “…so you both think I made the right decision, breaking up with Blaine?”

“Kurt…”

“Mother Mary, a bad relationship is like a cult, isn't it?”

“Keiran.”

“Not helping?”

“No.”

Keiran nodded, and made a slow sweeping gesture with one hand as if to say, 'take the floor, Elliott.'

Elliott rested his right hand on Kurt’s left shoulder before he softly said, “Kurt, going by what you told us, that Blaine cheated on you and blamed you for it; that would be reason enough. And you said that there were other things?”

“Yes. ...he lied about things when I would have been fine with the truth. He got jealous and insecure whenever I did well. He’d be late to our dates. He’d...there really was a lot that he did. And we fought daily.”

Elliott's eyebrows slightly lifted. “Daily?”

Kurt nodded. “We yelled at each other everyday.”

“Sounds like you made the right decision to me,” remarked Keiran.

He hung his head, and Kurt heaved a deep sigh.

Silence again.

Then, Elliott gave Kurt's shoulder a slight squeeze and a small shove. “Hey,” he said, “you know what you need?”

Kurt raised his eyes to look at him.

With a smile, Elliott continued, “You need something to focus on. A project. You should start a new band.”

His mouth twisted into a half frown, and Kurt returned, “With whom? Dani’s moved to Philadelphia, our bass player upstate, and our drummer to Denver. I don't have the energy to hold auditions.”

“Well…” said Elliott, and he gazed to the side, “I just may know someone who sings a beautiful tenor and plays bass, who knows someone who plays drums and sings contralto, who knows an impressive keyboardist.” Elliott paused. Kurt looked at him expectantly. Keiran seemed oddly incredulous.

“...and who just so happens to be sharing a couch with us,” Elliott concluded.

After a beat of quiet, the response was a simultaneous “Hell no.” from Kurt and a “Fuck no.” from...
Keiran. They then stared at each other in offended surprise.

“Why the fuck ‘hell no’?” shot out Keiran.

“Why the hell,” Kurt paused, the word unsavory on his tongue, “‘fuck no’?”

“I asked first,” Keiran responded.

“Okay,” said Kurt as he shifted his position, and payed no attention as Elliott moved his hand from Kurt’s shoulder to press against his own forehead, “you drink, you smoke pot, your clothes are a wreck, and you’re incredibly crude. You’re a disaster waiting to happen.”

“And that is why my answer is ‘fuck no’,” returned Keiran, he showed his teeth, “I want nothing to do with your ‘family friendly’ version of Madonna bullshit.”

“I'm sorry,” said Kurt, as he squared his shoulders, brows furrowed, “but did you just call Madonna ‘bullshit’?”

Completely unheeded, Elliott murmured “Oh G-d,” to the ceiling.

“If you'd been listening, you'd have noticed I said that your family friendly version of Madonna is bullshit. She's not anything like family friendly. But, since you mentioned it, yeah. Madonna is overrated. Along with Gaga and any other pop diva you care to bring up.”

Kurt snapped his gaze to Elliott. “Is this boy seriously a friend of yours?”

“Don't look to him for backup,” Keiran chuckled, “he loves his ‘Whole Lotta Love’ every bit as much as he does his ‘Ray Of Light’.”

“Actually, Keiran,” said Elliott, “You're full of crap.”

Keiran raised an eyebrow. “Am I?”

Elliott leveled him with a perfect expression of ‘are you kidding me’. “Have you forgotten,” he began, “that we've been best friends for more than two years, and I know the music you listen to?”

Keiran’s face crumpled into ‘oh shit’. “Fuck.”

“Yeah.” Elliott turned back to Kurt. “Mika is his favorite artist, and I overheard him singing a Lady Gaga song to himself as he brushed his teeth two nights ago.”

Kurt's eyebrows raised in surprise. “He likes Mika?”

Elliott grinned. “He loves Mika.”

“Fuck off!” snapped Keiran.

Kurt and Elliott looked at him as he sighed and said, “I wasn't lying when I called Madonna and all ‘overrated’, but what I mean by that is that she's human. She's an artist, not a god. Madonna is just a singer, Mick Jagger is just a singer, Freddie Mercury was just a singer.”

Elliott shook his head in clear disagreement as he said, “Freddie Mercury was not ‘just a singer’.”

“Alright, but he's still a human.”

“Debatable.”
“Fuck off.”

Elliott really grinned then. “Shut up, Keiran.”

Keiran smiled. “Fuck off,” he repeated.

Kurt stared. He'd never seen anyone interact this way. What a bizarre relationship.

“Anyway,” said Keiran, “The way I said was to imply I thought she was shite, which I only did to aggravate you. I was a prick. Sorry.”

“Well,” replied Kurt, “I called you a disaster, first.”

Keiran gave a nod. “We're both cunts. Truce?”

“Truce.”

Keiran extended his right arm, and Kurt responded in kind, and they awkwardly shook hands with Elliott being in the way.

“Well, glad that's over with,” muttered Elliott, before saying, “so, is it still a ‘no’ from both of you? I really think leading a band again would help, Kurt. And, Keiran, you and Reece and Minnow complain about being bored all the time.”

Keiran scrunched up his nose a bit, and queried, “Why, exactly, does it have to be his band?”

Elliott looked to the ceiling, and then to the side at Keiran. “Do you want to spend hours arranging gigs?”

“Well, no, but-”

“-and do you have all-time access to a rehearsal space with decent acoustics and working heating, cooling, and plumbing that is ludicrously large and cheap, even for Bushwick?”

“You can stop bringing that up, Elliott,” Kurt interjected, “I found the answer.”

“You did?” Elliott prompted.

“Turns out the owner of the building is an eccentric billionaire who views renting out huge apartments at a low rate as charity work.”

Keiran’s eyebrow quirked high. “Rich people are weird.”

“No kidding,” Elliott agreed.

Keiran let out a brief puff of air before he said, “I'm too lazy to be in charge, anyway. And I have missed playing in a band, haven't been since I left Ireland. And I'm sure Reece and Minnow’d be up for it. So, yeah, alright then.”

Kurt shook his head slightly. “You're right about managing a band being good for me, Elliott, but I won't approve band members sight unseen. I need to hear the three of them perform, first.”

Elliott and Keiran shared a look. Keiran took up his phone, and Elliott turned back to Kurt as Keiran began...texting?

“Kurt,” asked Elliott, “Do you still have all those amps and mics?”
“...yeah?”

“And do you still have Derek’s drumkit that he left behind when he took off to Denver?”

“...yes.”

“Already texted Minnow and Reece, they're game. Give ‘em the address, Elliott.” Keiran got up and walked to an armchair that propped up an electric bass guitar. He picked it up, and turned back to Kurt and Elliott. “Let's go.”

Chapter End Notes

Songs referenced in this chapter (I consider them to be 'bonus tracks')-
Istanbul by They Might Be Giants
Whole Lotta Love by Led Zeppelin
Ray Of Light by Madonna(There is footage of Adam Lambert singing this song, but it's only available on a Chinese website, not on Youtube, thanks to VH1 being tightfisted over copyright. I didn't wish to risk linking you to a virus. So, instead, Madonna's original.)
Teeth by Lady Gaga
There had been a minute or two of protest from Kurt, but in less than an hour, people he didn't know were in his apartment. He watched as they set up amps and mics and instruments so that they could audition to be in a band Elliott suggested as some kind of rehabilitation project.

No one introduced themselves, just right to work to get things ready to audition with.

Well. These people all really did want to be in a band, didn't they?

When the mic that was to be for the drummer was in position, Kurt saw Keiran turn to the other auditioners, and he said, “Alright, here we are, what do you think we should play for The Master?”

The one that Kurt had heard the others call ‘Minnow’ spoke up then. He...she...Kurt wasn't sure, was an Asian with a very short bobbed haircut, wearing a dark purple button down dress shirt, black vest, sleek black trousers, and about the shiniest black dress shoes Kurt had ever seen. On feet that were not his own, that is. The one thing throwing off the polished look was the strange necklace with what looked like a blue Lego for a pendant. Which this Minnow had been chewing on while the three of them arranged equipment.

“Keiran,” said ‘Minnow’, “Should we not at least pretend to be professional?”

Keiran smiled wide at this. “Yeah. Have at it, Minnow.”

Minnow grinned, and then moved in front of all the instruments, and gestured for the other two to do the same so they'd be side-by-side. The woman they called ‘Reece’ stood next to Minnow, and Keiran next to Reece. Kurt and Elliott each grabbed a chair and sat down as this happened.

“Let us each introduce ourselves,” came the announcement, “Except Elliott, because we all know who he is. I am Minori Yamane.”

“Teresa Messina, call me Reece.” Kurt took a proper moment to look at her. She was tall, Elliott was the only one in the room taller, beautiful, and her skin was very dark, all the better to contrast with the white ¾ sleeve blouse she wore with light blue jeans and gray sneakers. But, of course, it would have been easy to miss all of that what with her impressive hair- thick dreadlocks, hanging to just below the shoulders, and bright blue.

There was a pause. Minori (is that a girl’s name?) waited patiently, and looked in Keiran’s direction.

“Oh, right, I'm Keiran Connolly.”

Minori nodded, and looked back at their audience of two. In that general location, anyway, she (?) specifically gazed at slightly over Kurt’s right shoulder. “And to whom are we presenting ourselves?”

“Oh,” Kurt said, blinking. “I'm Kurt Hummel.”
“We are very glad you granted us this audition, Mr. Hummel!”

“...mr. Hummel...?” Kurt repeated, perplexed, with no response.

Minori turned to Reece and Keiran to say, “I propose that we perform Feel Good Inc., by the Gorillaz.”

“Sounds good to me,” agreed Keiran, with a shrug.

Reece nodded. “I can rock that.”

There was moment of silence as Minori again looked towards Kurt.

“Oh! Yes, go ahead, please,” Kurt approved, and gestured for them to proceed.

And the three took their places, Keiran on the right with the bass, Reece in the center on drums, Minori on the left at the keyboards and some type of flat square box covered in buttons.

A beat of quiet.

Shattered by a delightful cackle from Reece before Minori quietly began to sing ‘feel good’ over and over, as Reece attacked the drums with great energy. And then, as he played the distinctive bass line, Keiran sang the verse,

~City's breaking down on a camel’s back! They just have to go, ‘cause they don't know whack~

Elliott had been right about Keiran having a good tenor. He'd need to hear how he'd do with a more melodic piece, but this held promise. Minori’s voice was nice too. And they certainly played their instruments well.

Oh, he actually felt embarrassed, now. He knows he can trust Elliott, why didn't he?

Kurt shook himself out of this beratement and returned his focus to the already-proving-to-be-brilliant performance in front of him, and ignored Elliott, who sat next to him at his right, and wore a little smile.

~My dreams, they've gotta kiss me, ‘cause I don't get sleep, no...~

Kurt leaned forward a bit, interested how they were going to play this part without a guitar. And Keiran played his own version of the guitar riff on his bass as Minori sang the refrain. Kurt propped his elbow on his thigh, rested his chin in his hand. It sounded so different that way. Centered. More thoughtful?

~Windmill, windmill, for the land; is everybody in?~
It can be easy to forget the drummer when they do a good job. Reece brought in a reminder of her presence when she laid down the rap.

~~ladies, homies, at the track; it's my chocolate attack!~~

Kurt's gaze remained on her through her verse, watched as her dreads swang as she slapped down rhythm and word with passion.

When the rap ended and Reece had finished her sea-witch worthy laugh, she twirled a stick between her fingers during the brief interlude before she had to slam the beat back down.

The bass version of the guitar riff drew Kurt in even more the second time. Keiran and Minori did the repeat of the refrain together.

~~Take it all in on your stride, it is slipping, falling down

Love forever, love is free, let's turn forever, you and me~~

When the reprise of the rap came, it was delivered with no less fire than before. Kurt enjoyed Reece’s mad cackle even more than he did the previous two times. The same applied to Minori’s soft repeating of ‘feel good’.

Shortly after the last note was played, Elliott turned in his seat towards Kurt. “Well Kurt,” he asked, “what did you think?”

“Yes,” said Minori, “what is your judgement, Mr. Hummel?”

The was a brief moment where the CD of Kurt’s brain skipped at being called ‘mr. Hummel’ again. He then stood up and answered as he looked back and forth to smile at them all, “I loved it, you're all great! At instruments and vocals both. You were impressive, Keiran, you have a real talent on the bass. And, girls,” he said while he looked at Reece and Minori in turn, and just threw out a guess at Minori’s gender, “you were both amazing.”

Minori smiled, but Reece firmly stated, “Minnow’s not a girl.”

‘Dang’, thought Kurt. “Sorry,” he apologized, “I wasn't sure. I didn't realize you were a boy.”

Minori’s head shook slowly. “I am not a boy.”

Kurt blinked. “What?”

“I am not a girl. I am not a boy.”

Kurt’s face pinched slightly in confusion. “I don't think I understand.”

“Of course you don’t,” Keiran quipped, “you're from Ohio.”

Kurt’s jaw dropped, and he turned to face Keiran, but before he could give his (negative) reaction
to the insult, Reece blazed in herself.

“Oh, I'm sorry, Keiran Peter Connolly,” she fired as she strode over to him, “I was not aware that you, unlike every other human being on this planet, emerged from the womb completely woke and educated. Everybody has to learn every thing some time.” She took in a breath and pointed a finger at him before she said, “You never fail to be a rude son of a-”

“Alright!”, Keiran cried, as he threw his hands up in surrender. “I'm sorry! Fuck. Kurt,” he said, as he looked to him, “Minnow doesn't identify as male or female. They're neither. It's called agender.”

Kurt's right eyebrow took a small lift. “A gender?”

“No. It is one word,” Minori said, “agender.”

“Oh.” Kurt nodded with comprehension, “like ‘atypical’.”

Reece did not seem pleased with that word comparison, but Minori nodded in return and agreed, “Yes! And I am also that. In many ways.”

Kurt had an instinct not to question that. But he did have one more question.

“Is that why they call you 'Minnow’?” he queried. “Minori is a girl’s name? Or a boy's name?”

“No! Minori is genderless, like me. Many Japanese names are like that. I am fortunate in that way.” They continued, “I am Minnow because Teresa is Reece.”

“Okay…” said Kurt, as he chose to not investigate that non-explanation, not in the mood for what could possibly be a long story. “You're all in,” he declared, “we have a band. Now. Let's retire to the livingroom to discover what our name shall be.”

Elliott winced. “Oh no.”

Reece looked at him. “What's the matter?”

He said nothing, only shook his head as he walked to the livingroom.

Chapter End Notes

Author’s Notes

Minnow was chewing on something like this.

This is what a contralto voice sounds like.
Two examples of awesome bass guitar.

Song in this chapter-
Feel Good Inc. by Gorillaz
It had been about an hour since the five of them had sat down in the livingroom to try and hash out a name for their band. It...had gone less than smoothly.

“Elliott, be honest,” asked Keiran, exhausted, “was it this much of a trial to get to ‘Pamela Lansbury’?”

Reece did a brief double take. “Pamela Lansbury?”

“That was the name of his old band,” Keiran answered.

“You're shitting me,” said Reece as she stared at Keiran.

Keiran shook his head. “I shit you not.”

“Pamela Lansbury,” Reece repeated, before she turned to look at Kurt and asked, “Seriously?”

Kurt was offended, but Minori looked thoughtful and then, before Kurt had said anything, their finger pointed in the air and they cried, “Ah! Pamela Anderson and Angela Lansbury.”

Kurt turned his head to look at them with surprise, then delight. “Yes, exactly!”

They nodded as they continued, “Like Marilyn Manson. Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson.”

Kurt frowned slightly as he shook his head. “...we weren't anything like Marilyn Manson.”

“Ha!” Keiran crowed with delight, “You in ten layers of white makeup, with black lipstick and thick eyeliner and hair dye. That'd be a look for you.”

Minori grinned and said earnestly, “You should do that for Halloween, Mr. Hummel.”

“No. What's wrong with Pamela Lansbury?” asked Kurt, defensive. “Elliott and everyone else in the band liked it.”

After he had nodded, Elliott asserted, “Yeah. It's quirky and different.”

Keiran cocked a skeptical eyebrow as he gazed at Elliott. “Was the music you did ‘quirky and different’?”

“Well...no,” Elliott admitted, after a pause.

Kurt saw Minori shake their head and frown, before they argued, “I think the name stands for raw sex appeal and quiet dignity.”

There was a beat as Kurt and Elliott stared at this person that had echoed Kurt's own words, uttered nearly a year ago.

As he looked at them, Kurt said to Minnow, “I like you.”
Minnow’s face lit up. “I like you too, Mr. Hummel!”

Kurt squinted slightly. With his life experience, he could not honestly say that Minnow was the strangest person he had met. But they were certainly new. “Why are you calling me that?”

Minnow appeared surprised by the question. “You are a figure of authority,” came the answer, “does it make you uncomfortable?”

‘Figure of authority?’ he thought.

“Well,” he responded, “more like confused. It's a bit strange.”

Minnow grinned, eyes sparkling. “That is funny,” they said.

Kurt was reminded of Keiran’s presence when he heard him chuckle. He looked at him to find a smirk. “Oh, now you've done it.”


“They're never gonna call you anything else,” Reece clarified, and she shook her head with a smile.

Kurt's eyes flicked back to Minnow, to find a happy face in contest with the sun. Well then. As nicknames went, it wasn't so bad. And clearly it was no small source of delight for, whatever the reason, this...odd little fish. “Okay,” he said, with a smile.

“Yes,” they agreed, before they said, “northern lights.”

“Hmm?”

“Band name.”

“Oh, right.” He'd forgotten what they had been in the process of for a minute there. He considered it for a moment, before he said, “I'm sorry, Minnow, but there has to be several bands by that name already. Like your other ideas.” He realized something, then. “All of your suggestions have had something to do with the sky.”

It was like Minnow suddenly glowed with a halo made of glitter. “YES.”

“They really like the sky. And weather. And space,” Reece confirmed.

“Weather and space is the sky,” Minnow objected.

“Right, sorry,” was Reece’s apology.

There were then a few seconds of silence.

“I got it,” then arrived from Keiran. “Rose Blood.”

Kurt gave a long look at Keiran, along with everyone else.

“'Rose Blood'?“ Reece asked, with a raised eyebrow.

“Like Citizen Kane,” Keiran explained, like it was obvious, “Citizen Kane, Rose Bud, Rose Blood. Our tag line would be, 'It's Not His Sled’.”

Minnow looked to the ceiling with a thoughtful expression. “I like it.”
Elliott nodded in agreement. “Yeah. Kinda intellectual, but not trying too hard.”

“No,” Kurt shot it down, “it sounds like an emo band.”

Before Keiran could protest, Reece added, “Yeah, Keiran, that's some My Chemical Romance bullshit.”

Keiran pouted. “Hmph.”

“How about we name ourselves after a historical figure,” Elliott volunteered, “just like Franz Ferdinand. We could be Thomas Jefferson, or Lafayette.”

“Fuck no,” rejected Keiran, “I always thought that sounded stodgy.”

“I agree,” Kurt said.

Keiran looked at him with both eyebrows raised. “No fucking way,” he said, “we agree on something?”

Kurt gave him a sideways glance before he returned his gaze to his notebook. “A broken clock is right twice a day,” he quipped.

Keiran had the look of someone who had bit into a chocolate they were told was a cherry cordial to discover it was actually coconut. “Fuck off,” he said, “you're a broken clock.”

Kurt lifted his eyes to give Keiran some solid eye contact. “I'm Greenwich Mean Time,” was the retort.

“Oh, fuck off!!”

“Hey,” said Reece, who would not acknowledge the ‘men’ with their squabble, “we're all looking to be future stars, right? Minnow. What constellations have five stars?”

“Cassiopeia,” was the immediate response. “From Greek mythology. A vain queen, punished by the gods for boasting about her beauty.”


“I'm not terribly superstitious,” said Kurt, “but I can't help but feel it's unwise to name our band after someone who was punished by the gods.”

Reece sighed. “Yeah.”

Minnow shifted, uncomfortable. “I do not care to be connected to vanity.”

Keiran shook his head. “And it sounds posh. Nah.”

Quiet dwelled in the room for a few moments. Everyone felt somewhat emptied out of ideas. Until.

“Wait,” said Elliott, both hands up, fingers spread. “Five Star Constellation.”

Reece looked at him with wide eyes, and a smile slowly spread across her face. “Yeah!”

Keiran slapped his thigh. “I like that! I want it!”
And Minnow let out a squeal. “YES.”

They then all looked at Kurt expectantly.

And there was no true hesitation.

“...yes. Yes! It has a real charm to it, some punch, I've definitely not heard it before, and it doesn't lock us into any genre! That's it, that's our name!”

Keiran punched the air with a “Fuck yeah!” a “Yes!” from Elliott, Reece cheered “Yaas bitch!”

And Minnow continued to squeal, which then became a whistle, stuttering almost like Morse Code. Reece grinned in response, and began to slap out a rhythm, used her own thighs and the floor, and uttered some pops and clicks of her own. Minnow began to sway side to side to the same beat that Reece produced.

Kurt looked about in some confusion, and saw that Elliott and Keiran only smiled. As if this was some common occurrence.

Kurt then shook his head, irritated at himself. To burst into song was normal, he knew that.

So he sat back and enjoyed Minnow’s song.

~I spy in the night sky, don't I

Phoebe, Io, Elara, Leda, Callisto,

Sinope.

19-80-S27

Janus, Dione, Portia-

So many moons!

Quiet in the sky at night!

Hot in the milky way!

Outside in....~

Kurt smiled to himself. Something told him he had found a solid new circle of friends.

Maybe even in Keiran.

Possibly.
Song in this chapter-
**Far Out (Beagle 2 Version) by Blur**
Having Connections

Hardly a moment passed after Minnow and Reece had completed their rendition of Blur’s ‘Far Out’ before Elliott stood up and declared a desire to make everyone a cup of tea.

“Does Broadway Boy even have a kettle, mam?” asked Keiran. “He strikes me as more a coffee type.”

“I do have an electric kettle, actually,” said Kurt as he got up. Another one of Blaine's impulse purchases. ‘It'll be great for when we have company! ’, he had enthused. It had been shoved into a cabinet shortly after, never used, and forgotten by Blaine. “I am more of a coffee person, Keiran,” he affirmed as he dug it out from behind a few pots, “but I have one.” He set it down on a counter, and grabbed a washcloth from by the sink to wipe off the layer of dust. “...it was a gift.” When he had cleaned it off, he nodded to Elliott, who grabbed the Brita water pitcher and began to fill the kettle after Kurt stepped to the side. Then, as he blinked, Kurt turned to look at Keiran curiously. “Did you just call Elliott ‘ma’am’?”

Keiran shook his head. “Mam,” he repeated, with no clarification.

Kurt looked to Reece and Minnow, in hopes to find a translation there, as he walked back to his chair and sat down.


“It's Irish for ‘mom’,” Reece added.

“No,” Keiran disagreed, “‘máthair’ is Irish for mam.” He said this with a cheeky grin.

Kurt had known this boy for less than twenty-four hours, and he was already exhausted.

Reece rolled her eyes and said, “Don't start with that, Irish. I'm not having your Pagan tongue.”

Keiran’s grin got even bigger. “Of course you're not having my Pagan tongue,” he said, “you're a lesbian.”

There was a pained groan from Reece.

“Shut up, Keiran,” Elliott called out from the kitchen, before he made a short laugh of victory when he found the tea and saw that there was more than enough for all of them.

Minnow looked in Reece’s direction. “What happened?” they asked.

“Keiran made a pun,” Reece explained, in a well seasoned sort of way.

“Oh.” After a beat, Minnow asked, “was it a sex pun?”

Reece sighed, and glared at Keiran. “It's always a sex pun.”

“No, it is not always a sex pun, Reece.”

“Sorry. I mean nearly always.”
“That is correct.”

Kurt's curious gaze at the pair was broken when Keiran then spoke up to ask a question.

“So, Kurt,” he said, “where would you like Five Star Constellation’s first gig to be?”

“Huh? What sort of question is that?” Kurt braced himself for whatever smart-assed reply Keiran would give him, but it was Elliott that answered.

“He probably knows a guy,” he said, with a smile, before he asked, “Kurt, I don't quite remember; do you take lemon with your tea?”

“Yes, I do. What do you mean, 'knows a guy’?”

It was Reece who answered this question. “The boy has slept with half of New York City,” she said with a grin.

Minnow shook their head fiercely. “The population of New York City is too large for that to be physically possible, Reece.”

“Yeah,” Keiran interjected, “it's more like ten percent.” He looked as if he was proud.

Minnow started to look upset as they said, with some force, “That is still physically impossible.”

“I'm bad at maths. Anyway,” Keiran continued, “the point is, I get around, and I have lots of friends.”

‘Oh, please.’ “‘Friends’? Really?” Kurt crossed his arms as he frowned and raised an eyebrow.

This time, it was Minnow who spoke. “Most of his friends began as one night stands.” Very serious. Kurt suspected that they were still unhappy about the earlier hyperbole.

‘Most of his friends?’ he thought, and remembered how Keiran basically started hto hit on him two seconds after he first saw him. “...really?” he asked, looking around the room.

“None of us here,” from Minnow, again.

Kurt let out a small breath of relief. “So he hasn't had sex with anyone here.” He didn't see Elliott suddenly freeze in his tea making.

But he didn't need to. Minnow provided. Reece looked alarmed, but failed to stop it. Keiran’s own face read as, ‘Whelp. Here we go’.

“He and Elliott participated in coitus the day Elliott’s long term boyfriend, Horado, boarded his flight to California, and the relationship was officially over.”

Kurt’s eyes promptly popped out of his skull, dropped to the floor, took a ‘wtf’ roll across the floor, out the door, down the stairs, out of the building, several blocks along the sidewalk until they reached a bar, where they bounced up unto the bar counter and into a Long Island Iced Tea.

Figuratively speaking.

“What?!”

“I said, he and Elliott-”
“I heard you,” Kurt said emphatically, palm out in the ‘for the love of god, stop’ gesture. “What?” he repeated, and this time he looked back and forth between Elliott and Keiran.

Elliott began, “We were both really drunk—"”

“-blackout drunk,” Keiran added.

“We don’t even remember what happened—"”

“-but we were left with plenty of evidence of what happened in the morning, d’ya know what I mean?”

Kurt felt like his brain had just broke. “Oh my god.” He looked at Elliott. “Were you just not going to tell me this?”

Elliott sighed and rubbed his forehead. “No, I was going to tell you,” he said, “but I was rather hoping that bomb could wait until you knew Keiran for more than twenty-four hours.”

“Oh,” said Minnow, and blinked. “I am sorry. Though I do not understand why that information had to wait.”

“Me neither, really,” stated Keiran. “You can't just bring it up random though, of course. Wasn't expecting it to come up.”

“And that didn't lead to anything? Just, oops, we slept together, wanna go grab a pizza?”

Keiran shrugged. “Basically.”

Elliott also shrugged. “Except it was Thai food.”

As Kurt stared forward, Keiran said, “I bet that tea is at the perfect temperature, now, Elliott.”

“Oh! Right, thanks.” Elliott grabbed the tray that sat on top of the fridge, loaded up the five mugs, and carried them over, and handed them out. There was a pause when Kurt didn't grab the mug Elliott held out to him. He awkwardly set it down on the table next to him.

Minnow and Keiran immediately began to drink their tea. Reece and Elliott uncomfortably began to drink their tea.

After two minutes of four quiet sets of slurps and sips, Keiran grunted irritably. He shifted his mug to his left hand and began to snap his fingers while looking at Kurt as he said, “Oi! Broadway Boy! Get over it! Your tea is gonna go cold, ya dumb cunt.”

Kurt shook his head, glared at Keiran, picked up his mug, and started to drink his tea. All while he maintained eye contact. ‘Sure,’ he thought, ‘get over it. Okay. I am outnumbered in my thinking this is a big deal, clearly. And it's only one notch higher than the antics New Directions got into. Fine.’

“Anyhow,” Keiran said, somewhat offhandedly, “I could definitely get us the Mercury Lounge, and could probably grab Bowery Ballroom. I haven't talked to the guy at the Bowery in three months, is why that's not solid.”

Kurt pursed his lips in some small distaste. Not for the tea, the tea was perfect, but at Keiran’s proposal. “I want us to become a success based on our own merit,” he firmly stated, “not because one of my band members slept with the right people.”
Reece signaled she had something to say as she took a drink. After she had swallowed, she proceeded to point out, “Gotta get heard before anyone gets any merit.”

“And they're people I've fucked already,” Keiran reasoned.

Both solid arguments. Kurt sighed for a moment, gazing into his tea. “Okay,” he acquiesced, “I suppose that having connections is having connections. It would be foolish to toss them aside.” He looked up and again made eye contact with Keiran. “Just, don't start sleeping with people you wouldn't have slept with otherwise, just to help the band.”

“Hey now,” said Keiran, with a smile. “I might not be respectable, but I have self-respect.”

Elliott sat down his mug and rotated his torso slightly in his seated position on the floor next to Keiran to better look at him. “You're perfectly respectable, Keiran,” he said, “nothing wrong with having fun.” And he grinned.

Keiran grinned back. “See?” Keiran pointed at Elliott and looked around at them all. “That's why he's my best friend.”

Elliott dramatically pressed both of his palms to his chest, an exaggerated expression of gratitude on his face. “Aw!”

Keiran’s expression dropped into one of annoyance. “Don't you start.”

“You're the one that started it!” Elliott teased.

Keiran crossed his arms. “Fuck off,” he said, without any kind of force.

“Aw, I love you too!”

Elliott reached over to ruffle Keiran’s hair, only to have it swatted away. “Ugh!”

While Minnow and Reece smiled at this display, Kurt kept busy with the sensation of having been put off balance. He hadn't detected any sexual tension before, and didn't now. They are completely at ease.

And they are all in the room completely at ease, except for him.

….only one way to change that.

“The Bowery Ballroom,” he said.

Keiran and Elliott stopped and looked at him. “What was that?” asked Keiran.

“I'd like Five Star Constellation to get its start at the Bowery Ballroom. But not until we've rehearsed a few weeks, at least.”

Keiran grinned. “Alright then. Here's hoping he remembers who I am.”

Kurt shook his head. “How would anyone be able to forget you?”

Keiran raised an eyebrow. “Was that meant to be a compliment?”

Kurt smirked. “Sure.”

A small twitch of a smile. “Fuck off.”
Old Threads

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For about ten minutes, Kurt had waited (sort of) patiently in the mall, by the west entrance. He had known when to expect them, knew they wouldn't have been there earlier, but still he stood and twitched.

Ah, finally, they had arrived. And right on the minute at 9:30, even!

Keiran talked rapidly to Elliott as they walked through the doors (‘I'm serious, it's the gayest shite since Brokeback Mountain- ’), but that stopped immediately when he saw Kurt, with his expectant expression, by the door.

“Kurt?” Keiran looked at Elliott, confused. “You didn't mention he was joining us, Elliott.”

Elliott blew out a puff of air through pursed lips before he said, “I thought that if I did, you might guess the plan.”

Keiran’s eyes squinted. “Plan? What plan? Are we not watching Winter Soldier?”

Elliott shook his head. “You've seen it twice already, Keiran. Since it came out two days ago.”

Keiran leaned away, glanced to the side, and then back at Elliott. “...yeah?” He spoke as if he thought Elliott had just lost his mind.

It was then that Kurt spoke up. “You aren't seeing it a third time. We're here to buy you a new wardrobe.”

“So this is why you insisted on the 10 AM showing!” It was rare that Kurt had seen someone look so offended. “Fuck no,” he spat, “I'm not getting rid of my old clothes.”

Elliott reached out to him, a hand on his shoulder, and he promised, “You don't have to get rid of your old clothes-”

“-yes, he does,” Kurt interjected.

Elliott elected to not acknowledge that comment and instead continued, “...but you should get some new ones. You look a bit, eh, dated.”

Keiran brushed Elliott's hand off his shoulder and puffed his chest. “I look punk,” he asserted.

“You look homeless,” Kurt corrected.

Keiran turned to face Elliott more fully. “You never said anything about my clothes before, Elliott,” he accused.

Elliott, with one soft shake of his head, said, “No. I'd just sneak a newer shirt into your laundry once in awhile.”

Keiran stared at him. Kurt finally properly noticed that the man was shorter than them both, if only
slightly shorter than Kurt. The redhead seemed to, at that moment, really feel that. “What?” he said, quietly.

Elliott shrugged. “I honestly don’t know how you never noticed in two years.”

Keiran frowned. He looked rather annoyed. “Oh, fuck off.”

Kurt pointed up and then towards Keiran. “No. We're going shopping. If you run,” Kurt warned, “Elliott said that he would tackle you.”

Amusement. Keiran raised an eyebrow as he looked at Elliott. “You did not.”

Elliott crossed his arms. “I said I'd try.”

“You'd only hurt yourself,” Keiran easily replied.

“And you'd be to blame for his injuries,” Kurt stated.

Keiran went quite still then.

“I could break my nose if I landed wrong,” added Elliott, offhandedly.

“Ah, fuck,” uttered Keiran, defeated. “But does it have to be some brand new bullshit, feeding into the corporate machine? Why not a thrift shop? Help feed orphan babies.” He gestured at Elliott. “Everything he's got on is from a thrift shop.”

Kurt blinked at this. Elliott looked as sharp as ever. “Really?”

“Well,” said Elliott, “I'd say that 'modified thrift store purchases’ would be more accurate.” He looked pointedly at Keiran. “Tailored and augmented by new thread and fabric and buttons, thereby ‘feeding into the corporate machine’.”

“And, wait a minute,” Kurt said suddenly, “how is watching a major superhero film multiple times not ‘feeding into the corporate machine’?”

Keiran looked down at his ‘only not falling apart through force of will alone’ canvas shoes. “It's a good movie,” he mumbled.

“And these are going to be good clothes, Mr. ‘Sudden Champion Against Capitalism’,” Kurt declared, as he actually grabbed Keiran by the hand and dragged him along.

“Hey, Kurt,” Elliott asked, while he followed the annihilated and thus passive-if-grumpy Keiran, “I did want to hit up the fabric shop once we were done with Keiran.”

Kurt ignored Keiran’s dejected ‘once you've put me in my grave’, and said, “Already part of today's plan.”

“Oo, and maybe we could go to a thrift shop. I can show you my favorite one; always has great stuff.”

“Sure. I am now curious to see this process of transforming outdated garments into current fashion pieces firsthand.”

They paid Keiran no heed and instead began to sing ZZ Top's 'Sharp Dressed Man' while he wailed, “Father Almighty, have mercy on me and strike me dead!”
Around 5 P.M., three men, loaded down with shopping bags, walked into Kurt's apartment. Keiran looked exhausted and ready to kill a man, but Kurt and Elliott looked energized. They both wanted to dive right into the alteration of the clothes they had purchased, and Kurt's place was better equipped for such projects. Keiran felt he had suffered enough, but that day's makeover had yet to finish. Hence his homicidal appearance.

And Reece and Minnow were there. Just sat at the kitchen dining table, while they sipped at Starbucks.

Kurt was not quite used to this. Apparently, before he had officially joined their group, it had been Elliott’s place that everyone just used like it was their own, because he had the best apartment. Since Kurt's apartment was nicer than Elliott’s, it then became that it was his place that everyone hung out in. Minnow every day.

Which Kurt decided he didn't mind so much, since Minnow was so quiet in the same corner that it was easy for one to forget that they were even there. Kurt often didn't notice that they had been sat in Their Spot in the living room for hours with their laptop or tablet or Launchpad (that was the flat black box with buttons Kurt had noticed during the audition) until after they had gotten up to leave.

Minnow’s silence during these visits had made Kurt hesitant about asking them directly, so he had instead asked Reece about this. She seemed to know them best.

(“They really like it here. It's quiet, and open, so they don't feel enclosed, ya know? And you have wifi, so it's better than the cemetery.”)

Kurt raised his eyebrows. “Cemetery?”

Reece nodded. “Quiet and open.”

Kurt pursed his lips in thought. “Why don't they ever say anything?”


It was odd. But Minnow even brought their own food and drink, and never left so much as a crumb behind. So it was of zero inconvenience to him.

Reece sometimes came by to use his space to dance in. There was this creep at the community center, so she didn't want to go there. He could understand that.

Keiran would come by to sprawl on the floor and draw in his sketchbook.

Elliott would stop over to ask if he could use his mannequin. He didn't want to mess up any work if Kurt was using it, so he always asked first.

He wasn't quite used to it. But. It was actually kind of nice. He felt a little lonely living by himself now, and not a one of them ever touched his things in an unwelcome manner.

“Hey Reece, hello Minnow!” Kurt called out, “Elliott and I took a little shopping trip with Keiran.
He's in one of his new outfits now!"

Keiran groaned.

Reece stood up and walked over to them, and gave Keiran a good look-over after he had dropped his bags with a ‘thump’.

“Well well! Check you out, in jeans younger than five years! Look at them shoes! If you're about to tell me you hate this, I'll know you a liar- that t-shirt is your favorite shade of green.” She looked back over her shoulder. “Come on, Minnow, look at this.”

Minnow got up from their chair and went to them. After they had stared expressionless at Keiran for a moment, they smiled brightly. “You no longer look homeless!” they cheerfully pronounced.

Kurt beamed at Minnow for that, while Keiran scowled.

“Turn around,” commanded Reece, twirling her finger.

Keiran glared at her. “No.”

So Reece instead walked around him, as Kurt went and fetched his mannequin, moved it to the center of the room, between livingroom and kitchen, while Elliott carried the bags to the couch and began to sort things out. There were several quick fixes they could easily finish in a few hours. Reece stepped out of the way when Kurt appeared with a measuring tape. She laughed at Keiran’s dramatic groan.

Minnow, meanwhile, had immediately lost all interest after they had made their comment, and had gone back to their seat at the table. They drank their coffee as they looked through the pictures of clouds on their phone that they had taken that day.

When Kurt finished his recording of Keiran’s measurements in a little note pad, he suddenly looked up. He remembered something.

“Oh!” Kurt looked around at them all. “Five Star Constellation! May I have your attention!” When he had all of their eyes on him, or, at least, all in his general direction, he said, “I've been meaning to tell all of you this for awhile, but it kept slipping my mind, somehow. There will be no band practice this Saturday. My friends from McKinley and I have a little reunion scheduled for that day.”

“So,” asked Keiran, “why are you not available on Saturday?” To compound the insult, he said this while he walked over and sat in what he knew to be Kurt's chair. It had to be intentional.

Elliott paused in his task to level a Look at him. “Keiran,” he scolded.

“What? Come on, he breaks up with his fiance and doesn't think to contact a one of them-”

“-I didn't want to be a bother,” Kurt interrupted.

“That says enough right there, don't it? Shouldn't be worried over being a bother.”

Kurt sighed. Ran his fingers through his hair. “Well,” he began, “I want to see them, okay? I haven't heard from any of them in six months-”

From everyone, in unison: “- What?! ”

Reece had returned to the table to get her drink, which was then held in a frozen position before her
lips. She asked, incredulous, “are they Amish?”

Minnow looked to the ceiling. They appeared to be in serious thought. “It may be possible that they are all in remote locations deprived of communications access, or are all working covert missions for the government and are not allowed to contact non agents.” A beat of silence held in the room, until Minnow concluded, “Even if you consider a mix of the two options, the idea that either or both would apply to all of your friends seems highly unlikely.”

Another beat of silence. Then, Elliott softly asked, “Six months?”

“Not even Facebook?” pressed Keiran.

“...when I posted about having started a new band, Mercedes ‘liked’ it,” Kurt feebly replied. “She also liked my Tweet about it,” he added. He knew that didn't add much.

“That's it?,” Elliott questioned.

“In six fucking months, that's it?” Keiran demanded.

“...and I congratulated Mercedes on the release of her single? She texted me 'Merry Christmas' on Christmas Day?” Kurt said this very quietly.

“Oh, that's solid then,” Keiran said with a sneer.

Elliott looked at him coldly. “Keiran.”

He wouldn't have any of it. “What?” Keiran snapped.

The unpleasant silence quickly ended when Minnow broke the tension and said, “We should go with you!”

All looked at Minnow and asked, “What?”

They nodded very seriously and said, “That way, it will be awkward because you brought your new friends along, and not because you don't actually care about each other!”

That line landed like a feather does not.

“...damn, Minnow,” came from Reece.

Minnow looked in her direction, and blinked. “Did I say something wrong?”

“Not wrong; too real.”

“Oh.” Before Minnow said anything else, Kurt spoke again.

“Blaine...Blaine might be there.”

Keiran took stronger notice at this. “What, the Cunt?” In a very decisive, you-can't-change-my-mind-for-even-a-yacht-with-its-own-swimming-pool tone of voice, he stated, “Alright, we're going then. You're a genius, Minnow.”

“I know,” they said matter-of-factly, as they again picked up their phone to look at their cloud photos.
This Chapter's Song-
Sharp Dressed Man by ZZ Top (An Elliott and Kurt duet. A shopping montage.)

What's a Launchpad? This is a Launchpad.

Reece dances like this.
The little reunion was supposed to take place around 4 PM, right in front of Kurt’s apartment building. Reece, when she learned that, commented that they could still have band practice then, just earlier than usual. And so, around noon, they were all there, gathered around the kitchen table, enjoyed tea made by Elliott, and some Chinese food.

“You better appreciate this, Broadway Boy,” said Keiran, mouth full of Sichuan beef, “me giving up a whole Saturday for you.”

Kurt was quick to react. “You're here almost every Saturday morning!”

“Sure,” Keiran replied, “of my own free will to make use of the grand morning light. Great to draw by.”

“Of your own free- you being here right now is your own choice!”

Keiran grinned. “Yeah,” he said, “I'm a fantastic friend like that.”

Kurt was already a bit high-strung in anticipation of seeing a lot of his old McKinley friends again, and this about tipped him over. “You are such an ass!”

Elliott shook his head with a smile. “Kurt,” he said, “don't take it so personally.” He pointed his fork towards Keiran and stated, “He's under the mistaken impression that he's funny, that's all.”

Keiran gasped and slapped his hand to his chest. “I'm hilarious!,” he asserted, eyes wide.

“Nah,” came from Reece, “like he said, you're an ass.”

“Betrayal from every corner! Minnow,” Keiran beseeched, “defend me!”

Minnow paused in their consumption of lo mein, lifted their head, and asked, “Why?”

As Keiran clutched his chest as if heartbroken, Elliott and Reece quietly laughed, and Minnow shrugged and went back to their meal, Kurt processed. In New Directions, there was little room for irony. Everything was always turned up to eleven. Even when it didn't make sense. Hidden agendas and accusations.

Five Star Constellation...wasn't that.

Keiran had not attacked him. That was just his lame attempt at a joke.

...which didn't mean he was not an ass.

He was such an ass.

Kurt laughed at himself for a moment, then. He looked around the table and saw empty take-out
boxes and empty mugs. He looked to the clock and saw that it was just about one o’clock. Plenty of time.

“Allright! If we are all finished eating, let’s get to work.” He nodded decisively, pushed away from the table, and stood up, as everyone else did the same. He announced, “I was thinking we’d change it up a little.” Everyone looked to him with interest at this, which quickly faded when he went on to say, “Madonna has a lot of great songs that were never big hits on the radio…”

“Better not be making us learn more than one song we never heard of in the three hours before…” Keiran’s grumpy expression faltered.

“Before we meet your Ohio friends,” Reece quietly finished, as she threw the last take-out box away.

For what reason there was a moment of tension, Kurt was not sure, but he shrugged it off, fetched his iPod, and played Madonna’s ‘Secret Garden’ for them.

Keiran naturally complained right after he heard it, which Kurt expected, but the complaint was somewhat muted. Kurt interpreted that to mean Keiran must already have known what Kurt would then tell him- yes, the song was quiet and minimalist, which were two things Five Star Constellation was not. And that was the point: he wanted them to transform it into something Five Star Constellation would play.

Such a task meant the time passed quickly, even if it only was the one song. For about two and a half hours, their work was basically ceaseless as they argued over the arrangement.

Just before 3:30, Kurt had begun to stare at the clock. This lead Elliott to ask Kurt if he wanted to go and wait outside.

“-I mean, at least one may come early, right? Artie lives in the city, he'll probably be any minute.”

That one of Kurt’s alleged friends lived right in New York was new information for the other three.

“He lives in this town and you haven’t-” Keiran started, but he silenced himself upon Elliott’s look at him.

But that didn't stop- 

“Very odd that you have not heard from him in six months,” Minnow stated.

There was an awkward beat of quiet until Elliott again suggested that they go out and wait. Minnow did not wait for the others to answer, but walked to their ubiquitous over-the-shoulder messenger bag, which they opened, and revealed that it contained five collapsible umbrellas. Red, orange, yellow and green, blue, and purple.

“It will rain in approximately fifteen minutes,” they said, as they passed them out.

When they came to Kurt, he waved his hand. “Thank you,” he said, “but I have an umbrella.”

“Is it purple?”

“No, it's-”

They pressed the umbrella against his hand.

He knew had just lost against their infallible logic, and he took it.
And the five of them went outside.

It did start to rain at 3:46, which was exactly fifteen minutes after Minnow had said it would rain in fifteen minutes.

Kurt had been around Minnow enough that, while he noted it, he felt no need to question it.

They began their wait on the sidewalk at 3:34, and easily made conversation for the first forty-two minutes.

They uneasily made conversation for the next thirty minutes.

They drifted into uncomfortable silence for two minutes.

At 4:48 PM, (yes, you guessed it, Kurt had checked his phone for the time, more and more often as the minutes ticked on), Keiran was the one that broke it.

“...just how long are we going to be standing here like five dumb cunts in the rain?”

“Let's give it another twelve minutes,” Kurt answered immediately.

“I love to watch the rain, Mr. Hummel, but I grow tired of standing,” said Minnow. “I would like to sit down, but the concrete steps are wet.”

Elliott’s frown was a very sad one. “Yeah...Kurt? I don't think they're coming.”

“Just twelve more minutes,” Kurt insisted.

Reece then spoke. “Kurt,” she said, with empathy, “come on.”

Kurt's response was unsure, this time. “...twelve minutes...”

Keiran spoke up again. “Kurt? These supposed ‘friends’ of yours can go fuck themselves.”

Kurt bowed his head, and stared at a puddle that slowly grew. “...you're right.”

“I'm always right.”

Through clenched teeth, Elliott ground out, “Keiran.” Keiran made no effort to defend himself, and merely shifted his feet.

Kurt just slumped further. “...I was sure they would come,” he murmured. “...why did I think they would come?”

Silence returned to the group.

Elliott was the one who cracked the quiet this time.

“...who wants cheesecake? Let's go to Calibella and get cheesecake.”

Reece smiled bright. “Yeah,” she agreed, and nodded, “all the cheesecake.”

The rain began to dissipate.

“Best fucking idea I've heard all day,” joined Keiran, with a grin.

“I would love a slice of strawberry cheesecake,” Minnow added.
All turned towards Kurt. The rain stopped.

Slow and soft, a smile graced Kurt’s face. “That sounds great. Perfect.”

Keiran did a sharp clap with his hands and declared, “Great! But we should go to Monteleone. It’s a longer walk, but I expect we’ll eat like the starved and need that, and we can get a discount.”

Elliott grinned at him. “You know a guy?”

“I know a guy,” Keiran affirmed with a confident nod.

The clouds parted, the sun shone down warm, and they made their way towards Brooklyn.

Chapter End Notes

This Chapter's Song-
Secret Garden by Madonna
The week that followed that almost-awful day was a good one for Kurt. The five of them went out for coffee together on Tuesday, at Mixtape (With a discount; Keiran knows a guy). On Wednesday, Minnow nearly gave Kurt a heart attack when they suddenly announced that the band should have a logo. (“How do you always get in here without me seeing you?” “Keiran will draw it; I will text him.” “...right. Okay. You do that.”) On Friday, Keiran strode into the apartment while Kurt ate supper, and smacked down a piece of paper next to his plate, which made Kurt jump. It was an image in black ink of five eighth notes, arranged in the shape of a five point star, and each note had a white five point star inside the note flag. (“Minnow thinks the little stars should be the colours of the umbrellas they got for us. They’ll be okay with leaving them blank, though.” “Oh. Um. I like this. Adding color to this design would likely be too much.” “Thought so. Hey, is that chicken?” “...go on, help yourself...”) Kurt took the opportunity to tell Keiran to go ahead and see if he could secure that gig at the Bowery Ballroom, to which Keiran replied that he’d been in close contact with his friend all month, so, no problem. Kurt had smiled uncomfortably at this, and told him ‘thank you.’

Now it was Saturday. Band practice, to start 4 PM, with a break around 6 to enjoy the curry Elliott had started in the crock pot right after he had arrived at roughly 3:30. That was the plan, anyway.

As they got things set up for practice, Kurt gestured at Reece. He wanted to ask her a question. A Minnow question.

Kurt knew that maybe he ought to refer to Minnow for Minnow questions. But, no matter how much Reece insisted that Minnow wouldn’t be offended, Kurt only ever asked her, anyway.

“This is the last time, Kurt. For real, Minnow can translate themself for you, it’s fine. They’re not a hostile alien species, alright?”

“You’re right. It’s a bit rude to ask you, isn’t it?”

Reece crossed her arms and gave one nod. “Yeah. Just a bit.”

Kurt scratched the back of his neck. “Is there a reason Minnow never makes eye contact? They seem to like me, they’ve said as much, but...”

Reece was shook her head then. She told him, “There’s nothing wrong. That’s just Minnow. I guess you haven’t noticed, but the no eye contact thing isn’t reserved for you. Minnow’s like that. They aren’t mad at you, or whatever you’re worrying.”

“Hmm,” Kurt considered. He then nodded. “Okay. I just wanted to make sure everything was alright. Thank you.”

Reece shrugged with a smile. “No problem,” she said.

Kurt smiled right back. “Good.” He then called out for the whole room to hear, “Alright everyone, let’s get to work! We’ll begin with Madonna’s year 2000 hit, Music!”
“More Madonna?” asked Reece, as her smile fell from her face.

“Oh! Don’t you worry,” he reassured, “I have a Rihanna song in mind for us to do next.”

Reece slowly raised an eyebrow, and her head tilted back, slightly. “What makes you think I like Rihanna?”

Kurt looked at her in some surprise. “You don’t like Rihanna?”

Reece looked up and to the right and slightly bobbed her head side-to-side. “I don’t don’t like Rihanna…”

“Great!” Kurt cheered, before he turned to face everyone else, “okay, places, everyone!”

As Reece uncrossed her arms and made her way to her drums, she muttered, “But of course, your highness,” unheard by Kurt.

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Practice didn’t go well. For half an hour, nothing but error after error. Someone was off key, off rhythm, off cue, the wrong sound was programmed into the Launchpad, the mic started to scream. Everything went wrong, and everyone gradually got more and more frustrated.

Until Kurt finally shouted, “Gah! No! What is wrong with all of you?!”

Reece, who apparently had also reached her breaking point, snapped, “In case you haven’t noticed, your majesty, the problem includes you!”

“The problem is mostly him, Reece,” Keiran chimed in.

Kurt couldn’t believe this. Why was he being attacked?

“Not mostly,” Minnow then interjected, after they took their chew pendant out of their mouth. “It is difficult to quantify blame, but it appears equally distributed to me.”

Elliott rubbed a hand across his face, and let out a sigh that was almost a groan. “We are all out of whack,” he agreed. He looked to them. “Tell us, Minnow; is the moon in retrograde, or something?”

“There has been no such thing as the Earth's moon being in retrograde for the last several million years,” Minnow answered immediately. ”The moon is to be full tonight, but there is a great deal of research and observed data showing all forms of astrology or lunar influence on psychology to be completely unfounded, accuracy no better than random chance.”

This time, the noise Elliott made was indisputably a pained groan. The other three hardly paid the two any attention, invested in their glares at each other.

“All have bad days,” Minnow continued, “and we are unfortunately all having one simultaneously.” They paused briefly, then went on to say, “We should go to a cemetery.”

Elliott and Keiran stared at Minnow in some mild confusion, Reece and Kurt with some mild interest.
“What?” Keiran asked.

“It would invigorate us,” Minnow stated. “Cemeteries are like parks. But with fewer drug dealers and pedophiles.”

“You’re fucking weird, Minnow,” said Keiran, while he blinked several times.

Reece looked at Keiran, clearly irritated.

But before she could comment, Kurt said, “Did you have a specific one in mind, Minnow?”

Keiran’s look at Kurt was perplexed. “Are you serious, Kurt?”

Kurt shrugged, then nodded as he answered, “Fresh air, change of environment. It could work. It being a bit unusual would probably help snap us out of this, too.”

As Elliott nodded with a contemplative expression and Keiran quietly accepted that it was worth a try, Minnow answered Kurt, “The one I most favor is in Queens.”

Kurt smiled at them. “Well then, lead the way.”

And as Five Star Constellation left the apartment, Elliott began to cheekily sing The Addams Family theme tune, snapped his fingers, and the rest of the group had all joined in by just after the second set of snaps.

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The group took it in, being in Maple Grove Cemetery.

It was beautiful. Trees, benches, a pond; it was indeed like a park.

“Wow,” said Elliott, “this is nice, Minnow.”

While Minnow beamed, Reece affirmed with a, “Mmhm.”

“Though, technically, Minnow,” commented Keiran, “there are more pedophiles and drug dealers here. It’s only that most of them are dead.”

Reece groaned at this.

“Geeze, Keiran,” said Kurt, “now who’s weird?”

“Fuck off.”

All were quiet after that. Just walked among the tombstones and plaques in silence for several minutes.

Keiran then spoke suddenly.

“We’re all fucking sick of Madonna, Kurt. That’s what’s fucking with us. It’s been four weeks of Madonna, with you not even giving us a chance to say what we wanna do.”

“Oh, so you’re speaking for the group, then?” queried Kurt, with some sarcasm.
Only to then hear-

“Yeah, that is it, actually,” came from Reece. “I was planning to finally bring it up today.”

“I guess that is what it was,” added Elliott. “It has been making me a bit unhappy, and I had planned to bring it up, too.”

“For me it is likewise,” finished Minnow, “including an intention to inform you, Mr. Hummel.”

“Sure you all did,” Keiran deadpanned.

Kurt nearly reeled from this. How had he not noticed that everyone had been so unhappy with his management regarding song choice?

“Why didn’t any of you say anything?” Kurt turned to Keiran. “You especially, why would you hold back?”

“Because you’re sad.” Reece had spoken. “And for damn good reason, you’re sad.”

For a few seconds, Kurt didn’t breathe. So, for weeks, they had all allowed him to do as he pleased, despite not liking to do so, out of-

“Yeah, it was out of pity.”

Elliott’s tone was sharp. “Keiran.”

“What?” responded Keiran.

Kurt’s look at Keiran should have killed him. “You’re such an ass.”

“Yeah, well, you’re a cunt.”

Cue hand-to-face for Elliott. “G-d damn it, Keiran.”

“What?”

Kurt sighed, anger already gone. Keiran had only said what had been on his own mind, after all. He looked around at all of them. “As kind as it was for you all to be so...gentle with me,” he told them, “it’s bad for the band. For Five Star Constellation to be successful, we need to all be honest with each other. You need to tell me what you need.”

“Alright,” began Keiran, “another point is that it’s not just that we want to cover other artists. We’ve all got our own stuff we want to do, yeah?”

There was a chorus of agreement.

Kurt nodded. “Of course.” His look became apologetic. “I’m sorry, everyone. I’ve kept it to Madonna because...I wanted to keep to the familiar, to what felt safe. And...safe doesn’t get you far.”

“Well,” empathized Elliott, “that’s what you needed.” He stepped closer to Kurt, placed a hand on his shoulder. “And we can still do Madonna.” Elliott’s face then winced. “Just...not only Madonna.”

“God, please, not only Madonna,” Keiran and Reece said simultaneously, after which they grinned and high-fived each other.
“Not only Madonna,” Kurt agreed. He smiled at all of them. “So tell me what you want to do, show me what you’ve made. Let’s start taking chances.”

Minnow surprised the group when they suddenly began to sing. Minnow began to walk again, and the others followed, watched as Minnow swayed to the beat of the song.

~ It’s a really old city

Stuck between the dead and the living

So I thought to myself

Sitting on a graveyard shelf ~

They all knew the song, they had all heard Minnow sing it at least once before. They let Minnow sing the first verse and first refrain, and just enjoyed their delight.

~ You said, remember that life is

Not meant to be wasted.

We can always be chasing the sun! ~

When the refrain finished, it was then that Kurt joined in, took the first half of the second verse, addressed first to Minnow directly, and then to the whole group-

~ So how do you do it?

With just words and just music?

Capture the feeling

That my earth is somebody’s ceiling? ~

As he sang the rest of the passage on how to make songs that connect, he saw Reece’s grin, and he knew she wanted the second half. Who was he to refuse? He nodded to her, and she sang-

~ There’s a history through her

Sent to us as a gift from the future!

To show us the proof
Five Star Constellation had realigned themselves. There was no need for a signal for Elliott to know the next refrain was his this time, and he sang it with passion.

~ So fill up your lungs and just **run**!
*We’ll always be chasing the sun!* ~

Keiran easily took on the phrase that was between refrain and verse, and the others all knew they were to sing backup, smooth as ever.

~ *All we can do is try*

*And live like we’re still alive* ~

All knew that the last verse was Kurt’s.

~ *And the gift of my heartbeat*

*Sounds like a symphony*

*Played by a cemetery*

*In the center of Queens* ~

Elliott naturally had the last refrain, Keiran naturally had the phrase.

As they finished the song, they knew that Five Star Constellation had found it’s place in the sky again.

What they didn’t know was that there had been a mourner nearby, that silently wept when they began, that now left, unnoticed, with a soft smile, tears dried.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter's songs-

[Te Amo](https://example.com) by Rihanna
Music by Madonna
The Addams Family Theme Tune
Chasing The Sun by Sara Bareilles
A Minnow Moment

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

When the group got back to Kurt’s apartment, Minnow went straight to their Launchpad and told Reece that it was time for her to dance. With a smile and a stretch, Reece said, ‘Alright’, and moved to the center of the room. Before anyone else said anything, Minnow began to play this strange tune, something like techno, while Reece danced. The music was angles, but she was curves, and it worked.

The performance was something Kurt hadn’t been exposed to before. Something he would have thought he wouldn’t care for, before he saw it.

But it was interesting. He decided he liked it.

When the number concluded, he asked-

“I suppose that was an example of something you’d like to include in our performances?”

Minnow nodded firmly. “That is correct. I play one or two pieces on keyboard or Launchpad. If the stage allows for it, Reece dances. That was a cover, but I also have some original compositions.”

Reece grinned. “It’s a Minnow Moment!”

Minnow frowned at that. “No. It involves you. It cannot be called a Minnow Moment.”

Keiran sported a gleeful smile as he cheered, “It’s a Meece Moment!”

Reece scowled at him. “No.”

“Meece is a name. That does not work,” replied Minnow, logically.

Elliott looked at Minnow, and said, “‘Minnow Moment’ has a good sound to it, don’t you think?”

“And on a small stage, it will just be you,” added Kurt. “I think ‘Minnow Moment’ is a good name for this feature.”

“I suppose it is acceptable.”

Kurt clapped his hands together with decision. “That’s settled. Our gigs will have a Minnow Moment somewhere in the middle.” He looked around at the group. He smiled. “Now tell me your other requests.”

Chapter End Notes

Song in this chapter-

Flying Spaghetti Monster
"So Long, Mrs. Nidamarthi. It’s Been Grand."

The Friday that followed, Five Star Constellation had its debut gig at the Bowery Ballroom. And it could most certainly be called a successful gig; the large crowd seemed to love them. When Keiran strolled in the next morning with his sketchpad, he informed Kurt that his *friend* (This emphasis, it will now be noted, is not Kurt’s, but Keiran’s, with seeming delight at how it made Kurt uncomfortable) did not regret his favor to Five Star Constellation, and the Bowery would be interested to have them perform there in future. After he had delivered that news, Keiran asked if Kurt would like for him to set them up at the Mercury Lounge next.

Kurt firmly said no. He had only agreed to...utilizing Keiran’s various...connections in the city because Five Star Constellation *did* need to get their foot in the door, which can be very difficult to do. The door was open now, they didn’t need to cheat further. They can and will push the rest of their way into the room by their own strength. What’s wrong with just doing the Bowery again? To which Keiran shrugged, said that’s a waste, I want to draw that vase, mind if I move it?

And that was that. Huh. Kurt thought there would be an argument.

At 10-ish on a Sunday morning, Kurt was at Elliott’s apartment door.

Thankfully, it was Elliott that answered this time.

“Hey, Kurt!” Elliott greeted, and then beckoned, “come on in!” He had apparently been sewing; he held some green fabric in his right hand.

“Thank you,” said Kurt. He walked through the doorway, into the apartment, straight to the couch, and sat down.

“Stressed out?” Elliott asked, as he came over and sat next to him.

“No,” Kurt replied, then sighed and said, “I twisted my ankle on the way over here.”

“Oof, ouch. Want me to move the ottoman over so you can put your foot up?”

“No, no, that’s fine, it’s not that bad. Just annoying.” As Kurt relaxed into the couch, he realized that his ankle was the only thing there that annoyed him. “Where’s Keiran?”

“He’s at church,” Elliott answered as he lifted and examined what turned out to be a battered emerald green shirt. “This shirt. I keep fixing it, because Keiran won’t let me throw it away. I had the thought once that I could use the fabric for something else, but it’s too threadbare for even that by now. Look at it.”

Kurt stared at the garment. “It has clearly lost its will to live,” Kurt agreed. Then Kurt looked at Elliott. Did he say…? “Did you say that Keiran is at church?”

“Yes,” answered Elliott, like it was the weather.

“No, you can’t just say ‘yeah’,” Kurt objected. “*Keiran* goes to church??”

Elliott raised his eyebrows at him. “Yeah,” he repeated. Then, after he had smiled and shook his head a little, he did provide a bit more information. “It’s an Irish Catholic church,” he explained.
“He goes when he’s feeling a little homesick.”


Since Keiran was the topic at the moment, Kurt figured he’d ask a question that had prodded him since he met the redhead.

“Elliott?”

Elliott set the shirt down on the arm of the couch, folded; he seemed to have given up on it, for now. “What is it, Kurt?”

“Remember how you got about fed up with my friends’ drama?”

“...yes?”

“Well then. How is it that you couldn’t handle my friends’ drama,” he questioned, “when you are able to handle Keiran’s drama so easily?”

Elliott laughed then. “Okay. First,” came the response, “I don’t know if ‘easily’ is the word. Second, I wouldn’t call it drama. Keiran’s crazy comes nowhere near the level that your friends from Ohio reach.”

Kurt frowned. “A little near,” he said, somewhat defensively.

Elliott smirked slightly, and raised an eyebrow at him. He then said, “I have never heard him call anyone ‘traitor’ unironically. You know, as a starting example.”

Kurt had to pause at that. “Yeah,” he attempted, “...well...”

Elliott grinned, and gave Kurt a playful little shove. “He’s just loud, and he swears a lot. Keiran is really just a huge sweetheart.”

It was then that the door to the apartment opened, and Keiran entered; he carried a cardboard cup tray that held three cups of presumed coffee. “You tellin’ lies about me, Elliott?”

“Good morning, Keiran!” Elliott raised his hand in greeting, and asked, “how was mass?”

“Ah, the usual, s’alright,” said Keiran, as he moseyed over to the couch, and brandished the coffee tray. “Grabbed coffee.” He handed them out, and said, “...that’s a soy chai latte for mam, nonfat mocha for Broadway Boy, and black with milk and two sugars for me.” He set the now empty tray on the small coffee table, and took a seat in the armchair with his cup in hand.

“Thanks, Keiran,” said Elliott, a then held out his cup and added, “cheers.”

“Sláinte.”

The two then paused and looked at Kurt, who stared at the coffee in his hand. It was even the right size; grande.

Keiran grunted. “Say something, ya dumb cunt. Bad luck if you don’t join the toast.”

“Oh. Um, cheers.” The three of them all took a drink. There then was a short pause, after which, Kurt looked at Keiran and asked, “You know my coffee order?”

Keiran seemed confused by this question. “Well, yeah.”
Kurt blinked, and then frowned. “But you could have only heard it that one time, when our band got coffee two weeks ago.”

Keiran’s brow furrowed. He looked proper confused, now. “...yeah?”

“You remembered?”

Elliott gently nudged Kurt with his elbow. “See? I told you he’s a sweetheart.”

Keiran looked offended, to say the least. “Oh, fuck off!” was the cry, with only laughter in response from Elliott.

Kurt contemplated his coffee. Keiran did not neatly fill the role Kurt had cast for him in his head. He felt a bit frustrated.

The trio then easily began to chat about this and that, a decent chunk of time spent with which they nagged Keiran about his fashion choices, how he held on to his old rags after they had masterfully purchased and crafted a new wardrobe for him. His response to that was that they hadn’t gotten a new wardrobe for him, it was for themselves, and he was wearing one of their shirts right now, so fuck off. Kurt called him an ass.

They had enjoyed a period of comfortable silence after that, when Elliott suddenly squinted at Kurt.

“Hey, Kurt?”

He had drifted off for a moment. He turned to look at Elliott. “Hmm?”

“You still look stressed.” Elliott looked at Kurt’s feet, then back to his face. “Something tells me it’s not really your ankle.”

Before Kurt could come up with a reply, Keiran chimed in, “That’s not an ankle face; you look a bit like you just learned your cat has leukemia.”

Kurt blinked several times. “Huh?”

Elliott tilted his head to the side, and said, “Weird way to put it, but it’s an apt description.”

“Of course it was; it’s one of mine.”

“Shut up, Keiran.”

Kurt had a little laugh. Of course he was spotted. “Okay. I’ll tell you,” he said, took another sip of coffee before he continued, “I’ve been trying to make it work, but it is time for me to face the facts.” He let out a deep sigh. “I can’t afford to keep my apartment. I’m working up the heart to talk to my landlord.”

To Kurt’s confusion, Keiran seemed delighted to hear this news, while Elliott looked like he’d lost a bet.

“What did I tell you, Elliott?” Keiran crowed, “I’m a genius!”

“Huh?” As he glanced back and forth between the two of them perplexed, Kurt thought, ‘Did that ass actually make a bet I’d lose my apartment?!’

“Well, Kurt,” Elliott sighed, “the rent here has gone up-”
“-again,” contributed Keiran.

“Again,” Elliott affirmed, nodding. “And, while we can still afford it, technically-”

“-we can never eat out again-”

“-goodbye to fresh produce-”

“-and dessert-”

“-and we can only shower once a week,” Elliott concluded.

“Twice a week, if we shower together,” Keiran slid in.

“No, Keiran,” said Elliott, and did not look away from Kurt when he did so. Kurt was certain that that was nowhere near the first time Keiran had suggested that.

“Prude. Anyway,” Keiran announced, “I told Elliott we should move in with you! You’re short a flatmate or two, and are probably hurtin’ on rent yourself! And I was right! So I’m already about half packed-”

“-hold on a minute,” Kurt interrupted, “what makes you think I’d agree to live with you ?”

“...seriously?” He seemed incredulous. “After all I’ve heard about your old flatmates?”

Kurt wore a pursed frown, but Keiran had a point. He’d had to put up with a great deal of lunacy before. All the way through what included situations like Santana going through all of his things. And none of his past roommates that hadn’t been in a romantic relationship with him had ever brought him his favorite coffee order. He doubted that anyone other than Blaine had even bothered to learn it.

And he needed the money.

Desperate times, et cetera.

“Alright,” Kurt agreed, finally. “It’s a good idea, actually.”

“Fuck yeah, it’s a great idea!”, cheered Keiran, up on his feet like a spring. “I’m going to go tell our landlady that next week’s rent is the last rent we’re paying!”

Keiran ran for the door.

“Keiran!” cried Elliott and Kurt both, startled.

He shot back a distracted, “What?” as he undid the locks.

“Don’t be rude, okay?” pleaded Elliott, “she’s been a great landlady.”

Keiran, hand on the doorknob, looked at Elliott, exasperated. “Why would I be rude?” he asked. “I know how to behave, mam.”

And off Keiran went.

“...well,” Kurt said, after a long pause, “I guess that happened.”

Elliott hummed in agreement before he said, “At least he didn’t bring up how ‘we wouldn’t have
been in trouble this month if not for our frivolous shopping trip.”

Kurt’s jaw dropped open, and his eyes opened wide. “Frivolous?”

Elliott nodded. “I know.”

“Good fashion is a necessity!”

“Thank you.”

Kurt shook his head, more disappointed than an Olympian getting silver. “That boy needs to reassess his priorities.”
The move in was pretty smooth, though there was much negotiation over which furniture will be kept, and which would be sent to the thrift store.

“Shouldn’t we try to sell ‘em on Craigslist, or something?” Keiran had asked.

Shaking his head, Kurt had replied, “I don’t have the energy to bother with that,” and Elliott had agreed.

Kurt kept his couch, Elliott his armchair, they bickered a long time over what decorations should go and where the ones they kept would go, and Keiran kept relatively silent through all of it.

Kurt and Elliott were both relieved and upset that Keiran didn’t seem to care.

One thing that was very easy were all of the kitchen supplies. Elliott’s were better.

Kurt felt something that was a sort of...solemn relief, when he put Elliott’s electric kettle on the kitchen counter, and Blaine’s into one of the donation boxes. That was it. The last thing that was Blaine’s. When it was gone, no part of Blaine beyond Kurt’s memory of him would remain in this apartment.

Elliott peered at him. “Kurt? You okay?”

Kurt came back to himself. “Yeah. I’m fine,” he lied. “Pinched myself putting things in the box.”

Elliott clearly didn’t believe him, but Keiran, who had not looked at Kurt while he busily arranged the items on the shelves as he had been instructed to, quipped, “Don’t do that.”

Kurt turned to glare him. “You’re such an ass.”

“And you’re a cunt. You both sure you want them this way? Looks unbalanced to me.”

Elliott and Kurt walked over and had a look. “You’re right,” Elliott agreed.

Kurt nodded. “It’s a bit heavy on the left.”

And then Keiran voiced his first opinion on the decor plan. “Easy fix. The vase and...whatever the fuck this is, should trade places,” he said, and switched them as he spoke.

“Huh,” said Elliott. “Good eye, that works.”

Kurt had to admit, it looked as it should, now. “It’s a Chinese guardian lion,” he said, instead.

“Whichever,” dismissed Keiran, and hopped down from the couch, job done. He picked up the shirt of his that he had stood on and draped it over his shoulder, and then voiced his second opinion. “What’s the deal with the thin white curtains?”

“They’re not ‘white’, they’re eggshell,” Kurt corrected. “They’re privacy curtains, of course.”

Keiran raised an eyebrow at him. “They’re fucking stupid.”
Kurt bristled. It had been bad enough when he had heard that from Blaine. “You think so?” he said, tensely.

Elliott rolled his eyes and shook his head.

“Definitely,” said Keiran, with clear confidence. “At night, when one of us has their bedside light on, we’re putting on a shadow-puppet show.” He then added, “I sleep naked. I figure you wouldn’t like seeing that silhouette when I’m getting ready for bed.”

Good lord. “You would be correct,” Kurt managed.

Elliott looked thoughtful. “How did that not come up? Santana not saying anything surprises me.”

Kurt looked to the side. “None of us would mention it.”

Keiran barked out a laugh. “If your solution was to pretend you didn’t see anything, what’s the point of them?” When Kurt didn’t immediately respond, he went on and said, “Besides dividing the room up. But I hate the eggshell. Let’s get thicker ones, and get some color. I want green.”

“Of course you want green,” Kurt deadpanned.

“Fuck off.”

“How about navy?” Elliott offered. “That’s a neutral.”

“Or we all get our own. I get my green, Elliott has navy, and you have, I don’t know, cornflower.”

Kurt glared at him. But. The apartment could use a new look. And they were redecorating, after all.

...and Keiran was right about the shadow-puppet problem.

“I don’t like the idea of having three different swaths of color,” he stated. He then looked at Elliott. “When we’ve finished arranging our things, let’s go to the fabric store. We’ll look for a patterned fabric that incorporates a bit of green. Nothing too bold. We don’t want the curtains becoming the focus of the room.”

Keiran seemed mildly surprised. “So you’re agreeing with me?”

Kurt shrugged. “Broken clocks.”

Keiran’s eyes narrowed. “You’re a cunt.”

“And you’re an ass,” Kurt tossed back. Light as a feather.
May 27th. In the early evening of a Tuesday.

It was Kurt’s birthday.

The theme was red. Red everything. (“Oh my god. You changed your hair!” “Not forever, I’ll be going back to blue eventually. But, hey, the theme is red. Had to match.” “You’re amazing.”) Not just for the decorations and outfits, but the food, too. A Thai red curry that was, of course, from Elliott. (“It’s not even red.” “Shut up, Keiran.”) Minnow had made flounder poached in a fennel-tomato sauce. (“You can cook?” “I can read.”) Red velvet cake, lovingly baked by Reece. (“Red with pureed beets, like it’s supposed to be. None of that food-dye nonsense.”) Strawberry cheesecake, courtesy of Keiran’s ‘connection’ with Monteleone. (“So you’re the only one that didn’t make anything?” “Fuck off, birthday boy.”) And some blood-red cherry punch, crafted by Kurt himself. (“Any alcohol in this?” “Of course that’s your first question.” “You’re a cunt.” “You’re an ass.”)

The menu wasn’t exactly cohesive, but it was all delicious.

After all had eaten their fill, Elliott suggested that they continued the red theme and goofed around with some music with ‘red’ in the title.

Now, this entire time, in the midst of all this fun Kurt had with his friends, he had checked his phone, over and over again.

He thought he had been subtle.

He hadn’t.

It was in the middle of their rendition of ‘Red Rain’ by the White Stripes that someone finally said something.

It was Elliott. “What are you looking for on your phone, Kurt?”

He was momentarily startled, but Kurt quickly tried to play it off as nothing. “Oh, you know,” he nearly stuttered, “just seeing if I’ve missed any texts or calls.”

“In the last five minutes?” Reece asked, softly.

Kurt jumped again when Minnow just appeared behind his shoulder. “He is on the Facebook app.”

There was a brief pause, after which they went on to ask, “No one remembered your birthday besides us, did they, Mr. Hummel?”

“Don’t be silly,” defended Kurt. “I Skyped with my dad and my stepmom this morning. And as for everyone else…” He was silent. Then, quietly, “It’s only seven o’clock.”

“Yeah, we won’t be having that,” remarked Keiran, plucked the phone from his fingers, and slid away. “I’m deleting Facebook and its Messenger from this thing.”

Kurt was aghast. He lost a crucial second or two to surprise before he chased after Keiran, crying,
“Give that back, you can’t do that!” but Keiran dodged him easily until, apps deleted, he handed the phone back.

“It’s not as if I deleted your account; you’re free to make yourself sad on your laptop.” He stepped over to the couch, and dropped himself onto it. “You hardly ever post anything, all you do is lurk. Which brings a question to mind- they’re certainly cunts for not contacting you, but have you contacted them?”

“...I have,” Kurt about mumbled, “at least four times for all of them. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years. Hanukkah for Rachel and Puck. And then birthdays.”

“And no one replied,” said Reece. It wasn’t a question.

“Mercedes texted me on Christmas...in a group text.”

“Well, give her a fucking medal,” Keiran sarcastically commented, “pathetically low bar, and only she managed to barely step over it.”

“Keiran,” Elliott hissed.

Arms splayed, eyes wide, Keiran threw back, “What?”

“It happens, you know.”

That was Reece. “What do you mean, ‘it happens’?” asked Kurt.

“You grow out of relationships.” Reece stood up and walked away from her seat at the drums, linked her hands and stretched her arms towards the ceiling. “You all start doing different things, you all start becoming different people.” She walked to the post Kurt stood next to, and leaned onto it. “You see, my mom entered me into this lottery to go to this charter high school. That’s where me and Minnow met. After about a year of going, my old friends didn’t want to deal with me. I wasn’t ‘black enough’ anymore, apparently.”

Elliott and Keiran both stared at her. It seemed that this was their first time they had heard this, too.

“Reece,” breathed Elliott.

“S’fine, I’m past that, now. I don’t know about ‘black enough’, but I was different, we didn’t relate anymore. We weren’t livin’ the same life.” Reece hadn’t looked directly at anyone up until this point, but she now made eye contact with Kurt. “It is what it is, Kurt. You gotta deal with it, get over it. That’s the past. Be with us, now. Hey, Elliott,” she called, as she then looked at him. “Grab the acoustic.” She went and grabbed her bongos and made her way to the dining table, gestured for everyone to follow.

After Five Star Constellation had sat around the dining table, Reece simply said, “‘Count On Me’, by Bruno Mars.”

Kurt sat back, and listened as they serenaded him. Reece took on the main vocals, and the other three sang backup, or hummed in place of the violins.

~ You can count on me
Like one, two, three

And I’ll be there ~

Kurt smiled. He nearly started crying. It was...it was almost too much.

~ Find out what we’re made of

When we are called to help our friends in need ~

...these people. They were too good for him.

~ You can count on me ‘cause

I can count on you ~

‘Can you really? I’m from McKinley, too. How could I be any better than they are?’

But he didn’t say that out loud. Rather, when the song was over, he only said,

“Thank you.”

Chapter End Notes

Songs in this chapter-
Red Rain by The White Stripes
Count On Me by Bruno Mars

I don't consider the reveal that Kurt tried reaching out repeatedly a retcon. He didn't mention it before because he didn't get a single reply, and he couldn't really count Mercedes' group text as meaning anything.
“So,” Kurt said, after the comfortable silence that followed his ‘thank you’ for the song that had been performed for him, “my old friends forgot about me, your old friends pushed you away. How about you, Elliott?”

“Oh. Um.” Elliott shifted in his seat. “We still talk on Facebook, Tweet and text all the time.” His tone was something like apologetic.

Reece’s grin was warm as she said, “Perfect glittery ball of starshine has never lost a friend.”

Elliott frowned, shook his head. “That’s not true. You don’t really think New Jersey has zero homophobes, do you?” he said, raising an eyebrow at her.

“Yeah,” Keiran chimed in, “his aunt’s a cunt.”

“Keiran,” said Elliott, but sounded less annoyed than he usually did.

“Right, of course,” Keiran said, and lifted his hand, palm out, “she’s your family. Only you get to call her a cunt.”

While Elliott rolled his eyes, Kurt turned his focus to Keiran. “What about you, Keiran?” he asked, “Still in contact with those who you knew in Ireland?”

“No.”

There was a long awkward pause, which made it clear that no further information would be forthcoming. The silence was broken by Minnow.

“My turn,” they said. “I am not in contact with any old friends, because I had no friends before I met Reece.” Matter-of-fact, as usual.

Another uncomfortable period of silence, this time ended by Kurt, when he said, as he held out his phone, “Elliott? Would you mind putting this on that awkward part of the shelf I can’t reach?”

Elliott smiled, and took the offered phone. “I wouldn’t mind at all.”

The phone buzzed.

“Oh,” said Elliott, and looked at the screen. “It’s from Rachel.” He handed the phone back to Kurt, who opened the message immediately.

To be disappointed.

“Kurt!” he read aloud, “my pilot for ’That’s So Rachel’ airs tonight! 9pm Eastern, on Fox! Tell me what you think!”

After a beat, Keiran said, “What a cunt.”
The episode had just finished. All five sat in stunned silence.

“Well,” Elliott said finally, “how ‘bout that.”

Minnow looked towards Reece. “That was bad, right?”

Reece looked back at them. “So bad.”

Kurt turned to Elliott in some desperation. “Help me. What’s something nice I can say?”

Keiran held an ‘are you fucking kidding me’ expression. “You’re gonna lie to her?”

“No!” Kurt defended, “but I can’t just say it was terrible.”

“You’re meant to say something good, and then tell them what needs work,” Elliott agreed.

“Why?” said both Keiran and Minnow, in entirely different tones of voice.

Reece leaned towards Minnow. “It helps people accept criticism better. Not everybody can handle the facts.”

Minnow blinked. “Oh.”

“She looked good,” offered Elliott.

“She did.” Kurt nodded. “Thank you.”

You looked beautiful, Rachel. As for the show, I can’t say that I loved it, but a pilot is like a rough draft.

“How’s that?” Kurt asked Elliott, before he hit send.

“...have a second text that says, ‘they may need to look into adding more diversity to the writing staff, that always helps’.”

“You’re still lying to her,” Keiran interjected, “or do you really think this shite is going to be picked up for a season?”

“Well,” drawled Reece, “it is Fox.”
“Hey! Broadway Boy! Wake up! It’s 9 AM!”

Kurt groaned before he rolled over and whined, “It’s also Saturday.”

The man behind the curtain would not be ignored. “You’re always up before 9 AM, day off or whichever. This is aberrant behavior.”

Kurt had to sit up at that. “That word is too big for you.”

“Knew that would work, you cunt. I made you hangover eggs.”

Kurt blinked a few times, got out of bed, put on his slippers, walked to and drew back the curtain to peer at Keiran. “Hangover eggs?”

Keiran smirked at him and shrugged. “You did say you wanted to try them when you weren’t hungover.”

It clicked in Kurt’s brain, then. “Hangover eggs!” His brow furrowed slightly. “You remembered that?”

Keiran shook his head as he grabbed Kurt’s pajama sleeve and tugged him to the kitchen. “I didn’t remember, is why you didn’t get them for your birthday. But I finally remembered last night when I was racking my brain on how to cheer up the Sad Boy.”

Kurt batted away Keiran’s hand, and walked to the stove. A clean plate was on the counter next to it, ready to receive the eggs that waited in the large frying pan, which currently wore a pot lid.

“When I woke up around 8-ish, I was all, fuck, he’d have eaten his breakfast, already. But, luck for me, you weren’t even awake yet. So, I fry them up, ate my share, waited a bit, you’re still asleep, better wake that prick up before the eggs go cold.”

“Thanks,” replied Kurt, as he lifted the pot lid with a pot holder, and used the nearby cooking spoon to deliver eggs from pan to plate.

The door slid open then. Elliott, with what looked like a very full, and very heavy, large tote bag.

“There he is!” called Keiran. He looked at the tote bag. Yes, that was a bit of leafy green that spilled over the top. “Farmers market?”

“Yes! I’m not sure what I’ll make tonight, but it will involve carrots.”

“And curry,” Kurt and Keiran said simultaneously.

Elliott removed his excited gaze at the inside the bag to look at the two of them, cross. “It’s not always curry, guys.”

Again, immediate and in unison, “Yes, it is.”
Elliott huffed out a breath as Kurt, with plate loaded, walked to the table and sat down. As he began to eat, Elliott took notice and asked, “Who made eggs?”

“I did,” answered Keiran, and then continued, “Is farmer’s markets really cheaper, like you say?”

“For the last time, Keiran,” Elliott sighed, as he lifted the tote and set it down on the table, “it depends. Sometimes it’s more expensive, sometimes it’s cheaper, and it’s always better quality because it’s fresh, so you’re breaking even.” He looked at Kurt. “He left me alone, before.”

“We hadn’t had a budget crisis, before a month ago.”

“Shut up, Keiran.” Elliott shifted his gaze to Kurt’s plate. Recognition. “You made him hangover eggs?”

“He remembered me saying I wanted them when I wasn’t hungover. Could one of you hand me a glass and the water pitcher?” He thanked Elliott when he got him the pitcher from the fridge, then Keiran when he got a glass from the cupboard, and he continued, “He thinks I’m sad, and wanted to cheer me up.” He looked at Keiran. “It’s appreciated, but unnecessary.”

Keiran’s expression went flat, but Elliott spoke before he could, delight undisguised.

“You made him hangover eggs! Those are, mm, a bit of a hassle.” With a broad grin, he teased, “You are such a sweetheart.”

“Okay, you-” Keiran pointed at Elliott, “can fuck off, and you-” he pointed at Kurt, “are a lying cunt.”

Kurt glared at him. “Excuse me?”

Elliott’s smile became soft, and he said, “It’s true, Kurt. You’ve really had a cloud over your head, since Tuesday.”

“We’ve all been letting you breathe, to let it pass on its own. But it’s taking too fucking long. Reece and Minnow, as you know, have both got family things they can’t get out of, so there’s no band practice. This also means they can’t take part of today.”

Kurt narrowed his eyes in suspicion. “Part of what?”

Elliott spread his arms wide, and he grinned. “Us giving you a great day. We’ll go to the Met, then maybe do some window shopping, go home and watch our favorite movies…”

“…and then tonight, we’ll be going out on the pull,” finished Keiran, with a firm nod.

Kurt raised his eyebrows rather high. “What are we pulling?”

“He means,” Elliott translated, “we’ll go to a nightclub and find cute guys to dance with.”

Keiran looked at him then, and raised an eyebrow. “ ‘On the pull’ means a lot more than that, mam, and you know that.”

“And how, exactly,” Kurt queried, “is me...pulling...part of my having a great day.”

“Keiran believes, and I agree,” stated Elliott, “that having a rebound will help you get past...well, your past.”

Kurt was incredulous. “You think my sleeping with a stranger will fix my problems?”

“Oh, shut up, Keiran,” scolded Elliott, “if anyone is the doting husband, it’s you. Remembering his coffee order, making him your special eggs recipe…”

“I’m pretty sure it’s you two that are the ones who are married,” Kurt deadpanned. He considered for a second, before he allowed, “It would be fun to go dancing, in any case.”

“Yeah!” cheered Elliott.

With a grin, Keiran ordered, “Finish your eggs, mam will make you tea, you’ll get ready, and we’ll get to the Met.”

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“I can’t believe I’ve just sat through ‘Chicago’ for the fifth time in two-and-a-half years.”

“Shut up, Keiran,” said Elliott, as he nudged him with his left elbow. “This day is about Kurt, and he wanted to watch it.”

Keiran’s grump did not subside. “You got to pick a movie.”

Elliott rolled his eyes. “I was sure he’d love ‘Velvet Goldmine’, and he did. And you liked it too, don’t lie to me.”

“Still,” pouted Keiran (Kurt was sure he’d deny it was a pout, but it definitely was), “It’s not fair that my pick was voted down.”

“If this is my day,” retorted Kurt, “I’m certainly not watching ‘Die Hard’.”

As Keiran crossed his arms, pouted further, Elliott chuckled at his expense, ruffled his hair, and got his hand slapped, Kurt observed the pair from his spot in the armchair. The way they were basically cuddled next to each other, how Elliott had even had his arm around Keiran’s shoulders at a few points during the movie marathon.

Yeah, they were definitely the ones who were married.

Kurt stood up and stretched, and announced he’d finally go ahead and wash the dishes, now that they have soaked for two hours, which is certainly enough time.

“Oh, no, Kurt, we should do the dishes,” Elliott said, with a frown.

“No, no. I prefer to do them myself.”

Keiran and Elliott shared a look, but said nothing.

“What was that, again?” asked Kurt, with a raised his voice to be heard from the kitchen, “It was really delicious, Elliott.”

“Carrot and lentil stew over brown rice.”

“‘Over brown rice’? We know it was over rice, why’d you say it like that?” After a brief moment,
Keiran snapped his fingers. “I knew it. You looked up that recipe right before you started cooking it, didn’t you. I was sure I saw you keep peeking at your phone.”

It was Elliott who crossed his arms, now. “I had to come up with something, after you both curry-shamed me.”

Keiran threw his head back, barked out a laugh. He then looked again at Elliott, with a grin. “Well, it worked out. Well done.”

“Thank you.”

Keiran nodded, stood up, and stretched. “Alright then. Once you’ve finished with that, Broadway Boy, let’s get to the club.”

Kurt weakly protested, and tried to persuade them both to watch another movie. Elliott and Keiran were united in movie time being over, however. It was just about eight o’clock already. Where they were divided was whether they ought to just go now in their current outfits. In that, Keiran was downvoted- maybe he was fine to go in his normal day clothes, but Kurt and Elliott were emphatically not.

So it was already past 9:30 by the time they were in line for the club.

“Now, Elliott,” said Keiran, as he threw his left arm around his shoulders, “I’ll likely be distracted by someone young and pretty about five minutes after we get in there, so it’s you that has to be the main support for Kurt.”

Elliott turned his head to gaze at Keiran, eyebrow raised. “I had already assumed as much, Keiran.”

Keiran lightly smacked Elliott in the chest with right hand. “Grand,” he said, before he let him go and greeted the bouncer, as they had finally arrived at the head of the line. “Jamal! How’ve you been? Fuck, those new gauges? Gorgeous.”

Kurt leaned towards Elliott and murmured, “Is Jamal a...guy he knows?”

Elliott quirked a smile and nodded.

Kurt sighed. “Tonight’s gonna get the best of me.”

And then they were in. Straight to the bar, on Elliott’s recommendation to warm up with at least one shot tequila, come on, Kurt. To which Kurt acquiesced. He had one shot.

In the midst of which, yes, Keiran had already managed to disappear.

Elliott only shook his head and shrugged at Kurt’s exasperated look. He took hold of his hand and pulled him onto the dance floor.

Kurt felt awkward, a little uncomfortable. But Elliott was there with him. He’d be okay. And he liked this song. He would later learn that it was 'Vampire', by Nitemayor.

~Give me something real

Something more than love

Something I can feel
Just as he began to get into the groove, a, let’s not be shy about it, rather handsome man began to
dance with him, and suddenly asked to exchange numbers. Kurt, a bit blustered, reached for his
phone-

-it wasn’t there.

He suddenly remembered, with perfect clarity, how he had left it on his dresser.

He told the man this, and, in response, the man pulled a Sharpie marker pen out of his pocket,
grabbed Kurt’s arm, wrote his number on Kurt’s skin, capped the pen, pressed the pen into Kurt’s
hand, and disappeared back into the crowd.

Kurt stood there, frozen. ‘What just happened?’

Elliott had witnessed all this, of course, and with a laugh, remarked, “Lucky you. Dumb enough to
forget your phone, but you are saved by your marker fairy godmother.” He lifted Kurt’s arm, and
examined the digits scrawled there. “This phone number looks lonely, don’t you think? How about
we find it some friends?”

“What are you talking about? Get more numbers written on me?” Kurt stared at him. “How am I
even getting this one off of me?”

Elliott smiled and shook his head. “Rubbing alcohol, honey. Easy. Come on. Let’s get to work on
making your phone book costume.”

Kurt had nearly laughed, then. Phone book costume? He doesn’t even understand why one guy
would have wanted to give him his number. How many more numbers did Elliott honestly think he
could get?

But he did get more.

He had gotten at least five on his right arm, and that did not include the first one, when Keiran
suddenly appeared, elated over something.

“Elliott! Kurt! Okay, alright, I’ll be leaving now, see you in the morning. Ask me why.”

Elliott chuckled. “Why, Keiran?”

Keiran looked beyond delighted to tell him. “See those three over there?” he asked, and pointed to
a group that consisted of two men and one woman. “They are an actual, factual, long-term triad, all
modern like that, and they are looking for a fourth, just for the evening. And they’ve picked me!
Can you imagine my luck? Look at ‘em! So, message given, received, see ya.”

“Bye, Keiran!” Elliott called as Keiran rushed away with his new companions. He looked to Kurt
and said, “How about we continue working on your sleeves?”

“...sleeves?”
When Kurt woke that morning, a cheerful Irish voice sang in the kitchen. It’s not that Keiran was particularly loud. It was simply the sort of song that would be disruptive at any given volume.

~ 'Cause we find ourselves in the same old mess, singin’ drunken lullabies! ~

As he got out of bed, Kurt smirked to himself as he pulled on his dressing gown. While he did have on the usual pajama bottoms, it was a tank-top he wore rather than the matching top.

Yes, he owned a tank-top.

“Good morning, Keiran,” Kurt yawned as he walked into the kitchen.

Keiran wore the same clothes he had been the night before. As he was currently in the process of making hangover eggs, for their intended purpose, he did not look at Kurt when he apologized, "Did I wake you? Sorry, Elliott sleeps like the dead, and I’m usually up after you, so, I didn’t think of it…”

“And you’re normally not singing in the morning,” Kurt added, as he put himself to the task of making coffee.

“So, he still asleep in your bed?” Keiran asked.

Kurt turned to look at him, and squinted. “Who is?”

“The guy you pulled.” Eggs apparently done, Keiran shut off the burner. He finally looked at Kurt. “...you did pull, didn’t you?”

“I did not...bring anyone home,” Kurt answered smoothly, as he took a plate and helped himself to eggs after Keiran had taken his share.

“How did you not-” Keiran interrupted himself, “-you own a dressing gown? You’re actually wearing a dressing gown. Mother Mary, how posh are you?”

Kurt set his plate eggs down on the table, but, before he said anything in response, there was a loud yawn and the shickt of a curtain being pulled aside. Elliott emerged, stretched. “Morning Kurt, morning Keiran.” He took notice of Kurt’s dark blue robe, and smirked. “Going for the dramatic reveal, I see.”


“...what dramatic reveal? What’s going on?” Keiran looked back and forth between the two of them. He squinted.

“Well,” sighed Kurt, as he rolled his eyes at Elliott, “I guess it can’t wait, now.” And he undid the knot of the sash, parted the dressing gown, shrugged it off his shoulders, slid his arms out of the sleeves, folded the robe once before he draped it over the back of a chair, and then proudly stood straight, arms outstretched, and performed a full turn before facing Keiran again.
“Holy Mary, Mother of God,” breathed Keiran, his mouth dropped open, eyes wide. “...is all of that...?”

“Yes!” Kurt answered, with enthusiasm. “Phone numbers. All of these men, they found me attractive, and gave me their number.”

“How many are there?”

Kurt smiled. “Twenty-three.” He looked to Elliott, then Keiran. “I didn’t need a rebound. But I did need a reminder that...I’m desirable.”

Keiran somehow became offended at that. “How the fucking Christ could you have forgotten that?”

Elliott glared at him. “Keiran.”

“Sorry.” Keiran walked to Kurt, looked at the nearly two dozen phone numbers scrawled on his arms. He shook his head. “All these men wanted you, and you didn’t try to pull any one of them?”

“Well, you see, unlike you,” stated Kurt as he sat himself down to start to tuck into his eggs, “I don’t sleep with every person that smiles at me.”

Dead silence.

Kurt paused, fork full of egg before his lips, and looked back at Keiran.

Oh.

Kurt then realized that he had never actually seen Keiran upset before. He thought he had, but he hadn’t.

Keiran closed his eyes. He drew in a deep breath through his nose. Let it out. Opened his eyes. Looked directly at Kurt. “You’re a cunt.” And not another word, before he turned and walked right out the door.

Kurt looked at Elliott. The amount of disappointment he saw in his eyes about burned him.

“That was miles away from okay, Kurt,” Elliott said softly, before he loudly called out, “Keiran!” and chased after him.

Chapter End Notes

You may have seen that fuck-up coming.

Songs in this chapter-
Vampire by NITEMAYOR
Drunken Lullabies by Flogging Molly
Kurt had an eight hour shift at The Spotlight, from 10 AM to 6 PM (Yes, on a Sunday; such is capitalism). Elliott had work that day, as a Starbucks barista, as well. And Keiran certainly had no plan to visit him at work today. So Kurt had a whole day to consider what had happened that morning.

In that time, he had formed an Opinion.

That evening, seated at the couch, he quietly read the latest issue of Vogue, took notes on the latest trends and lamented on not going after a position there after his internship had finished, when the door to the apartment slowly slid open. Elliott, home from work. Elliott, who immediately walked to Kurt, and took a seat in the armchair.

“Kurt,” he began, “we need to talk.”

“Do we now,” replied Kurt, and set the magazine aside. He made direct eye contact with Elliott. “I can’t help but notice that a double standard applies to me here, Elliott.”

Elliott narrowed his eyes, shook his head. “What are you talking about?”

Kurt did not blink. “Keiran calls me ‘cunt’ several times a day.”

“And you call him an ass right back,” Elliott immediately responded. “You and I both know that’s not the same thing as what you said this morning.”

Kurt stood up even straighter. “Well,” he returned, “you know what was the same thing? Reece saying he’s slept with half of New York City.”

Elliott looked more agitated. “You know that that wasn’t the same thing, either. Reece was teasing. You were...I think the word is, disdainful?” He glanced at the ceiling for a moment before he returned his gaze to Kurt. “You really have a problem with the amount of sex Keiran has, don’t you?”

“Why would I have a problem with it?” Kurt defended. “It’s none of my business what he does with his own time.”

Elliott nodded, mouth a firm line. “That’s right.”

Kurt started to get angry, then. “This is nonsense,” he stated. “What I said was only a problem because I was the one who said it; you know that’s true. I shouldn’t be punished for saying something any of the rest of you could have said, but without this overblown reaction.”

Elliott leaned back. “So you don’t believe you did anything wrong.”

“No,” Kurt said, “I don’t.”

“In that case,” spoke Elliott as he stood up, “I guess it will be too cloudy for stargazing, for awhile.”
Kurt blinked, squinted. “What?”

Elliott briefly bit his lip. “Five Star Constellation will be taking a break, Kurt.”

‘Excuse me?’ Kurt’s glare was harsh. “And how is that your decision, exactly?” he demanded.

“I have the morning shift tomorrow, I need to get to sleep,” said Elliott. He walked away.

“Goodnight, Kurt.”

When Kurt woke up the next morning, he still felt in the right. Elliott had already left for work, so he didn’t have to contend with him. He made sure to leave before Keiran woke up. To do so meant he needed to walk around the block a few times so that he wouldn’t turn up at work more than half an hour early, but such as it was.

When Kurt got back to his apartment early that afternoon, Reece was there, casually sat at the dining table.

“So,” she said, as she pushed her seat back and stood up, “how goes it, your highness?”

Oh, Kurt could hardly believe this. “Really? You’re on Keiran’s side on this? After what I heard you say regarding his sexual behavior?”

Reece looked up at the ceiling. Ran her tongue along her teeth. With a nod, her eyes went back to his. “You right,” she admitted, “I shouldn’t say those things. Won’t do that again.” She bowed, and said, “Thank you for the lesson on manners, your majesty.” She straightened and made her way past Kurt to the door, and said, “I think I’ll head over to the community center to dance some.”

Kurt blinked as he asked, “What about that pervert you told me about?”

Reece paused for a moment, bobbed her head side to side, in the appearance of consideration, before she turned just enough to look at him from the corner of her eye, and said, “I think I can handle him.”

For an hour or so, Kurt was thrown off by this, but he soon rationalized to himself that Elliott and Reece and Keiran were all being insensible.

He interacted with no one on Wednesday.

Thursday, Kurt had the day off. He had started to feel a little isolated, but maintained a firm position in his own mind of being the one wronged.

Around eleven o’clock, the door slid open, and in walked Minnow. Kurt greeted them, and expected the usual quiet grunt, followed by nothing more.

Instead, Minnow stood there, stared right through Kurt, and said, “I am upset with you.” A few seconds passed by, and the tick-tock of the wall clock seemed unusually loud, until Minnow finally blinked, walked to Their Spot at the corner of the living room, by the window, with their back to the wall, sat down, and pulled out their tablet from their messenger bag.

And this was when Kurt finally had a proper second thought about what he had said to Keiran on Sunday. Everyone else he could dismiss as illogical, hypocritical.

But not Minnow.

Before he had dinner that evening, he understood that he needed to apologize to Keiran. As he lay
in bed later, he realized that he wanted to. When he woke up the next morning, he knew that he could do it and actually mean it.

Kurt had a morning shift on Friday, as did Keiran as a cashier at Artist & Craftsman Supply. When he got back to his apartment after work, he knew he didn’t have long at all to wait for Keiran, provided he came straight back here, like he had. He changed out of his uniform, and then fussed a little over how he ought to be dressed when he apologized. ‘He’s always calling the way I usually dress ‘posh’. Should I try to look more casual to seem more authentic, or would that just do the opposite?’ He elected to wear one of his dress shirts that he would normally wear, but with a pair of jeans.

He walked to the couch, and sat down with a sigh. His apprehension was sidetracked, however, by what was on the coffee table. ‘Is that…a rosary?’ Kurt had not seen many rosaries in his life. And he had never seen one that looked like this. It was like a loop of chain, each bead threaded with its own wire, bent into hoops on either end, each hoop connected to a hoop that belonged to the next bead. The beads were clear, faceted, each bead half covered with an iridescent sheen.

That was as far as he got into his analysis when the door slid open and Keiran walked in.

“Hey, Keiran,” Kurt greeted, softly. When that wasn’t returned, he asked, as he nodded towards the beads, “Is this rosary yours?”

“Oh,” said Keiran, as he walked over and picked them up. “Didn’t realize I left them out here.”

“Do you pray with them?” Kurt asked.

It was a question that Keiran, to Kurt’s distress, though he understood why, took entirely the wrong way.

“The fuck?” He looked both disgusted and offended. “You think I stick these up my arse? Alright, let’s go down the list as to why that’s the stupidest assumption to make about me. First, I’m not about to leave sex toys laying about. Second, look at these,” he demanded, as he thrust them out towards Kurt, “How the fuck would I keep them clean, short of boiling them, which would likely strip that rainbow sheen right off. Third,” he declared, as he again stood upright, “I would never desecrate a sacred object of any people, how dare you think that I would. Fourth, and most importantly of all, they were a gift from my gran.” Keiran took in a breath, and then concluded, “I’m not some sex crazed sociopath, no matter what you think.”

“That’s not what I think,” Kurt quietly said, before Keiran could turn away in anger. Kurt looked at the floor, and then back up at Keiran. “I’m sorry that my earlier behavior gave you reason to believe that I would think that.” He paused, and then repeated, “I’m sorry.”

Keiran’s defensive, nigh on hostile stance, wilted. “...you mean that.”

“I do,” Kurt affirmed as he nodded. “What I said was a horrible thing to say. Because, there is nothing wrong with being sexually free, and having fun like you do.” Kurt breathed in deeply before he stated, “I was wrong to shame you for something that isn’t shameful.” Some moments passed by as Keiran simply gazed at him. He then said, “...to be honest, on some level, I’m envious.”

It was then a grin stretched across Keiran’s face. “Are you really?” he asked.

Kurt narrowed his eyes at him. “Don’t smile at me like that,” he objected. “I don’t mean that it’s anything I would want to do,” he elaborated, “I envy the skill in Michelangelo's David, but that
doesn’t mean I want to take up marble sculpting.”

Keiran’s eyebrows raised, and clearly expressed his glee when he then asked, “You think I’m skilled?”

And, just like that, they were back to the dynamic they had had before Sunday. Kurt glared at him. “Stop making me regret this apology.” When he saw that Keiran’s smile then shifted into something warm, he relented, and explained, “I mean the attitude. Being in the moment, and just...” Kurt searched for the right word. He settled on, “enjoying.”

Keiran returned to his cheeky grin. “Yeah,” he quipped, “you don’t enjoy anything.”

Kurt glared again. “I hate you.”

“Nah,” said Keiran, as his eyes twinkled, “you love me, Broadway Boy.”

After a quick sigh, Kurt smirked, and commented, “That’s a feature I appreciate from this personality trait of yours. You don’t hold grudges.”

Keiran shook his head, and his smile dialed down, somewhat. “Actually,” he corrected, “I do hold grudges. But you have to be a right massive cunt for me to hold one against you.”

Kurt’s head tilted slightly as he smiled at Keiran. “And that’s not what I am?”

“Nah,” Keiran disagreed, “you’re just a bit of one.”

Kurt puffed out a laugh. “And you’re just a bit of an ass,” he remarked, and got a laugh in return from Keiran. He looked again at the rosary Keiran still grasped in his right hand. “So, you do use those to pray?”

Keiran took a moment to look at the chain of beads he held, before he shrugged slightly, walked to the couch, and sat down next to Kurt. “Sort of.”

Kurt looked at him inquisitively. “‘Sort of’?”

“Well,” started Keiran, as he looked to the ceiling, “I guess the proper word is ‘meditate’, but that’s the same thing, really, d’ya know what I mean?”

“So,” Kurt questioned, as he shifted his position to be better face Keiran, “is it similar to why you go to church? Feeling homesick?”

“What’s that? ‘Homesick’? Is that what mam called it?” At Kurt’s little nod, he rolled his eyes a little, but smiled. “I don’t know what the right word for it is, but that’s not it. ‘Homesick’ would imply I want to go back.”

Kurt was more than a little taken aback by this. “Keiran?”

“Hey now, relax,” Keiran verbally brushed back, “it’s not like that.”

Kurt’s gaze was intense. “Then what is it like?” he pressed.

Keiran let out a sigh. “Lead you there without thinking. Guess I’ve got to tell you, now.” After a moment of hesitation, Keiran began. “My family is very Catholic. Mam, you know, my actual mam, had me doing the rosary every day as soon as I could manage the words, about four. Not that she or anyone forced me. I loved being Catholic. I was a good Catholic boy.”
Kurt couldn’t help himself, too surprised to consider the words before he spoke them. “You were a ‘good Catholic boy’?”

Keiran glared at him. “I’d thank you to not say it like that.”

Kurt blushed. “...sorry,” he mumbled.

“Right. Yeah. A good Catholic boy. I loved going to mass every Sunday and Wednesday, sometimes even Saturday. I was an altar boy, went to a Catholic school. I wanted to be a priest.”

“You wanted to be a priest?”

“Do you want to hear the fucking story or not?” he snapped.

Kurt really went red, then. “Sorry.”

Keiran blew out an invisible candle, and continued, “Then, when I was fourteen-”

‘Oh god.’ “No,” whispered Kurt, horrified.

“What?” asked Keiran, confused and clearly irritated that he had been interrupted again, until he realized what Kurt had just assumed. “No!” Now he was the one horrified. “Father O’Malley is not that sort of priest, alright? He’s a good priest. This isn’t that kind of story. Oh be Jesus, fuck.”

It felt to Kurt that the room was approximately 120 degrees Fahrenheit. “......sorry.”

“I’m thinking that one may have been my fault a bit, but, yeah, let me fucking talk.” Keiran raised an eyebrow at Kurt in punctuation, before he continued, “Anyway, when I was fourteen, I, you know, noticed someone, for the first time in my life. Bit of a late bloomer there, I was. He was this beautiful blond boy who had just moved to Malahide, new student at my school.”

Kurt did not interrupt again, and kept the thought of ‘Fourteen when you had your first crush, really?’ to himself. He then scolded his brain, and he reminded it that some people didn’t realize they were gay until they were thirty.

“Half ignorance plus half denial,” said Keiran, “meant it took me about two months to realize what these weird feelings were. Then I was devastated. A good Catholic boy like me knew his bible, and the bible teaches that sinful thoughts and desires are the same as sinful actions in the eyes of God. Whether I acted on these twisted wishes of mine or not, I was a damned sodomite. Now, what my pure self thought as twisted then barely went past hand holding. Past me was a different species.”

“Sorry,” asked Kurt, “but can you run that by me again? The bible saying that thinking of sinning is the same as actually doing it?”

“Just as with every other damn rule in there, there’s contradicting passages,” Keiran informed. “The bit saying that thinking you want someone to die is equal to murdering them is in Matthew...Matthew 5. Somewhere in the twenties of Matthew 5. I was taught that that was the passage that mattered. A good Catholic always feels guilty.”

Kurt shook his head. Wow. That explained some things he’d seen from a few religious people.

“Anyhow,” Keiran carried on, “so I had a bit of a moral panic, right? Ireland is a bit more relaxed on the queer thing than America, but such is not the case for my family, or the people my family is closest with. So I looked to fix it. I read every book I could find, every website I could find. All of them. Including all the science side of things.”
Kurt nodded, then. “And you learned that you are born that way.”

“And that there’s no way to reverse to the other way,” added Keiran. “I was crushed by that. So I’m going to hell no matter what I do, then? And that’s when I got angry.”

Kurt raised his eyebrows. “Angry?” he asked.

“Yes, angry,” said Keiran, like it was obvious as to why. “God made us all before we were born. And all this information was pointing me towards a God that created people to be doomed to hell.”

‘...wow.’

“So, I started reading all I could find on religion, because I needed some fucking explanation. And then I had all the contradictions pointed out to me. Not just in scripture, but in the basic concepts. Like, if God knows everything, has a plan, knows the future, knows everything we’re going to do, how can free will be a thing? And what benevolent God would create parasites that make their living eating the eyeballs of living humans? Shite like that.”

‘Wow again.’ “And that’s when you became an atheist,” Kurt guessed.

He guessed wrong. “No, I’m not an atheist.” When Kurt looked at him in a way that clearly conveyed the question as to what he meant, Keiran explained, “the world and how it is rules out currently existing benevolent god or gods, but not malevolent, apathetic, or dead.”

Kurt considered this, and nodded. “I guess that’s true. ...wait, what do you mean ‘dead’?”

“A god or gods that used to exist, but don’t anymore,” Keiran replied. His face clearly conveyed ‘duh’.

Kurt chose to ignore that. “So you’re agnostic, then.”

Keiran contorted his face slightly in thought. “That’s the word for it, I know, but it doesn’t have the right sound for how I feel about it, d’ya know what I mean?”

“Then what does?”

“I go with ‘fuck it’.”

“Of course you do,” Kurt deadpanned.

“No, really,” Keiran insisted, “if whoever or whatever is apathetic or dead, or never existed, nothing to worry about. Fuck it. If whoever or whatever is malevolent, you’re fucked, because what are the chances you pick the right guy, and, even if you do, they or them or it may not care anyway. So fuck it. Not worth worrying about. Just, live your life, and try not to be a cunt.”

“Hmm. That’s about how I feel, I guess.” Kurt then remembered how they got here. “So what happened after you realized all this? Why do you still go to church and use a rosary?”

“The answer to the second question is, I had been going to church two to three times a week for fourteen years, and was reciting the rosary everyday for eleven. It was just part of my programming by then. And they both get me into that meditative state, which is good for your health, you know. No reason to stop.”

There was a prolonged pause. “And the first question?” Kurt prodded.

Keiran sighed. A beat of additional silence. “Nothing, for a while,” he casually started. “I just
pretended everything was as it always was for nearly a year. George, that was his name, George, and I were in the same year and the same classes, and we ended up friends. Guess you could say best friends. And, one day, hanging out over the summer, I told him.”

Keiran went quiet again. Kurt’s back began to build tension. He felt like he knew what came next.

“It didn’t go well,” Keiran said finally. “He punched me in the face, called me a faggot, and went and told everybody.” Keiran bit his lip and lifted his eyebrows before he said, offhandedly, “and then things were fairly unpleasant for the next three years.”

“Keiran,” said Kurt, eyes soft, voice softer. “I’m so sorry that happened to you.”

“Key word being ‘happened’, Keiran stated dismissively, “it’s three years since I left, and three thousand miles away.”

Kurt decided that, for the moment, at least, it was for the best that he let Keiran sweep it away like that. “So that’s why you’re here. That’s why you left.”

“Yeah,” Keiran said distantly, “that was part of it.”

Those words did not go by unnoticed. “...part of...?”

Keiran shoved his rosary into his pocket, and jumped to his feet, and brought his hands together in one loud SMACK before he shouted, “Fuck! I’m starved! Let’s get some delivery. I want Thai, sound good to you?”

Kurt blinked and managed, “Um, yeah. Sure.”

And that was that, so it seemed.
Song for this chapter (Keiran solo)-
Long Road To Hell by Avicii
Five Star Constellation were all at the apartment on a Monday evening. Last week had not been fun for anyone, but the tension and release had seemed to have provided some creative energy. They had worked on some new songs for two hours. At seven o’clock, they had taken a break for dinner, courtesy of Reece; Cameroonian food according to her grandmama’s recipes. It had been too good, and they all ate too much.

They lazed about, temporarily rendered useless. Kurt looked around from his seat in the armchair. Keiran and Elliott napped on the couch, Keiran’s head propped on Elliott’s shoulder. Reece sat in the armchair opposite Kurt, as she read something on her phone. And Minnow occupied Their Spot, back rested against the wall as they stared forward. They seemed to be deep in thought about something. The only thing Kurt thought about while he gazed at them was to wonder why Minnow only ever sat on the floor. Never the couch, either of the armchairs, or the large seating cushion. The chairs at the table only if Reece or the whole group were seated there.

This line of thought was abruptly disrupted when Minnow snapped out of their reverie and stated, “Five Star Constellation ought to have an expansive presence in social media.”

Keiran and Elliott woke up from their nap, disoriented, and Reece set her phone on her lap and turned her head to look at them.

“What?” Kurt asked, after a beat of silence.

“I will create and manage our Tumblr blog. Reece, Instagram and YouTube. Mr. Hummel, you should be in charge of our Twitter and Facebook. Elliott, you will manage our Snapchat.”

Keiran asked, “What about me?”

Minnow looked in Keiran’s direction and said, “Excessive swearing is not conducive to promoting our brand, and you are best suited to tasks that are not ongoing.”

Keiran narrowed his eyes. “Did you just call me lazy?”

Kurt looked over at him. “Are they wrong?” he asked, with a raised eyebrow.

Keiran crossed his arms and glared at him. “Fuck off.”

“Additionally,” Minnow, as if not interrupted, continued, “we now have twelve original songs. We should record them, get them registered with the ISRC, and then put them up on iTunes as an album. I possess the GarageBand program. Since renting a recording studio is beyond our budget at this time, I will learn to use it. We need to purchase recording equipment, however, if we wish to have good sound quality.”

“Hang on, Minnow,” Kurt protested, “slow down...”

“Am I speaking too quickly?” Minnow asked. “I am sorry. What would you like me to repeat?”
Kurt blinked. “It’s just...do you really think we can handle all of that?”

Minnow tilted their head. “If I thought we could not handle these tasks, or even thought of our chance at success at them as unlikely, I would not have suggested it.”

Elliott moved closer to the edge of the couch seat, and leaned forward and turned slightly, to better look at Kurt. “I’d say,” he spoke, “that we should at least give it a try, don’t you think?”

Reece voiced her opinion. “Ya know, all the big stars have all of that.” She clasped her hands and gave Kurt a serious look. “At least Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, anyway. If we wanna be big stars, we should act like big stars.”

Minnow nodded eagerly. “Metaphorically speaking, we should be red supergiants! They are very rare. They are the largest in terms of volume, but not by mass. Betelgeuse is a red supergiant, and it is almost one thousand times bigger than our own Sun. It is estimated to be eight hundred and eighty-seven times larger. It is the second brightest star in the constellation of Orion. It is—”

The others all settled back and listened to everything Minnow knew about red supergiant stars. One would need to be an incredibly cruel individual to make Minnow stop talking about anything to do with the sky. The first time this happened, Kurt had been somewhat bewildered. But only briefly. He quickly saw the appeal in enjoying Minnow’s delight and enthusiasm. It was difficult to not feel happy, too, in the presence of it. It was a few minutes before they exhausted the subject.

“—but it is not currently possible to say with any certainty what the largest star in the universe is, as measurements become more imprecise the further the location of the star is from our observation point. That is everything I know about red supergiants. I thank you for listening.” With that, Minnow fell silent, and beamed.

“Thank you, Minnow,” said Kurt, with a smile. “I think you’re right— if we want Five Star Constellation to go far, we need to go far in promoting ourselves.” He sat back in his chair for a moment. ‘This is so different from Pamela Lansbury,’ Kurt thought, ‘they all take the band as seriously as I do.’ Kurt nodded decisively. “Let’s do it,” he declared.

And Keiran sat up then. “That’s it!” he crowed, “that can be the excuse, perfect!”

Elliott looked at him, confused. “What’s an excuse?”

“An excuse for what?” was Reece’s question.

“An excuse for a party! ‘To celebrate Five Star Constellation’s joining of social media.’”

“That’s not a good excuse,” Kurt rejected. But when Kurt looked around, he saw that everyone else clearly thought it was a good idea. He still insisted, “No.”

“Fuck off,” Keiran shot out, “I want a party! Look at this place; this flat is meant to have parties in it.”

Left elbow on armrest, chin rested on fist, Reece asserted, “I dunno about the rest of you, but I could use a party. Had to listen to my damned uncle rant about Mexicans through the whole meal when Minnow and I had dinner with my folks on Sunday.”

“I do not like your uncle,” Minnow quietly said. “He called me a chink again.”

Reece’s right hand rubbed at her temple. “I remember.”
“I am not even Chinese! He is offensive and incorrect!” Minnow’s ears had turned pink.

“Yeah,” Reece sighed, “he’s about as smart as he is open minded. At least he didn’t ask you about your genitals again.”

After a quiet moment to process that had passed, Elliott shifted in his seat and said, “My problems aren’t nearly that bad, but work has been stressing me out.”

“Ah, right,” remembered Keiran, “That girl who’s certain she can turn you.” When Elliott nodded in the affirmative, Keiran said to Kurt, “See? We’re all losing our heads. We need a party.”

Before Kurt could argue again, Minnow stated, “Especially you, Mr. Hummel. Your socks do not match.”

Kurt’s soul promptly departed his body, ascended to heaven, found Alexander McQueen and apologized profusely, then returned to Earth and his body.

Figuratively speaking.

Kurt looked down, and lifted his feet slightly to see his socks. One was black. The other was grey. “Oh my god,” Kurt said, horrified, “how did this happen?” He looked at Elliott with an expression one could describe as ‘betrayed’. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

Elliott looked at his socks, then at him, equally horrified. “A better question is,” he slowly replied, “why didn’t I notice?”

“Mother Mary!” Keiran threw his hands into the air, and waved his hands by the sides of his head, palms open. “We’ve gone mental, Broadway Boy!”

“Okay, fine!” Kurt put his hands up in surrender. “But not a big one- that would bring the stress of cleaning up afterwards.”

“Alright, alright; we won’t violate any fire codes,” Keiran said, casually. He looked around and said, “We could probably fit twenty people in here, yeah? Fifteen guests.”

Kurt’s eyes went wide. “NO. I’m capping it at ten. One guest for each of us.”

Minnow shook their head in disagreement. “Neither you or I have any friends outside of the people in this room, Mr. Hummel. Two guests each for Reece, Elliott, and Keiran would bring the total to eleven; that is what I propose.”

“What?” Kurt shook his head now, in denial. “I have friends beyond the members of my band.”

Elliott looked thoughtful. “I’ve never heard you talk about any friend that wasn’t one of the four of us. You’ve mentioned people you don’t like to me, but…”

“I have friends!” Kurt protested.

“Oh yeah?” Keiran questioned, and he essentially oozed skepticism. “Name one.”

Kurt hesitated. He couldn’t think of anyone he’d call a friend. Minnow was right. “…Greg from work…” he weakly attempted.

And Keiran immediately dealt out the follow-up question, “What’s his last name?”

Kurt wilted. Caught. “…shut up,” he mumbled.
Elliott came to Kurt’s defense. “He could still invite him, Keiran,” he argued, “maybe they could become friends that way.”

Kurt sagged a bit further. “No,” he sighed, “I’m pretty sure he’s racist, actually. And I remember now that he said something rude about the Irish on St. Patrick’s day.”

Reece squinted at him. “Then why was he the one that came to mind?”

Kurt shrugged. “He’s the only one that bothers making small talk with me.” Kurt tilted his head and looked to the ceiling, then. “I think he’s working up the nerve to ask me out, actually.”

“Be sure to shut that cunt down when he does, then,” Keiran advised.

Kurt nodded in agreement to that. After a moment of thought, he had decided. “Okay. We’ll have a party on Saturday, and the three of you,” he said as he pointed to Reece, Keiran, and Elliott individually, “can have two guests each.” He then smiled. “Now. What should the theme be?”

Minnow leaned forward excitedly, and authoritatively declared-

“Stars.”

Chapter End Notes

Song for this chapter (A group number of Minnow’s imagination: Kurt as Mitch, Elliott as Scott, Keiran as Kirstin, Reece as Avi, Minnow as Kevin.)(Reece can’t sing as deep as Avi, Minnow knows that. But it’s their fantasy musical number.)-

Daft Punk by Pentatonix
The party started off on a good note, and that note was Minnow’s sound of joy they made when they saw Kurt had chosen to wear the star-shaped brooch Minnow had given him for his birthday.

Kurt smiled, and said, “I meant it when I said I liked it, Minnow. And it is perfect for tonight’s theme.” He nodded towards them. “I like your tie.”

“Oh! Thank you, Mr. Hummel,” they replied as they then adjusted said tie, which was black with blue stars. “I had trouble deciding which one to wear. I have eight ties with stars on them.”

“Eight?” Kurt raised an eyebrow. “How come this is the first time I’ve seen you wearing one?”

Minnow looked more off to the side, and fidgeted slightly. “I have fourteen ties in total. Eight are covered in stars, two with planets, two with clouds, two with rainbows.” They paused. Kurt waited. Eventually, they finished, “I do not enjoy it when people stare at me. People stare more when I wear my ties.”

Kurt stood a little straighter. “Well,” he stated, “I can’t speak for ties unseen, but that tie looks very good on you. It would be an appropriate accessory for many of your outfits. You shouldn’t be embarrassed to wear it.” After a moment, he added, “I believe I have your wardrobe memorized. So you should bring your tie collection over sometime for me to analyze, tell you which ties would look best with which outfits.”

Minnow’s eyes opened wide. “Thank you, Mr. Hummel!” They grinned. “That would help me very much. I appreciate this offer, and I accept it.”

Minnow then immediately went across the room to their keyboard and various other electronic devices and began to perform/dj, conversation ended the way most conversations ended with Minnow.

Kurt then turned to the door as it slid open and revealed what turned out to be Elliott’s two guests. And it was made painfully obvious to Kurt that the one named Jian had been invited in the hopes they’d hit it off. That plan of Elliott’s imploded when, in response to Kurt’s query if Jian’s suit jacket was a real Louis Vuitton, Jian said, “Who?”

Thankfully, another guest arrived at that moment. A real beauty in a shimmering blue dress that ended just below her knees, matching strappy sandals, and, to literally crown it all, a tiara of stars. Kurt introduced himself, and learned her name was Mahsuri, and that she was one of Keiran’s guests.

“How do you know Keiran?” Kurt asked, thoughtlessly.

Mahsuri laughed. “The same way most people do,” she answered with a grin, “I was a one night stand that became a friend.”

While Kurt had sputtered, Keiran had moseyed over. After Keiran and Mahsuri had done their ‘hey, glad you could make it; so am I’, Kurt finally said, “What do you mean, you were a one night
stand?” He pointed at her, “You are a woman,” then at Keiran, “and you are gay.”

Keiran raised an eyebrow. “Who told you that?”

Kurt stared at him. “You did.”

He shook his head. “I did not.”

“I’m certain you did,” Kurt insisted.

“I’m certain I didn’t,” denied Keiran, before he showed some mercy and elaborated, “A boy with the face of a god was the one who jump-started my sleeping sexuality. After I noticed him, though, I started noticing all sorts of people.”

“Oh,” said Kurt. “So you’re bisexual.”

Keiran shook his head again. “Pansexual.”

Kurt had not heard that word before. “Pansexual?”

“Right, Ohio,” said Keiran. Before Kurt reacted to him having dragged Kurt’s home state again, he continued, “You know those boxes of assorted chocolates?” He gestured out the shape of a large box of chocolates, and waved his right hand over the whole of the surface of the imaginary box as he asserted, “I enjoy all of the assorted.”

“Even coconut?” asked Kurt. He realized the question was incredibly asinine less than half a second after he had asked it.

But, while Mahsuri giggled, Keiran only smirked a bit before he confirmed with a nod, like that had been a normal question, “Even coconut.”

Moments of awkwardness and embarrassment were not restricted to Kurt that evening. One of Reece’s two guests, a woman by the name of Fabiola, was apparently someone Reece had been looking to date. Fabiola not only already had a girlfriend, but had assumed that Reece was straight, and that Minnow was her boyfriend.

“Uh, no, Minnow’s not my boyfriend. They’re not a boy, either.”

“‘They’? Is Sushi one of them fake ‘third genders’, then?”

And so the party quickly featured one less guest.

That disaster, however, faded just as quickly as the first two much more minor ones. If anyone had been asked as to why, credit would have been given to Minnow’s supply of music. Difficult to remain upset while you danced.

Further conversation with Jian revealed why Elliott had thought they’d be a good match- same taste in music, same devotion to Broadway theater. Kurt decided he liked him just fine, but...there was no chemistry there. He hadn’t even bothered to incorporate the theme of the evening into his outfit. No.

It was while he spoke to Camila he finally realized he had not seen Keiran’s second guest arrive. He looked around the room and counted everyone there. He came to a total of nine. Hmm.

A little while later, he spotted Keiran, who looked at the clock with a frown. He walked up to him. “Keiran? Did you have another guest?”
Before Keiran replied, the door slid open, and a panther sauntered in.

Not a literal panther, of course, that would have been terrifying.

Kurt’s eyebrows nearly lifted off his forehead at the sight of this tall, dark, and handsome Latino, in a tight black t-shirt with a large white star on the chest, and equally tight black jeans. At a certain point, beauty almost becomes parody.

“You made it!” crowed Keiran as he nearly tackled the man in a hug, “I was thinking you had to work tonight!” He released him and stepped back, and took in the sight of him with clear delight.

“Nope,” said the man as he shook his head with a smile and spoke in a rich caramel voice that made Kurt doubt reality further, “I’ve gotten myself a situation where I can afford a night off.” He grinned, and his dark eyes about sparkled.

“Oh, yeah?” Keiran asked and leaned towards him, only to get pushed aside by Reece so that she could give this guest her own bear hug.

“Xander!” she cried, “it’s been ages!” She briefly turned to lightly smack Keiran upside the head. “Why didn’t you say you invited Xander?” she scolded.

Keiran rubbed at the part of his head that had been slapped as he answered, defensively, “Cause I was nearly sure he wouldn’t come! You know how much he has to work all the time.”

Xander steered their attention back towards him when he interjected, “Reece! You look great. You changed your hair!”

Reece leveled a look at him. “About two weeks ago. Thought you followed me on Instagram.”

“Well,” Xander smirked, “it’s been a crazy two weeks for me.”

Reece leaned in and asked, “Oh, yeah?” only for Elliott to arrive and greet Xander himself.

“Xander! It’s been, what, two months?” Elliott flicked Keiran in the arm. “Why didn’t you tell me you invited him?”

Keiran put a hand to the spot where Elliott had flicked him. “Ow. Fuck sake. I wasn’t thinking he could show.”

“Ah, right,” Elliott nodded, before he said to Xander, “I’m glad you could take a break off of work tonight.”

Xander stretched. “Let’s say, in regards to work, a bit of luck landed in my lap.”

Elliott raised an eyebrow. “Oh, yeah?” he asked as he leaned towards him.

“What do you do,” Kurt interrupted, “where do you work that it’s so hard to get time off?”

Elliott, Keiran, and Reece all paused, and looked at Xander. Who only smiled and nodded towards Elliott.

“Oh, um,” said Elliott, suddenly awkward as he gave an unsure look to Kurt. “Kurt,” he began, “this is our friend, Xander Hernandez, and he’s a sex worker.”

Kurt’s brow furrowed. “Sex worker?”
Xander did answer this time. “That’s the modern, politically correct, Elliott sort of way to say that I’m a whore.”

Before Kurt could react, suddenly, from Minnow’s music corner, came a recording of-

~Voulez-vous coucher avec moi, ce soir? Voulez-vous coucher avec moi? ~

-before they went back to the song they’d been already performing.

“Hey there, Minnow!” Xander called as he gave a wave.

When Xander returned his gaze to the group around him, Kurt asked, hesitantly, “what do you mean, you’re a whore?”

Keiran laughed, “Oh, come on, they’ve got to know that word in Ohio.”

Kurt glared at him. “You are such an ass.”

Easy and immediate as always, “And you’re a cunt.”

“Ah, Keiran, as suave and tactful as ever,” said Xander with rolled eyes and a smile. He looked Kurt directly in the eyes. “I have sex for money.”

For a moment, Kurt forgot how to think. He wasn’t completely back online when he asked, “Why?”

Keiran let out another laugh, which Xander paid no mind to as he maintained eye contact with Kurt and answered, “Med school and New York City rent does not come cheap.”

Kurt blinked. “Med school?”

“Xander’s going to be a heart surgeon!” chimed in Elliott.

While Kurt stood and processed this, Keiran asked, “Alright, so what’s the story about your situation permitting a night off?”

“Ah! Well,” Xander stretched, and rested his clasped hands on his head, “did a public official whose reputation would be somewhat maligned if his or her constituents heard that he or she had employed a rentboy, make the mistake of choosing possibly the only rentboy in New York City that would recognize him or her, with a heavy fee being the cost of his silence?” He waited a beat, took in their wide-eyed expressions. “I can neither confirm or deny,” he stated, as he released his arms from their pose with a flourish, and with some laughter from his small audience. Then, he broke that moment when he inquired after the location of the restroom, and excused himself in the direction Elliott had pointed.

Kurt’s operating software continued to compile as Mahsuri, Jian, and Isaiah all walked up to enquire about the new arrival. Mahsuri received the disappointing news he was gay, Jian and Isaiah got the encouraging news that he was single. After those three had walked away and two more seconds had ticked by, and Reece and Elliott’s expressions became concerned towards Kurt, Keiran leaned back slightly, arms crossed, eyes squinted.

“Is there a problem, Ohio?”
Kurt regained awareness of his surroundings. “Why did you tell them he was single when he’s...”

Elliott reached over and put a hand on Keiran’s shoulder, and silenced whatever unhelpful response he had to that.

“Hey, I wasn’t so cool about it to begin with, either,” Reece reminded. She looked at Kurt and said, “It’s Xander’s business who he tells or doesn’t tell, is why we didn’t say anything. You should talk to him yourself if you got questions.”

Kurt wasn’t sure whether he’d prefer to keep his questions to himself, or not. He didn’t have much time to rummage through his thoughts before Xander reemerged, walked across the room, right to Minnow, to lean in and whisper something in their ear. They nodded, and began to play the song Xander had apparently requested, and Xander began to sing as he first danced with Elliott.

~Hey there, sugar baby, saw you twice at the pop show! ~

Kurt stared as Xander body rolled and rotated his hips, and Elliott responded in kind. Xander turned away from Elliott and moved towards Keiran for the second half of the verse, and they danced even closer, nearly pressed against each other at the end of the verse, before Xander spun away to dance in the suddenly cleared center of the room for the refrain.

~Boys boys boys!

We like boys in cars...

Boys boys boys!

Buy us drinks in bars... ~

At that specific moment, Isaiah appropriately handed Xander a shot glass of whiskey. He accepted it with a wink. He lifted it in toast as he sang.

~We love them! ~

and took the shot in the brief bare beat of time immediately after. He divided the second verse between Isaiah and Jian, and aside from when he jovially pointed towards Minnow at

~Heard our buddy’s the dj~

it was just as sexy as it had been with Elliott and Keiran, with Isaiah in the Keiran role. It was to the
center again for the refrain, no enthusiasm lost. This time he danced with Mahsuri, and it hurt Kurt on some level to see two ridiculously attractive people dance together, its only saving grace for Kurt being that, while it was just as sexually playful, it did not contain the same potential. And then came the bridge, where he sang a line or two to each of the four men...and then turned and began to stalk towards Kurt at

~Watch your heart when we’re together

Boys like you love me forever!~

his eyes locked on him, and the lock remained solid through the ‘oh’s. Closer and closer he prowled towards him. Kurt felt like a vulnerable deer. As he came to the last ‘oh’s, barely a foot away from Kurt, he reached out. He leaned in, looked as if he would cradle his chin.

And when he concluded the bridge, he abruptly turned and left to dance elsewhere, just as he had before with everyone else.

Kurt clapped a hand to his chest, nearly stumbled, and learned to breathe again. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Keiran smirk at him. He turned his head and glared at him. Which of course only made Keiran grin in return.

After Xander had sung the last refrain, he took his bow, and received his applause.

Elliott went to Minnow and, while it sounded very different on keyboards than it did on guitar, Kurt recognized it as ‘I Believe In A Thing Called Love’. He happily jumped right into the duet, but his relief to have something familiar to slip into wasn’t complete. The song felt more sexually charged, this time. Kurt reasoned to himself that that was to be expected after the shock Xander had just put him through.

...Kurt was not a man inclined to violence, but he desperately wanted to smack that smile off of Keiran’s face that he saw when the duet finished.

Things thankfully wound down, after that. Kurt mingled and conversed, mainly with Mahsuri, who was as obsessed with fashion as he was. And he thought about Xander. He still could not figure him out. He could not understand why anyone would resort to prostitution, to selling their body. Especially someone who seemed as nice as Xander did.

Reece did say that he ought to ask Xander himself if he had questions.

He walked up to Xander, and asked if they could speak somewhere in a corner. Xander agreed and followed, and looked as if he knew exactly what Kurt wished to speak about.

They weren’t exactly secluded in their corner, but everyone seemed to understand that this was a private conversation, and gave them space. Kurt took in a breath.

“Okay,” he began. He looked Xander in the eye. “You seem so comfortable about...what you do for a living...”

“Being a whore,” said Xander, matter of factly.

Kurt paused awkwardly, then asked, “How? How are you so okay with selling your body?”
Xander raised his eyebrows and quirked a smile. “You mean, like you do?”


“Well,” said Xander with a shrug, “I assume you are employed, you have to be to live in a New York apartment, and I assume your job requires the use of your body. You know,” He tilted his head, “like every job does.”

Kurt blinked. He couldn’t think of a good rebuttal for that.

Xander then asked, “What do you do?”

“I’m a waiter,” Kurt replied.

“Ah,” Xander looked to the ceiling and said, “A job with direct interaction with one or several customers, and, while it’s not exactly required, good looks and charm certainly helps.”

Kurt blinked some more, and frowned. “Alright,” he said, “but, still, why? You could be a waiter, yourself. Being a...prostitute...isn’t exactly a safe job.”

Xander had an answer for that, too. “On the safety thing, that’s usually true. But I’m what you call a high class hooker. I work a few of the more ritzy hotels. And I will not work without condoms or dental dams.” He frowned a bit. “That does, unfortunately, reduce my number of potential clientele. Which is why I work nearly every night. As for ‘why not be a waiter’,,” he continued, “I’m going to med school. Being a waiter, scrounging for tips, won’t quite cover that.”

‘...med school is pretty expensive. And he’s going in to become a heart surgeon. That’s probably more than NYADA...but wait. I’m affording that with-’ “What about student loans?”

Xander almost look amused at that. “Go nearly a million dollars into debt? In this uncertain economy? I mean, a heart surgeon may be a secure job, but if the market crashes, who knows, right?”

Damn. He had an answer for everything. ‘...he must have had this conversation a few times.’ Kurt nodded. “Fair enough. Just, one more question. How?”

Xander turned his head ever-so-slightly and blinked at him. “How, what?”

Kurt blushed. “How...how do you manage...every night? I mean, I don’t imagine that most of your...clients...are exactly your type.”

Xander’s eyebrows raised a bit as he nodded. “Ah, yes. Well, my some of my male coworkers...a lot of my male coworkers...possibly most of them, actually, rely on stuff like Viagra. As for me, however,” he placed his hand on his chest, “I have a tremendously hyperactive sex drive. So, even though I’m not all that into ladies,” he smiled a bit sardonically to himself, “I can still ‘get into’ ladies.” His hand fell to his side, and the look he gave Kurt this time wasn’t as smooth and cheerful as it had been up to now. “It’s only difficult with the utter douchebags. But those men usually want to top, so…” He shrugged, and left it at that.

Quietly, Kurt said, “You don’t really like having to do this.”

Xander shook his head and pursed his lips slightly. “No, it’s alright. Most of my clients aren’t assholes. And I like people, so I usually enjoy it, actually.” He shrugged, again. “It’s a job. I imagine being a waiter isn’t exactly your bliss, right?”
Kurt shook his head. “No,” he agreed. “It’s okay most days, but sometimes it really isn’t.” After a beat, Kurt added, “And I generally don’t like people, so…”

Xander threw his head back and laughed hard. He continued to chuckle when he looked at Kurt again. “Oh, come on, that can’t be true.” He again put his left hand to his chest. “You’ve been really nice to me!”

“Yeah, well,” Kurt said, airily, “that’s because you are extremely attractive, and I’m extremely superficial.”

Making a ‘pfft’ noise in response, Xander rolled his eyes. He then looked at Kurt and asked, “Are we all clear, now? Or do you have more questions for me?”

Kurt’s expression again became serious. “I do have one more question...two more, actually.”

Xander stood a little straighter, attentive.

Kurt paused a moment before asking, “Do you and your coworkers tend to know each other?”

Xander raised an eyebrow. “If we work the same turf, we can bump into each other, become friends or enemies, sure. I know most of the people that work in the same hotels as I do.”

Fancy hotels. “Do you know someone named Brody Weston?”

Xander smirked, shook his head a little. “You think we use our real names?”

“...ah. Right.” Kurt wilted a bit. So much for that idea.

Xander smiled and put his hand on his shoulder. “How about you tell me what he looks like?”

Kurt looked up suddenly. “I might have a picture, actually,” he said, as he pulled his phone out of his trouser pocket. He opened up his photo gallery, with the hope he had not deleted it. “Year 2013...January...ha, here it is.” He held up the phone for Xander to look at. Xander had moved to stand next to him, and he looked intently. “That’s him, on the left,” Kurt said, as he pointed at Brody in the one picture he had of him.

Xander smiled. “This has to be one of the most awkward pictures I’ve ever seen of a group of people.” He inclined his head to the right slightly, and asked, “Who are the other two, out of curiosity?”

After a brief hesitation, Kurt answered, “My friend, Rachel, and my...boyfriend at the time, Adam. It was sort of a double date.”

“Hm.” Xander then firmly nodded. “I know him. Now,” he looked at Kurt, “why did you want to know if I knew him?”

There was a long pause, until Kurt eventually said, “When my friends found out about him being a...” Kurt paused again. ‘What was the word Elliott used?’ “...when we found out he was a sex worker...we weren’t kind.” He bit his lip. “In fact, Santana, our friend that...found him out, told...Finn, Rachel’s ex, and he came and...beat the crap out of him.” Kurt looked at Xander. “I didn’t have much to do with all of that. Nothing, really.” He sighed before he finished, “But I didn’t feel bad about it, or even think about it, until now. And I’m the only one who would, or...can...apologize.”

“Mm.” Xander looked at the photo, then back at Kurt. “He may not want to hear your apology, you
Kurt looked at the floor. “I know.”

Xander smiled kindly. “I’ll talk to him, Kurt. Never getting the chance to apologize, never hearing an apology, those are among the most heartbreaking things in life.” To Kurt’s confusion, he then grinned. “Mending hearts is what I’m learning to do, and helping people ‘connect’ is what I currently do, so…”

Kurt rolled his eyes and groaned. Clearly a friend of Keiran’s. “Oh my god.”

Chapter End Notes

Songs in this chapter-
Lady Marmalade by Patti LaBelle
Boys Boys Boys by Lady Gaga

Sorry for the long delay, guys. I was not in a good headspace. I was depressed. But, I recently made some new friends, having joined a Dungeons And Dragons group, and we’ve been having and will continue to have lots of meetings to play. I get along great with all of them, so my brain has been shifting into a more pleasant locale.

Conversations that people nearby somehow do not hear? Yeah, that happened on Glee all the time, not sorry for it.

I was really upset about the way the show treated Brody, okay?

The title of the chapter is a reference to Brody’s song, How To Be A Heartbreaker, by Marina And The Diamonds, in case you forgot.

Kurt thinks the rendition of I Believe In A Thing Called Love by The Darkness he and Elliott did in this chapter had more sexual energy than the one they did in the music store. He’s correct...but it’s not by much...
The day after the party had been about the clean up. Now it was evening, and Keiran and Elliott had gone to bed. Kurt was still awake. He knew the floor was clean enough; he could see that Elliott had done a great job, but...only one way to be sure that it was the way he wanted it.

Hardly a moment passed after the wet mop made contact with the floor, when the sound of curtains thrown open with something that approached violence reverberated through the apartment.

Kurt froze, grip tight on the mop. He stared back at the angry Irishman that glared at him. “Keiran,” he whispered, surprised.

“See,” started Keiran, “you were counting on us being asleep before you started recleaning all that Elliott and I cleaned already. Elliott is, because, he said, ‘he won’t do it this time, everything is spotless’, so he trusted you. Not me. I was awake and waiting.” He jerked his chin towards the mop Kurt held. “What have you got there?” he asked, in the way one does when they know the answer.

“I, um,” Kurt floundered, “I thought I saw…”

Keiran raised his eyebrows, and he appeared even more piqued. “Oh, did Elliott miss a spot?” He crossed his arms. “And where would that be?”

Kurt could come up with nothing to defend himself. He remained silent as Keiran stared at him.

“You think you’ve been real sly, don’t you,” he accused as he advanced towards Kurt, “well, you haven’t.” He stopped in front in him, only a little over a foot away. “We caught you a few times. Like when you Hoovered the rug after Elliott had already done it, when you thought he was out of earshot. Bad luck for you, he’d had to tie his shoe and answer a text message, so he was still right by the door when you switched the Hoover on.” Keiran uncrossed his arms, and lifted them to splay his hands on either side of his head in a display of exasperation. “We’ve all noticed this shite, and we’ve all held quiet, because we know those people back in Bean Town got you right fucked.”

Kurt squinted as he murmured, “‘Bean Town’?”

Keiran barreled on, “But I’ve had it! Why do you try to do everything around here; you’re not our housekeeper.”

Kurt lifted his head slightly, and stated, “I enjoy ‘keeping house’, it relaxes me. For you and Elliott, it’s a chore. Why shouldn’t I do everything if it’s something I like to do?”

“Because we’re not children!” Keiran shouted.

They heard some muffled grumbles from behind Elliott’s curtain.

“Ah, fuck,” said Keiran, as he stepped back, away and to the side of Kurt, when a sleep rumpled Elliott emerged.

And when Kurt saw the disappointed look on Elliott’s face as he gazed at the mop in Kurt’s hand while he stepped closer, Kurt quietly said, “Likewise.”
The room was silent for a time. Slowly, Elliott’s eyes left the mop, and came to rest on Kurt’s face. “Kurt,” was all he said.

“...Elliott,” was all Kurt said.

Keiran was the one to crack the quiet, when he asserted, “We’re not slobs, we can clean up after ourselves. We’re adults, Kurt. ...or at least Elliott is.” He waved off Elliott’s look of concern at that, and concluded, “This is our apartment, too. We should be part of maintaining it, because we live here. That’s how it’s supposed to work.”

Kurt looked at the clean floor, and nodded. This was a problem he had, that he had almost acknowledged to himself only a few minutes ago. As he returned his gaze to the two of them, he said, with the weight of full sincerity, “I’m sorry.”

Elliott smiled at him, but Keiran shook his head. “If you’re sorry or not, whichever.” The look he gave Kurt was intense and serious. “If you stop doing it, we’ll be like you’d never done it to begin with, alright? That’s what matters.”

Kurt held Keiran’s gaze steady. “I won’t do it anymore.” He shifted his grip of the mop from his right to his left, so that his right hand was free for him to place over his heart, and the tiniest upturn arrived on his lips. “I pledge to let washed dishes dry.”

Elliott let out a surprised little laugh at that, and he went the rest of the way over to Kurt and wrapped him up in a hug, his bare feet making a little ‘plit’ sound when they stepped on the tiny puddle next to Kurt.

Keiran stood awkwardly for a moment, like he thought they ought to still be serious and upset with Kurt, until he shrugged and joined the hug anyway.

Chapter End Notes

Elliott is a sleepy sheepy. :3
It felt like a fine July morning when Kurt got up, stretched, put on his slippers, and wobbled his way into the kitchen-

-and was greeted by the sight of a beautiful Asian woman who did a little dance while she made pancakes. While she wore a tight pink miniskirt and an equally tight black tank top. And heels. Hair and makeup far too perfect for this early in the morning.

All he could do was stare in silence for several very long seconds, as she finished the last pancake, and put it on top of the high stack on the plate. She shut off the heat, rested the spatula on a little plate, picked up the loaded plate of pancakes, and then gracefully, airily turned around to set it down in the center of the dining table. After she had done so, she finally noticed Kurt.

“Oh! Good morning!” she sang, cheerily.

Kurt, as he gazed at her bubbly visage with her blonde hair, could still think of nothing to say.

Which didn’t put her off at all, it seemed. She only looked him over before she declared, “No tattoos, not on the wrists that I can see, anyway, no facial hair, such a smooth, pretty face, and actual pajamas like from way in the past, isn’t a little warm for those, I think they’re cute though. You must be Kurt!” She grinned brightly.

Finally, Kurt’s brain caught up with him. “Who are you and why are you in my apartment?”

She somehow looked even happier. “I’m Preeda! Hi!”

Kurt raised his eyebrows. “And you are in my apartment because…?”

Keiran emerged from the bathroom, then. He rubbed a towel over his hair, apparently just showered. “She’s a guest of mine,” he cheerfully explained, his eyes on her.

Kurt blinked. “Guest?” He looked back and forth between them. “How did you not...wake us up last night?”

Keiran chuckled some. “We had our fun at the party-”

“-a lot of fun,” Preeda interjected.

“-and when the party was over, I brought her back here for more fun-”

“-but we were actually really tired and just fell asleep,” she completed.

“Yeah,” Keiran nodded, looked at Kurt and added, “bad luck for us, good luck for you, eh?”

“I should say so,” Kurt replied, flatly.

Keiran then took note of the carb goodness on the table. “Hang on, are those pancakes?”
Preeda nodded energetically as she chirped, “Yes! They’re apple cinnamon!” But she suddenly frowned, her gaze on the wall clock. “I have to go right now if I want to make it to work on time, because I have to go home, shower, brush my teeth, get dressed, do my hair, and do my makeup, so much to do, because I’m a huge mess right now, disgusting. So, bye!”

“Whoa, wait!” Keiran cried. He darted in front of her, hands out on the ‘stop’ gesture. “You are most assuredly not disgusting,” he stated with a grin, “surely you have time to eat some of your own cooking?”

She shook her head. “I really don’t,” she insisted, “and I did have some pancakes, I ate the first two that I made while I was making the rest, I know you’re supposed to throw out the first two, but I really don’t believe in wasting food, too many people starve when we have so much food, so I had them, so I had breakfast, and I’m full. But thank you for thinking of me!”

To go by the look on Keiran’s face in the presence of this word avalanche, he was charmed by the way she babbled.

Kurt was not.

“Alright, alright, fine,” Keiran yielded, “go to work.” He reached out to gently hold her face in his hands. “We had a damn fine night, thanks to you, Preeda, so you’d better have a damn fine day.”

Kurt could not see her face from where he stood, but, to go by the noise she made, it must have been an almost sickening expression of ‘deeply touched’. Preeda took his hands from her face and clasped them in hers. She leaned forward and pecked him on the lips, and giggled, before she said, “I hope you have a great day, too, Kevin.”

And at that, she quickly bounced out the door.

The air conditioning kicked in.

Kurt saw Keiran’s frozen expression. Cautiously, he asked, with the hope he misheard, “Did she just call you-?”

“-Kevin,” answered Keiran, as the frozen look evaporated to a shrug and a sigh, “happens a lot.” He smiled a bit sardonically. “I always lose their number when that happens, somehow.” He walked to the laundry hamper and threw in the towel.

Kurt tilted his head, like he was trying to get a better look at him, as he watched Keiran go to the cupboard to grab three plates, and then turn to nab three forks from the utensil drawer once he’d set them down in their respective places on the table, like that was that, simple.

“You alright?”

Keiran had placed the third fork by its plate, and he looked up at Kurt like that was an odd question. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

‘Are you kidding me?’ Kurt thought, and his expression matched. “You’re not going to tell me that someone getting your name wrong after a night of intimacy doesn’t bother you.”

Keiran rolled his eyes. “It does bother me,” he said as he shrugged, “but it bothers like a stubbed toe. You say, ‘fuck’, it stings for a minute or two, and then you’re over it.”

Kurt leaned on the table and raised an eyebrow. “Yeah?”
Keiran was clearly exasperated when he shot out, “Don’t look at me like that!” He took in a breath, and continued, “Look here, Kurt- it doesn’t matter that Preeda doesn’t remember my name, and won’t remember me. Seriously!” he looked annoyed as he insisted, “Because you remember me, Elliott remembers me, all of my friends, they remember me. You and Elliott counting double, but don’t tell anyone that.”

Kurt stood more upright, and then leaned back slightly. “Really?”

Keiran nodded authoritatively. “Yeah, really. I’m not some sad and lonely cunt, alright?” He grinned wide, his eyes like stars. “In fact, I’m living with my two best friends, and I’m fucking happy! Ha. Glad you got all sad at me and made me admit that, I’m feeling rather grand, now.” There was a beat of silence. Keiran looked at Kurt, confused again by the facial expression he found there. “What?”

Kurt slowly smiled. “I’m your best friend?”

Keiran stepped over towards Kurt, clearly offended, and lightly whapped him on the right arm as he said, “Of course you’re my best friend, ya dumb cunt!”

“Hey!” cried Kurt as he rubbed his arm where he’d been slapped, however slightly, before he playfully shoved back at Keiran’s chest with both hands and declared, “You’re such an ass!”

Keiran batted away his hands. “Don’t be shoving me, asking me questions like ‘I’m your best friend’; have you been in a coma, or what?” He reached out as he said, “I’m gonna fuck up your hair, Broadway Boy!”

Kurt shrieked and dodged away. He laughed. He couldn’t remember play fighting like this with anyone.

A curtain was pulled open, and out came Elliott. Kurt and Keiran stopped in their tracks as they stared at him while he stared at them. He grinned. “Are we ruining Kurt’s hair?”

Keiran grinned back. “Yes.”

Kurt didn’t stand a chance. The two soon had him between them, hands in his hair. They ruffled it up every which way, and Kurt moaned, “How could you, Elliott; you know the importance of good hair.”

Elliott laughed and gave him a final toussel before he stepped away, and stated, “I also know it doesn’t matter if you have yet to shower that morning.”

Keiran ceased in his attempt to create devil horns at that. “Fuck, that’s true,” he pouted as he, too, stepped away, and took a seat behind one of the plates.

Kurt walked over to a decorative wall mirror, and attempted to fix his hair. Elliott was right that it didn't matter for the remainder of the day, but he still had standards. He would not spend breakfast with a look like this. He called over his shoulder, “Oh, sorry, Elliott; we woke you up, didn’t we?”

He saw Elliott wave it off in the mirror’s reflection. “You did, but it’s a good thing. I wanted to wake up about now, but my...” he hesitated, Kurt thought he glanced at Keiran, “my alarm didn’t go off.”

Kurt couldn’t see Keiran’s facial expression, but he knew what it was before he heard Keiran speak. “You forgot to charge your phone again, and the battery is dead, isn’t it, ya dumb cunt?”
Kurt spun around and stared at Keiran. “Did you just call Elliott a ‘cunt’?”

Keiran raised an eyebrow at him. “I call all who merit being called a cunt, a cunt. Did you think you were special?”

Kurt pursed his lips as he walked to and took his usual seat at the table. As he did so, he said, “Being that you do call me that at least once a day, I’d say that, yes, I am pretty special.”

Keiran shook his head, and he used his fork to snag two pancakes and place them on his plate. “Fuck off,” he muttered.

Elliott laughed. He sat down and helped himself to pancakes, as did Kurt, and asked, before he began to tuck into his breakfast, “So, what was the argument this morning?”

“Keiran called me his best friend,” answered Kurt as he poured maple syrup from the bottle that Preeda had (presumably) had the foresight to place upon the table ahead of time.

Elliott’s fork paused in its delivery of pancake to his mouth. He raised an eyebrow. “How dare he.”

“No,” Keiran corrected, “he had the nerve to be surprised.”

“How dare he, then,” said Elliott, with clear amusement.

All three took a bite of pancake at the same moment.

The eyes of all three went wide.

“My G-d,” cried Elliott around his mouthful, “which of you made these, they’re amazing.”

“Neither of us,” Keiran sighed, “it was Miss Preeda Called-Me-Kevin Kunchai.”

“Aw, man,” Elliott groaned, “pancakes as incredible as these, and she gets your name wrong.”

Keiran jabbed his pancake ruefully. “I know, right?”

Kurt swallowed his bite thoughtfully, then set his fork down and sat more upright. “You’re my best friend, too, Keiran.”

“Of course I am,” Keiran replied matter-of-factly.

Kurt narrowed his eyes at him. “You’re such an ass.”

“And you’re a cunt.”

Elliott laughed loudly, and asked, “What’s the date, today?”

Kurt thought for a moment, then answered, “July 14th, why?”

Elliott smiled. “I wanted to know exactly what day it was when the two of you finally realized you were friends.”

Keiran frowned, indignant. “I knew before today!” he objected.

“Did you?” Elliott asked with a smirk, eyebrows raised.

“...well,” Keiran faltered.
Kurt’s mouth dropped open. “You ass,” he accused, “you had no idea until this morning, either!”

Keiran glared at his pancakes. “Fuck off,” he mumbled.

Elliott laughed, again. “Shut up, Keiran.”

They then fell into an easy silence, as they enjoyed their cinnamonny pancakes with its bits of apple. A few minutes had passed when Elliott got the look like he had just remembered something.

“They’re apples…” he murmured to himself. And then it seemed to have clicked. “Hey, Kurt,” he said, “there’s something I’ve been meaning to ask you about, but kept forgetting.”

“Yeah?” Kurt replied, his mind more focused on what he was eating.

“What’s that flyer on the side of the fridge about; ‘Adam’s Apples’? Interesting design.”

Kurt went very still.

“Oh yeah,” remarked Keiran, “I wondered about that, too. Is that some weird play, or a band we never heard of?”

Kurt spoke softly, as if to himself, “Blaine would have known what that flyer was, but he never said anything. Never asked why I didn’t take it down. He must have not noticed it. Somehow.”

Elliott looked at him with concern. “Kurt?”

Keiran looked just as worried. “Yeah, the fuck?” he asked.

Kurt sighed. He poked at his pancakes with his fork as he revealed, “It’s a singing group, a club, at NYADA, lead by-”

“-not Adam Crawford?” Elliott interrupted, as he leaned forward, towards Kurt.

Kurt nodded. “Yes. That Adam,” he affirmed. He resolutely resumed eating, as if that would cut off the conversation.

Keiran looked back and forth between Elliott’s sympathetic stare at Kurt and Kurt’s consumption of breakfast in a manner that tried too hard to look relaxed and normal. The tension built for a few seconds before Keiran asked, “Mind telling what the fuck you two are talking about?”

Elliott looked at the table and then at Keiran. “Adam is his ex,” he explained, “a guy he dated while he and Blaine were broken up. Before he and Blaine got engaged.”

Bizarrely, Keiran looked relieved to receive this information. “Oh, thank fuck,” he declared, as he looked at Kurt, “The Cunt isn’t the only man you’ve ever dated, then. He wasn’t a bastard, too, was he?”

Elliott glared at Keiran while Kurt slumped further. “Keiran.”

“What?” was the response, not as offhandedly as he likely wished to have sounded.

Elliott sighed, shook his head, and questioned, “Kurt. Why do you still have this flyer up?”

Kurt shifted in his seat. “I don’t know,” he replied, “It’s not that I forgot about it. I often notice it, and remember.”
Elliott sat back as he considered this. “Remember?” He asked, softly, “So you still have feelings for him?”

Kurt shook his head firmly. “I don’t think I ever loved him,” he answered, “…but I think he loved me. And I just...tossed him away, like he was nothing.”

There was a long awkward pause.

Keiran let out a puff of air, and said, “Well, this is a fine way to start a day.”

“Keiran,” Elliott admonished.

Keiran stared at his nearly empty plate, and set to finish it without another word.

Elliott returned his gaze towards Kurt, and pressed, “So, it’s guilt, keeping that flyer on the fridge?”

Kurt still did not return any eye contact when he smiled and joked, “I’m pretty sure it’s the magnet, actually.”

That garnered a laugh out of Keiran.

Elliott, however, was not amused. “Kurt.”

Kurt relented. “Yes. It’s guilt.” He finally looked back at Elliott. “Since we broke up, we’ve avoided looking at each other when we cross paths at school.”

Keiran had finished his pancakes. He lightly tapped at his plate, and said, “We hear this story now, while university is out.” He looked at Kurt. “Can’t bully you into apologising for nearly two months.”

Elliott shook his head at that. “He shouldn’t try to apologize before he’s ready, Keiran.”

Kurt looked to the left, towards the floor. “I should apologize, shouldn’t I?”

Keiran stared at Kurt like he was insane. “Why the fuck was that a question?”

That earned a stern look from Elliott. “Keiran.”

“What?” was the defensive reply.

Elliott rolled his eyes, and then looked at Kurt, again. “Apologize only when you are ready, Kurt.”

Keiran frowned and shrugged. “Yeah, actually,” he acquiesced, “you apologise before then, it’ll come off as fake.”

Kurt sighed deeply, and stared at his empty plate, like there would be an answer and he’d know exactly what he wanted to do, if he just stared long enough. “I might not get a chance,” he murmured. “He goes back to England every summer, and he might not come back this time. This last school year was so awkward. Especially after...after March.”

“Well,” stated Keiran, “if you fucked up, you fucked up. Just gotta move on, and hope you didn’t ruin him for life.”

Kurt stared harder at his plate, visibly distressed.
“Keiran.” Elliott could have been called aggressive, that time.

“...I’ll just help myself to the last pancake, if that’s alright,” said Keiran, quietly.

Elliott moved his plate to the side so he could lean forward more properly and address Kurt. “Let’s just hope that he does come back, and that you get your chance to make things right, Kurt. We’ll be here to support you.” He reached across the table, and offered his hand.

Kurt eventually smiled, and put his own plate to the side so that he could lean forward and take Elliott’s hand. For a while, the apartment was very quiet, as Kurt and Elliott held hands.

Not long after Keiran had finished the final pancake, he couldn’t handle the silence.

“Hey,” he spoke up, “how about we cheer ourselves up with a little dancing? Either of you know how to swing?”

Elliott and Kurt looked at Keiran in some mild surprise. They let go of one another’s hands. “No,” answered Elliott. He looked at Kurt. “Do you?”

Kurt shook his head. “No.” To Keiran, he said, “I would have never guessed that you knew how to ballroom dance.”

Keiran shrugged. “I gathered a bunch of hobbies to keep me busy as a teenager,” he replied, in a tone that wasn’t quite neutral, “joined a band in Dublin, took dance classes in Dublin, lots of things.” He paused. “Anything to get me out of Malahide, really.” He grinned, suddenly. “How about I teach you?”

Kurt was receptive, but Elliott frowned. “I’d probably step all over your toes, Keiran.”

“My feet can take it,” Keiran dismissed as he waved that off.

Elliott put a contemplative hand to his chin, and then gradually smiled as he looked back and forth between Keiran and Kurt, to their mutual confusion. “In any case,” he said, in a sly tone, “I have to work today, and the two of you each have the day off. So Kurt’s getting the first lesson.” He pushed back his chair, stood up, and walked over to where his guitar rested near the couch. “I have time to play a song before I start getting ready for work.” Guitar in hand, he walked back to his chair, and dragged it to a position where it would be facing the open space in the center of the apartment. He turned to the two of them and gave them an exaggerated wink.

They each looked at each other, than at him, each with a raised eyebrow.

“Hey,” asked Keiran with suspicion, “what’s the big idea?”

Elliott gave a wide grin at that, and began to play, as he called out, “Yo, Mika!”

Keiran grinned back and shook his head as he realized he had accidentally said the beginning words to one of his favorite songs. He got up from his place at the table, and he beckoned to Kurt as he strode to the center area, and said,

~Sucking too hard on your lollipop, hey,

Love’s gonna get you down!

Boy,
Sucking too hard on your lollipop, hey,

Love’s gonna get you down!~

Kurt got up and followed, next to Keiran when he began to sing the words he had just said. At

~Say love,

Say love,

Oh love’s gonna get you down…~

Keiran would dance a few steps, and Kurt would repeat. Kurt heard Elliott sing the ‘say love’ with some odd significance, and he sang only that. Kurt decided to pay that no attention, and instead elected to put his focus on copying Keiran’s movements. He stumbled a bit, but by the time the song got to

~Take a look at the boy next door

He’s a player, and a downright bore!~

he had begun to get the hang of it. When the refrain came, this time he sang it, wholeheartedly. Keiran began to properly dance with Kurt, the dance moves gradually getting more complicated, and Kurt proved himself to be a very quick learner. After Keiran sang the first half of the second verse, Kurt sang the second half.

~Take a look at a boy like me;

Never stood on my own two feet

Now I’m blue, as I can be!

Oh, love come get me down~

In the next sing of the refrain, they alternated the segments. They added spins, and at the last two ‘love’s gonna get you down’, they each dipped one another. Keiran dipped Kurt, then Kurt dipped Keiran.

For the repeat of the first half of the first verse, Kurt pictured a fourteen year old Keiran, the left side of his face horribly bruised, teeth newly chipped, and a swollen eye that would result in anisocoria, one pupil permanently larger than the other. But the young Keiran sang nonchalantly in Kurt’s mind, as if none of it mattered.
Kurt was pulled out of this melancholy thought when he and Keiran sang the refrain again, this time in unison.

When Keiran sang the repeat of first half of the second verse,

~Mama told me what I should know
Too much candy gonna rot your soul
If he loves you
Let him go!
‘Cause love only gets you down!~

he broke away from Kurt, and proceeded to show off, with spins and kicks.

For the closing lines of the song, Elliott sang with them both for

~Whoa, whoa, whoa
Lollipop!~

-but only for that.

Song ended, Kurt and Keiran collapsed on the couch, already exhausted. Elliott laughed at them as he walked over and placed the guitar back to rest on its stand, and left to go shower. Kurt and Keiran played rock-paper-scissors to see who would wash the dishes, and both grumbled but accepted it when Kurt lost the best of three. After the dishes had been washed(Kurt successfully resisted the urge to check them), they resumed the dance lesson. They were in the middle of a break, sat on the couch, when Elliott emerged from the bathroom, dressed in the clean work clothes he had put to wait in the bathroom the night before. He carried his night clothes to the apartment laundry hamper that they have all shared since Elliott and Kurt agreed to alternate laundry duty for the group. Elliott and Kurt only, because Keiran was hopeless at remembering what he called ‘an endless list’ of specific rules for cleaning different items.

“Hey, Kurt,” said Elliott. He walked over to them, turned around, and asked, “How’s that cowlick of mine behaving today? Does it look alright?”

Kurt got up from the couch and went to Elliott. He gently and carefully touched Elliott’s neck as he inspected the area, to encourage Elliott to turn his head right, then left, so that Kurt could properly assess the issue.

“You’re good,” Kurt pronounced with a pat on Elliott’s right shoulder.

Elliott nodded. “Thanks.” He rotated his stance to briefly wave at them both as he smiled, and said, “See you guys later,” and went for the door.
But Kurt called out, “Wait!” He had a feeling. He walked to Elliott’s ‘room’, pulled aside the curtain, and walked inside.

He had been right. There was Elliott’s phone on the bedside table, still plugged in. Thankfully, it was fully charged.

“You nearly forgot your phone,” he announced as he strode back to Elliott, phone in hand. He waved it at Elliott like an admonishing finger. As he handed it to him, he said, “Have a good day at work, Elliott,” and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

Elliott kissed his cheek in return as he replied, “Thanks, babe, see ya,” turned, and went out the door.

Once the door had slid closed, Kurt turned back towards the couch- -to see that Keiran wore the biggest grin he may have ever seen on him, chin rested on his fist.

Kurt huffed. “What?”

“You kissed him on the cheek,” Keiran answered, in a gleeful tone.

Kurt blinked. “I did? I did. Huh.” He then shrugged. “So did Elliott. He kisses all of his friends on the cheek all the time.”

Keiran rolled his eyes. “Sure,” he said, “but that’s Elliott. That’s not you.”

Kurt gave him a flat look. “What’s the big deal?” He pointed at Keiran. “You at one point had your tongue in his mouth, and that’s not weird, for some reason.”

Keiran put his hands up in a defensive position and responded, “That may or may not have happened; only the fucking was verifiable. You kissing him while sober definitely happened just now.” His eyes sparkled. “I fucking knew it.”

Kurt narrowed his eyes at him. “You knew what?”

He held in a laugh then, or at least that’s what it looked like. “Nothing.”

Kurt stepped closer and crossed his arms, to try to loom over him, but it had no visible effect. “You knew what?”


Kurt dropped his arms and stared at the ceiling in complete exasperation. “Oh my god.” He glared at him. “You are such an ass.”

“And you’re a cunt!” was the delighted reply.

Kurt threw his hands in the air, and stalked to the bathroom to take his shower.

Chapter End Notes

Song in this chapter-
Lollipop by Mika
Two men swing dancing.

I didn’t make it up, it’s canon- there are scenes in season five where we see the ‘Adam’s Apples’ flyer, still on display in the apartment. Maybe in future if I can bear sitting through season five to screenshot it, I will; I lost track of the post on Tumblr that pointed this out, with screenshot proof. As for now, you have to take my word for it.

My mama knows how to dance, and has danced competitively. She usually won, too. So I referred to her as what type of dance Lollipop would be.
Kurt and Elliott sat next to each other on the couch, some sort of garment across both of their laps. They leaned forward and stared at the door, and only looked away to trade anxious, giddy grins with each other.

Keiran rolled his eyes at the two dorks as he sat on the cushion chair and (to Kurt’s later discovery and embarrassment) sketched them; he thought they looked rather funny.

Finally, the door slid open, and in walked Reece and Minnow. Elliott and Kurt jumped up and blocked Minnow’s path to their keyboards, the garment now in Elliott’s hands.

“Hey, Minnow!” they said, in unison.

Reece leaned around Minnow to look at Kurt and Elliott with a raised eyebrow. “What’s got into you two? And I’m here, too, by the way. Hi,” she said, with a little wave at the end.

“Sorry, Reece,” Elliott apologized, “we just have something for...Minnow?” Elliott had trailed off because Minnow stared like a laser at the article of clothing in Elliott’s hands.

“There is a star on that,” they stated.

“Not just one star,” informed Kurt. He nudged Elliott and tugged at the garment. “Elliott, show them!”

“Oh, right!” There was a brief fluster, but Kurt and Elliott together held up what turned out to be a suit jacket. It was the usual standard black, but the lining was a dark blue with a black star pattern. The collar had a very small embroidered white star patch neatly sewn in either corner. It had a single button closure, the round button being black with a silver star inside. Two front pockets on either side, with a very small star stud on the lip for each. A very starred jacket, but none of the stars being ‘loud’. Expertly tailored to fit Minnow perfectly, of course.

All those months ago, shortly after that shopping trip to get Keiran a new wardrobe, Keiran had gotten very cross indeed as Elliott and Kurt went through every single item of clothing he had in order to perform some tailoring. Adjust this, remove that, add this. Yeah, he looked amazing, whichever, but why is he getting singled out? Why don’t Reece and Minnow have to go through this?

Unfortunately for him, that did not result in them ceasing their meddling in his clothing choices. Instead, they offered their services to Reece and Minnow, and were accepted.

So they had been tailoring everyone’s wardrobe for months, been making performance outfits for the group for months.

This, however, was the first time they had made something new that was not directly intended to be worn on stage.

(Not that it couldn’t be worn onstage. Nothing was banned. Aside from five of Keiran’s t-shirts.)
Kurt and Elliott smiled proudly as they held up the jacket, but their smiles faltered after several seconds had passed by with Minnow stood there in perfect, wide-eyed silence.

Elliott and Kurt glanced at each other, then back at their apparently catatonic friend.

Kurt asked, in almost a whisper, “...Minnow?”

Minnow suddenly let out a shout, practically a scream. They took the jacket from a very surprised Kurt and Elliott, and spun about the room with it. They held it out at arm’s length and stared at it, then hugged it close, then held it out again, then hugged it again, and then collapsed onto the couch, arms above them to display the garment for their eyes.

For a few actual minutes, no one said anything.

Until Keiran reliably broke the silence when he asked, “So, do you like it?”

Minnow again hugged it tight. “YES.”

Everyone smiled, recovered from their shock. But Keiran suddenly lost his smile, and looked thoughtful.

“You two should do that.”

All but Minnow, who was still far too transfixed by their new jacket, turned their heads to stare at Keiran.

“Huh?” asked Kurt.

Keiran closed his sketchbook and set it to the side. He stood up, stretched, and gestured towards Minnow. “Look how happy they are.” He then turned his gesture towards Elliott and Kurt. “Look how happy it made you to make it, even before you saw the reaction.”

Elliott squinted slightly. “What are you trying to say, Keiran?”

“You could make people besides your friends happy, and get money for it, is what I’m saying,” Keiran suggested, as his hand slipped into his pocket, “I think you should get an Itzy account, something like that.”

“It’s not ‘Itzy’, it’s Etsy,” corrected Reece. Her face carried a look of interest.

“Etsy, whichever.” Keiran insisted, “You should do that, you’d like that.”

Minnow sat up, mind returned with the group. “We get at least one comment on one of our social media platforms a day that is complimentary towards our outfits, and it is most often more than one. While it is not impossible that they are all from the same fan with multiple accounts across all platforms, it is highly unlikely due to the variance in communication styles. Your clothing would likely sell very well.” They looked in Reece’s direction. “Reece. Would you be willing to utilize your photography skills in this, seeing as it would not relate directly to your own success, unlike your photo and film work for the band?”

Reece raised both of her eyebrows as she crossed her arms and replied, “Oh, but it would relate directly to my success. I’d expect to get paid for it.”

Minnow nodded. “That is a reasonable demand.” To Kurt, they asked, “What percentage of your profits are you willing to offer, Mr. Hummel?”
“All of you can slow down, okay?” said Kurt, hands up in a defensive posture. “I don’t recall my having said that I want to run an online clothing shop.”

“I don’t know, Kurt,” murmured Elliott, “it could be fun.” But he looked at Reece and frowned. “How big of a cut did you want, Reece?”

Reece put her right hand out in the ‘halt’ gesture. “Naw, naw,” she refused, “nothing when you start out, that’d be crazy.” She put her hands in her pockets and leaned back slightly. “Get me a Matcha Dough’ssant from Cha Cha Matcha and consider me paid for the first photo session. I’ll ask for money when you start really makin’ it.”

Elliott grinned and said, “Deal.” Then, with a more serious expression, he said, “10%, for when you consider us ‘really makin’ it’.”

Reece stepped forward to give his hand a firm shake while she smiled broadly. “Deal!” And they shook hands with matched enthusiasm.

“What deal?” demanded Kurt.

Only to be ignored when Keiran declared, “We need models! And I know who! Xander and Mahsuri!”

Reece shook her head impatiently. “Irish, you know that Xander works all the time, and he’ll be busy with school, soon. And a rich girl like Mahsuri has got to have better shit to do.”

Keiran rolled his eyes. “To start, they’re our friends, they want to spend time with us. Xander only works nights, and he may or may not be blackmailing a politician, he has freetime. And Mahsuri would do it for the craic, come on.”

Kurt’s eyes nearly popped out of his head. “She would do it for the what?!”

Keiran almost sprained something with how much he rolled his eyes that night, but Minnow came to the rescue.


“So,” attempted Kurt, “you basically mean, ‘for the hell of it’, then.”

Keiran and Minnow responded, in unison, “No.”

Kurt ran his fingers through his hair in exasperation. “Why have you all apparently just decided that Elliott and I are going to do this? Am I not to even be consulted in regards to what I wish to do?”

Elliott put hand to his shoulder, expression apologetic. “I’m sorry, Kurt. Would you like to run an Etsy page with me?”

A part of Kurt wanted to tell Elliott ‘no’ out of spite, simply because it seemed like everyone had assumed the answer would be ‘yes’. ...but the idea of actually selling clothes he designed and made...it was an attractive one. Oh, what the hell.

Do it for the craic.

He let out a deep sigh, shook his head, and smiled as he answered, “Okay. Yes. It does sound like
Keiran, who had had his phone out since shortly after he had made his suggestion of an Etsy page, quipped, “Good you said that, since I already texted Xander and Mahsuri and they both said yes.”

Reece and Elliott each took a step back from Kurt as he turned to stare at Keiran.

“You are such an-” Kurt closed his eyes, paused for breath. He then made direct eye contact with Keiran. “With all my strength,” he pronounced, “I will it that Ireland will not even place in Eurovision 2015. In fact, they won’t even make it to the final.”

Reece and Elliott gasped.

Oh, Keiran made a most wretched sound.

“Take it back!”

“No.”

Chapter End Notes

And that is why Ireland didn’t make it past the semi-finals in the 2015 Eurovision.

Song in this chapter, a duet between Xander and Mahsuri. Fashion show montage!-Fashion by Lady Gaga
It was an evening in late August. Kurt was on his tablet in order to post on the band’s Facebook page and Twitter. He couldn't but be a little excited; Five Star Constellation had a lot of followers on all of their social media platforms. It had started to get difficult to respond to every comment, there were so many.

To respond to every positive comment, that is. The majority of negative comments, they ignored completely. Don’t feed the trolls. Minnow had been exactly right about social media outreach being an unsuitable task for Keiran; one could imagine the Twitter wars. Elliott insisted that Kurt was wrong about that; Keiran did, in fact, possess self control. But Kurt found himself unable to buy that.

When he had finished his posts on Twitter and Facebook, of images from their last gig with thanks to their fans, a mention of where their next gig would be, and his responses to Facebook comments and tweets from fans, he set the tablet down on the coffee table, got up, and walked to the kitchen to investigate the apparently distressed Elliott, who went about and opened the fridge, the cupboards, the fridge again, the cupboards again, and so on, as if whatever he looked for that wasn’t there would magically appear the next time he checked.

“You alright, Elliott?” he asked, and leaned on the kitchen table.

Elliott did a little jump, as if he had momentarily forgotten that he was not currently alone in the apartment. He then sighed. “I’m hungry,” he explained, “so I was going to cook something, but we are seriously low on groceries. I guess I could do scrambled eggs with the leftover steamed broccoli…” He cursed as he stared at the spices on their lazy-susan in their cupboard. “We’re even out of turmeric! And cumin! How did that happen?”

Kurt attempted to hold in a laugh, but wasn’t entirely successful. “Possibly by you putting them in absolutely everything?”

Elliott let out a small laugh at himself. “Right.”

Kurt stepped further into the kitchen area, thoughtfully. “There’s still Keiran’s stew…” he began to suggest, but corrected himself, “wait, there’s beef in that.”

“Mmmh,” affirmed Elliott with a nod, almost resigned.

Kurt looked up and to the left for a moment. “I don’t know why I never asked,” he looked at Elliott again, “but why are you a vegetarian, Elliott?”

Elliott blinked. “Oh.” He shrugged. “I just don’t like meat.”

Kurt had never heard that answer before. “What do you mean?” he asked.

Elliott made a face, clearly disgusted to even think about it. “The texture, it gets stuck in your teeth, the bones, and if you don’t prepare or cook it right, food poisoning or parasites. Gross.” He shook his head and made the sweeping gesture of rejection with his hands. “No thank you.”
Kurt made his own face of disgust. Good points, well made. “Oh.” He glanced at the clock. Just past midnight. “Are you sure you want to eat this late, anyway?”

Elliott crossed his arms. “I’m hungry. So, yeah.”

Kurt sighed. “Well, congratulations, you made me hungry, too. And, because of you, I can’t eat the stew, now. You got in my head.”

An apologetic smile. “Sorry about that.” Elliott reached into his pocket. “I guess I’ll just order a pizza. Large mushroom and black olive?”

“Sure,” nodded Kurt, “sounds good.”

After he pulled out his phone and looked at it, Elliott cursed, “Dammit, the battery is low. Could you make the order?”

Kurt laughed at him as Elliott plugged it into one of the many chargers throughout the apartment. “Of course,” he replied.

But before he could retrieve his phone from his pocket, the door slid open, and in walked a Keiran that looked a lot more drunk than what was warranted, being that he couldn’t have been at the club for much more than an hour.

“Keiran!” exclaimed Elliott, “what are you doing back so early?”

“I realized I didn’t want to be there,” was the reply. He grinned, and spread open his arms. “And that’s all your fault.”

Kurt and Elliott looked at each other in confusion, then back at Keiran.

“What?” asked Kurt.

“I don’t want sex,” stated Keiran, and his grin practically sparkled. “I’d rather be here, home, with the two of you. Been that way for over a month. How dare you.”

“What?” asked Elliott.

Unprompted, Keiran began to sing. He walked towards Kurt, and gazed into his eyes.

~ I was fine.

I pulled myself together.

Just in time

To throw myself away~

He stood in front of Kurt, and hardly anything Kurt had heard him say before had sounded as sincere.
~You ruined everything.

In the nicest way.—

And he kissed him.

‘What?’ thought Kurt. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Elliott grin like an idiot. ‘What?’ he thought again.

But then, Keiran spun away from him, and began to stalk towards Elliott, to Elliott’s own clear confusion.

~You should know,

How great things were before you—

He wagged an accusatory finger as he sang, but then shrugged and spread his arms as he continued—

~Even so,

They’re better still today—

And then, after he sang

~You ruined everything.

In the nicest way.—

he kissed Elliott.

Kurt relaxed at that. That made sense. It didn’t entirely make sense, because how could Keiran confuse him for Elliott? But he did seem pretty drunk.

Keiran continued to sing, and showed how drunk he must be, by the way he alternated to whom he sung to.

~I’ll be with you

Till the day you leave.

You ruined everything.
Song concluded, Keiran announced the need to take a piss, and walked into the bathroom, and shut the door.

Kurt and Elliott turned to stare at each other.

“What the heck was that?” asked Kurt.

“It was obviously a love confession,” Elliott confidently answered, “which brings the question of how on Earth he could confuse me for being you.”

Kurt looked at him with disbelief. “Are you serious? The question is how did he confuse me for being you.”

“Kurt,” Elliott looked to the ceiling and shook his head, “don’t be silly.”

Rather than argue, Kurt had another thought, an alternate interpretation. “The song doesn’t actually mention love. It’s about how meeting someone changes your world completely. A friend can do that. I mean, I know he kissed us, but you kiss both of us all the time. And he’s clearly very drunk.”

Elliott seemed to consider this. He then nodded. “You’re right. We’re overthinking this. If it were a love song, it would be to you—”

Kurt rolled his eyes. “Ridiculous.”

“—but I think you’re correct. He’s just being drunk affectionate. He’s always affectionate when he’s drunk.”

Kurt raised an eyebrow. “You would know.”

Elliott ignored that, and said, “Man, he’s going to be embarrassed about this in the morning.”

Kurt frowned. “And bringing it up would only make things awkward for everyone.”

Elliott hummed, and decided, “I won’t bring it up if you don’t.”

Kurt nodded. “Deal.” He pulled his phone out from his pocket, and went on Yelp to see who still had delivery this late, if anyone did. “Hopefully, he just won’t remember in the morning.”

“Fingers crossed,” replied Elliott.

When Keiran left the bathroom, he said goodnight, and went right to bed without another word.

And in the morning that followed, he showed no signs that he remembered anything.

And so, it was like it never happened.

Chapter End Notes

Mwahaha!
Song in this chapter-

**You Ruined Everything** by Jonathan Coulton

About two weeks after this little scene, the events in [chapter one](#) of Meanwhile, At McKinley take place, before the circumstances of the next chapter in this story.
September 19th, 2014, a Friday, at 4:07 PM, in Lima, Ohio. Rachel sat at one of the many little tables at the Lima Bean, and stared at her soy vanilla latte contemplatively. It was hard to believe. Come Monday, she will be in McKinley, at the start of Homecoming week, bringing the glee club back to the school. Bringing the arts back to the school.

As the coach.

She was going to be a teacher. No. She is a teacher.

...could she be a teacher?

She sighed, deeply. She knew she could do this. She was capable.

...right?

Then, out of the corner of her eye, she thought she saw someone familiar in line to order coffee. She stood up and turned slightly to have a better look, and-

“Santana?” She exclaimed, and walked over to her friend, “What are you doing in Lima?”

Santana stared at her in surprise. She stepped out of line, and, with a raised eyebrow, replied, “What are you doing in Lima? I figured that after your Hollywood dreams turned to ash you had gone into porn, or something.” She crossed her arms. “I still don’t understand why you took a chance on L.A. when you already had your actual dream job, by the way.”

Rachel’s face formed a brief pout before she responded, “I believe I asked you a question, first. We can talk about yours after you’ve answered mine.”

Santana shrugged, and followed Rachel when she walked back to her table, took a seat in the opposite chair. “Fine,” she agreed, “but only because I kinda want to talk about it anyway, not because you asked.”

Rachel barely resisted her urge to roll her eyes. Typical Santana.

“Okay,” began Santana, “the story is, one of Brit’s former professors from MIT told her about this job opening at NASA-”

“-NASA?” Rachel interrupted.

“Yes,” said Santana, irritably, “mind letting me talk?” When Rachel had pressed her lips together and nodded, she continued, “so Brittany thought, what the hell, and sent in an application, along with her professor’s letter of recommendation. To her surprise, that got her a Skype interview, and after that, to her even greater surprise, she got an email last week, on Monday, saying she had gotten the job.” Santana sat back in her chair, and looked very irritated. “Of course, she was nowhere near as surprised as me, who had not been informed about any of this until last Wednesday.” She huffed out a breath. “So we had a fight.”
“-oh no!” Rachel interrupted again with a gasp. Over the last few days, she had already learned that her dads were getting divorced and that Blaine and Kurt had broken up.

But Santana only leveled an annoyed look at her. “...and we reconciled almost immediately. Relax, Barbra.” When Rachel had settled again, she finished, “But I’m still pretty peeved, so, I’m here, in the town where we met and fell in love, to help me cool off.” She looked off into the distance, then, and smiled. “And it is helping.”

Rachel couldn’t help but smile, too. Santana’s face at that moment was like ambrosia for her inner romantic. But she frowned, suddenly. “So, Brittany is really going to be an astronaut?”

Santana shook her head firmly at that, back in the conversation. “No. Thank God. I don’t need nightmares about her dying in a ball of fire.” She closed her eyes and did a little shudder before she looked at Rachel again. “Her crazy math brain will be put to good use in research. Since she’s discovered that part of herself, she needs an outlet for it. This job will be great for her.” Then she smiled again, chin lifted, arms crossed. “She’ll be bettering the human race, and, if and when some rogue asteroid comes barreling towards planet Earth, she’ll be the one figuring out the equations needed to deflect it.”

Rachel clasped her hands together and tilted her head, curious. “So, does this mean you’ll be moving to Houston?”

Santana shook her head. “Actually,” she corrected, “NASA has a bunch of research and development facilities all over. Including one in Cleveland.” That fond smile returned. “She’s only a two and a half hour drive away, right now.”

Rachel perked up, sat up straighter, at that. She had an idea.

“So,” she suggested, “if you were to get a job in Lima, you could commute.”

Santana leaned back, raised an eyebrow. “I guess...” she said, clearly full of suspicion, “but why would I want to do that?”

Rachel leaned forward, and began her sell. “I have a proposition for you. Something I could use help on, that would be a good addition to your resume.”

Santana narrowed her eyes, but she bent forward. “I’m listening.”

That evening, as she sat on her bed in her nightgown, Rachel had heavy thoughts in her mind. She had a lot to hope for, great things to strive for, with Santana by her side as her assis-, ahem, co-coach.

But, as great as this opportunity was, to provide this service to bring the arts back to McKinley, there was the very sad fact that McKinley so badly needed it. She not only felt, but saw that there was no joy left in the school. Too many of the students looked...well, depressed.

She refused to believe that grades at McKinley really were up; Sue had to be forging test scores. She wouldn’t be the first school administrator to do so, and it’s exactly the sort of thing Sue would do.

She got up, and walked to her window. She looked out, at the stars, felt the pull to sing, and did not resist.
~Please, could you stay awhile
To share my grief?
For it's such a lovely day
To have to always feel this way~

Meanwhile, in Lima Heights Adjacent, Santana somberly stared out her window, too, as she thought of Brittany, and sang as well.

~And the time
That I will suffer less
Is when I never have to wake~

Then, on the roof (Santana would have a fit) of an apartment building in Brook Park, Cleveland, Ohio, where she sat and gazed at the stars that would now be her work, and also missed her girlfriend fiercely, Brittany also sang.

~Wandering stars
For whom it is reserved
The blackness, the darkness, forever
Wandering stars
For whom it is reserved
The blackness, the darkness
Forever~

Back in New York, Five Star Constellation was in the middle of an unusually late band practice. Elliott, close to the microphone, sang-

~Those who have seen
The needle’s eye, now tread
Like a husk
Keiran leant forward to sing the second half of the verse, with an odd intensity-

~And the masks,

That the monsters wear

To feed…

Upon their prey~

Minnow sang the refrain with heart, Reece with them.

~Wandering stars

For whom it is reserved

The blackness, the darkness

Forever~

Kurt took the bridge, which he sang with a melancholy he himself did not know the source of.

~Doubled up inside

Take awhile

To share my grief

Always doubled up inside

Taunted

Cruel…~

For the final refrain, Minnow sang alone. Then the group played the long instrumental, until they came to the end, and then resided in silence for what felt like a long time.

Reece ended the quiet moment, when she squinted and asked, “Isn’t that really, I dunno, gloomy, for us, Kingly?”

Minnow nodded, and said, “If this was for me, Mr. Hummel, there is no need. It does not suit Five
Star Constellation at all.”

Kurt shook his head, and heaved a great sigh. “It’s not for the band,” he apologized, “it’s for me. Sorry.” He sighed again. “I had this weird dream, that I don’t even remember, but is still bothering me, anyway.”

Elliott and Keiran both frowned in sympathy.

“Did singing Portishead get whichever out of your head?” Keiran asked.

Kurt shook his head again. He still felt strange and miserable, and had no idea why.

Chapter End Notes

Song in this chapter-
Wandering Star by Portishead

Remember how the explanation I came up with for Elliott not being in New York in canon was that he got a job on a cruise ship as a singing waiter and was thus out of reach, while in my timeline he didn't get the job? Well, he didn't get the job because in my timeline he chose to sing Britney Spears for his audition, and the guy he was auditioning in front of hated Britney Spears. So he rejects Elliott, and later complains about this weird guy with makeup that forced him to listen to Britney during a phone call to his brother.

His brother who is a professor at MIT. Hearing about Britney made him remember Brittany, who he then realizes is an excellent candidate for that job position his friend at NASA told him about.

BUTTERFLY EFFECT, BITCHES.

I was pleased to learn in my research that NASA not only had places all over the country (and even a few in other countries), but even had a facility in Ohio! How convenient is that? :D
Since Kurt had left the office of Madam Tibideaux, he was frazzled. Disoriented. Off-balance. Which had not been helpful in his dance class; Ms. July had become quite unhappy with him. This state of mind was still with him when he slid the door open and walked into his apartment.

Each member of Five Star Constellation was there, scattered casually about the apartment. Minnow played on their keyboards, Reece danced, Keiran sprawled on the floor to sketch in the early afternoon light, and Elliott busily prepared ingredients for the crockpot. Kurt glanced at the various spices he could see, and saw the shapes and lid colors of containers he was well familiar with. Curry again.

After the assortment of versions of ‘hey, Kurt’ from the group, Keiran was the first one to look at him. Upon which, he moved to sit up, and asked, “What’d she say?”

That got everyone’s attention, and they all stopped to look at Kurt, Reece and Minnow confused.

“What did who say?” questioned Reece.

Kurt did not reply for a moment. He stepped to the nearby armchair, dropped his messenger bag on it. He then said, to Keiran and Elliott, “She said yes.” To Reece and Minnow, he explained, “NYADA requires work study as part of the Junior year grade. Elliott and Keiran suggested that the band making music videos, proper ones, with a story and characters and costumes, like you’ve been wanting to do, not just video recordings of us playing, should count as work study. I didn’t think Madam Tibideaux would accept that. Elliott and Keiran insisted that I at least ask.” He walked towards the couch, and plopped onto it. Slightly dazed, he said, “And she said yes. By some miracle, Madam Tibideaux agreed that making music videos could count as work study, provided I show my work, document the process. She said yes.”

Reece looked at Minnow, then both looked at Kurt with excited grins.

“So you mean, we get to make music videos?” asked Reece, with undisguised enthusiasm.

Kurt shook his head. “No,” he answered, “it means we have to make music videos.”

Keiran blinked. “Well, fuck,” he replied, “that does take some of the fun out of it.”

Reece glared at him. “Shut up, Keiran.”

Keiran glared back. “Hey,” he objected, “only Elliott gets to tell me that.”

“That’s right,” called out Elliott. He rinsed his hands in the sink, then turned to face the group as he wiped his hands on a towel. “Shut up, Keiran.”

Keiran crossed his arms and sulked. “Fuck off.”

Before Kurt got the chance to laugh at this familiar moment that did help to steady him, Joan Jett’s voice suddenly blared out,
As the line repeated, Kurt, in rapid succession, got confused, realized it was his phone, pulled his phone out from his pants pocket, saw that the call was from Rachel, connected that someone changed his ringtone for possibly all of his friends from Lima, concluded it was Keiran, and answered the call while he glared at the Irishman, who wore a very large grin. “Hello? Rachel?”

“Kurt,” he heard, and it was clearly Rachel’s voice. “I know we haven’t really talked in almost a year, but I have a huge favor to ask of you.”

“Hang up!” Keiran crowed.

“...who was that?” Rachel asked.

“No one important,” Kurt deadpanned.

Keiran stuck his tongue out at him.

After a beat, Rachel continued, “You know how Sue has this...vendetta against the arts? As principal, she eliminated all the arts programs, including glee club. She even expelled all of the glee club members, aside from the cheerleader, Kitty.”

Rachel’s loud voice carried, and everyone, because they all had stepped (except Keiran, who had scooched across the floor) closer to listen in, heard that. Jaws dropped, eyes went wide, noises of disbelief were made.

“That can’t be legal!” Reece exclaimed.

“Who was that?” asked Rachel.

“Someone who is important, but I’d rather hear about why you called me,” Kurt said, concerned.

He heard Rachel take in a breath. “That’s not even all she’s done; I heard that there are attack dogs she literally releases in the hallways sometimes, canings-”

“-that definitely is illegal,” Minnow interjected.

“...how many people are with you, right now?”

“Four, Elliott is here,” answered Kurt. “I may as well put you on speakerphone,” he stated, and he did so, and he placed the phone on the coffee table. “Are you serious? Canings?”

“I am serious,” Rachel insisted, “and it doesn’t end there.” There was a pause before she continued, “But we should get to the reason I called. I got permission from the superintendent to reinstate the glee club, using the money I have left over from That’s So Rachel. But I have to run it, he said.”

“You’re going to be the coach?” Kurt blinked, surprised.

“Along with Santana,” Rachel confirmed, “but that’s a story that can wait for later.”
“I’m going to want to hear it,” Kurt replied.

“Me too,” agreed Elliott.

“I’ve put sign up sheets all over the school,” Rachel went on, “but no one has signed up. But I know that there are people needing this, that want to be in glee club, even if they don’t know it. Because I overheard someone singing earlier today. They’re here, Kurt. But they need to be drawn out. And I’m asking you and everyone else in the original group of the first year to help Santana and I do that, because these kids don’t just need a push. They need a hard shove.” Rachel paused yet again, before she stated, with significance, “We need you, Kurt.”

Kurt, without hesitation, said, “I’ll be there. I’ll grab the first available flight, and I’ll be there tomorrow.” He spoke with conviction.

Keiran, Elliott, Reece, and Minnow, all looked at Kurt with what looked like surprise at how forceful his voice had been.

Keiran soon looked more than surprised. He looked floored.

“Thank you, Kurt. Thank you so much,” was Rachel’s heartfelt response. “Goodbye. See you tomorrow.”

“See you tomorrow,” Kurt said with a nod, before he reached forward and ended the call with a firm tap on the phone.

For several seconds, everyone was silent.

“Kurt…” Elliott began.

But he got no further.

“Why the fuck,,” railed Keiran, as he stood, “would you agree to help that, that cunt, who, I apparently need to remind you, hasn’t properly spoken to you in a year. Not just her, but the whole lot of them! Why in fucking hell would you agree to go back to McCarthy?”

Kurt stood up as well. “It’s McKinley-”

“ Which-fucking-ever! ”

“-and you heard how bad it’s gotten, over there,” Kurt firmly stated, and did not flinch.

“I don’t care if it’s fucking North Korea! ” Keiran shouted as his arms flew out, “You can’t go back to Bean Town!”

“It is not after the bean,” Minnow interrupted. They spoke quickly, as if they couldn’t help it, “I looked it up. Lima, Ohio is reputedly named after Lima, Peru, which was originally named ‘Limaq’, a word meaning ‘speaker’ in the native language of the region, coastal Quechua.”

Keiran turned towards Minnow and yelled at them, “ I don’t give a fuck , Minnow!”

Minnow took some steps back and seemed to try to shrink in size as they stared at the floor.

Elliott glared at Keiran.

But Reece’s eyes were like fire. “Keiran.”
Keiran did not yield. “What?!”

Before that got a chance to escalate, Kurt spoke up. “I am going to return to McKinley to help bring back the glee club,” he said, in a solid voice, “because the glee club saved my life.”

All but Minnow stared at Kurt. (Minnow remained still, like they were frozen, eyes blank as they still stared at the floor.)

“…saved your life?” Elliott asked, voice soft.

Kurt looked to the side, avoided eye contact. “Saved my life,” he confirmed.

Keiran was very quiet. His angry flame seemed to be extinguished. Sense returned, his gaze went to Minnow. Eyes guilty. He said nothing. All four knew it was of no use to speak to Minnow until they had came back to themselves, in their own time.

The silence hung heavy for a long time, until Elliott finally said, “We’ll help you pack, Kurt.” He offered a small smile. “Get you ready to go save some lives.”

Kurt smiled in return.

He left for his room, and fetched his luggage.

Chapter End Notes

Songs connected to this chapter-

Fake Friends by Joan Jett And The Blackhearts

I’ve Never Been To Ohio by Darlia
FYI, Darlia is an Irish band.
The feeling did not hit Kurt as he stepped off the plane, early in the morning. He was happy to see and hug Carole, it was wonderful to see her again. His dad not being there to greet him, because Congress was in session at that time, wasn’t what brought the feeling on, as disappointed as it made Kurt feel, because he understood.

It was when the car drove into Lima, that that feeling arrived.

‘...this isn’t home.’

He tried to dismiss it, to shake that emotion off, call it jet lag. But it clung to him. As he walked inside and around the house he grew up in, exactly the same as when he left it, he felt like an intruder. The song ‘How To Return Home’ had begun to play in his mind.

He teased Carole for not doing anything with his room, it should be her craft room now, but his heart wasn’t entirely in it. When she teased back that he ought to be glad she kept his room, now that he’s here, she seemed to know. She suddenly hugged him again, tight. He hugged back, gratefully.

But the feeling remained, as he put his luggage in his room, took a shower, got dressed. While he waited for the crowded van, driven by Tina, with Artie, Mercedes, Mike, Puck, and Quinn inside. While they quietly snuck onstage, and created the dramatic moment of when the lights went up and he declared “Everyone!” in reply to Santana’s question to Rachel, “Who did you call?” and he hoped he convinced those who looked at him that the enthusiasm he had presented was real. While they had all smiled and embraced, and their joy seemed genuine.

And then they all walked off the stage, but he lingered. He stared at the wood floor, and told himself that this had been his home, and he was here to save it.

He jumped when Santana called out, “Hey, Broadway queen! Move it!”

He put his smile back on as he replied, “Sorry! Drifted off for a minute. Coming!” and followed the group to the choir room.

As he did, he felt out the energy of the school. It was…

...not good.

In fact, he realized something, as he looked at the faces of the students they passed in the hall. ‘They’re all feeling like I’m feeling right now. ...like how I felt before I joined glee club…’

He decided then, rationalized, that that was the reason why he felt like he didn’t belong in
McKinley. It was an emotional flashback. His mind was back in 2009. He’d heard of that happening to people, a memory pulling them back in time.

That had to be the reason.

One by one, they entered the choir room, chose chairs, and sat in them, while Rachel and Santana stood before them all.

Rachel began the pep talk, of what needed to be done, and how they would do it. Kurt would glance at Santana occasionally as Rachel spoke. He expected her to interrupt and take charge of the speech with a quip of how Rachel wasn’t going hard enough at any moment, and he imagined that everyone else in the room did, too.

But, just as he saw her open her mouth to likely do as he predicted, the school intercom let out a brief screech, and the voice of Principle Sue invaded.

-Attention, McKinley,-

her voice boomed,

-this is your glorious grand leader, Principal Sue Sylvester, with what I guess counts as an important announcement for most people.-

Kurt noticed then that Sam had tensed up, as if he had known what they had been about to hear, that it was not to be pleasant news.

-It has just been brought to my attention,-

said Sue, in a matter-of-fact tone, like it was the day’s lunch menu,

-that Alice Johnson committed suicide last night.-

More than pin-drop silence. If a downy feather had landed on the floor right then, they might have heard it in the horrible quiet.

-As always, thoughts and prayers, et cetera,-
Sue continued in that same tone that had been revealed to be callous,

-but, remember, students. It’s survival of the fittest at McKinley.-

It was there that the announcement ended.

Mercedes broke the long silence that had followed. “...I didn’t just hear what I think I just heard, right?” she demanded, “She did not just say ‘it’s survival of the fittest’ after tellin’ us somebody just committed suicide.”

“She did say it,” Brittany quietly said, “I heard it, too. It’s possible we had a shared hallucination, those are real things, but-”

“-it’s real,” Sam confirmed. He stared forward for a second, then put the palm of his hand to his forehead, and then dragged it to the side and down his face. It dropped back into his lap as he said, “There were five last year. Suicides.” He took in a long breath.

Rachel looked at Santana. “It’s worse than we thought,” she said, in a hushed voice.

Kurt shook his head. “It is North Korea, Keiran,” he whispered.

Mercedes, who sat next to him, turned her head to look at him. “What was that, Kurt?”

He did not answer Mercedes. Instead, he stood up, marched to the center the room. Rachel and Santana, surprised, both stepped aside and gave him space. He turned to face the seated group, and addressed them all.

“These kids,” he began, “they feel like they don’t belong, that they’re unwanted. Not loved. Like how I did. Before I joined glee club.” Kurt paused. “Glee club saved me, by giving me a safe space in this school. A home. That’s what these kids need. To know that they can have a home here.”

Kurt stood straighter, face certain. “I was thinking about just that on the plane ride over here. I have some song ideas for communicating that idea of a loving home to the school. The first is ‘Our House’, by Crosby Stills and Nash. I’d like to sing that now, if that’s alright. So you can hear what I’m trying to say.”

Rachel smiled at him and nodded. “Go ahead, Kurt. We’re listening.”

Rachel took a seat, and Santana followed suit.

As the old glee club all gazed at him in interest, Kurt closed his eyes and breathed deep, and tried to place his heart where it had been that first year, with New Directions.

~I’ll light the fire

You place the flowers in the vase

That you bought

Today~
As he opened his eyes and continued to sing, his mind did not stay where he intended, with those old memories. Instead, they drifted back to the apartment in New York City he shared with Elliott and Keiran. Elliott bringing back flowers he had impulse purchased at the farmer’s market. Elliott and Keiran, either alone or together, strumming along on their guitar or bass. One playing while the other danced with him, or him singing while they danced. Elliott working with him on a jacket, while Keiran drew, in the early evening light.

~Our house

Is a very, very, very fine house~

He thought of Minnow, in Their Spot. Of Reece, dancing to Mary J. Blige. Of all the members of Five Star Constellation, sharing an unplanned supper.

~Life used to be so hard

Now everything is easy

‘Cause of you~

Keiran and his Hangover Eggs. Elliott making curry again. Keiran calling Kurt a cunt, and Kurt calling Keiran an ass. Elliott ruffling Keiran’s hair. Keiran blowing a puff of air on his neck while Kurt was lost in thought, earning a smack on the arm. Elliott kissing him on the cheek. The three of them falling asleep on the couch while watching ‘Rent’, Elliott in the middle, with Kurt and Keiran using his shoulders as pillows.

~I’ll light the fire

You place the flowers in the vase

That you bought

Today~

When the song ended and he had come back to himself, he suddenly felt embarrassed. Here he had meant to sing a song about how being a part of glee club had made him feel, and instead it became a song about how being around his new friends in New York made him feel. Sure, no one in the room knew what had really been on his mind, but Mercedes, Rachel, and Santana all looked at him with strange expressions, odd smiles.

“That’s the sappy one,” he distracted, “Iggy Pop’s ‘Home’ was another one I had in mind.”
“I like that song!” piped up Sam. “Because it’s really, really true. Everybody does need a home. I know that, because I was homeless.”

“I have an idea!” said Tina, as if Sam hadn’t spoken. And it was like she hadn’t listened to anything Kurt had said, either. “Let’s do ‘Take A Chance On Me’ by Abba!”

“No, Tina,” the room chorused.

Rachel clapped to get everyone’s attention. “Kurt’s theme of ‘home’ is a fantastic idea,” she enthused. “Let’s work on that. How about we all brainstorm some more song ideas right now, and then we can perform one or two in the cafeteria during lunchtime. Kurt,” she said as she grabbed him by the shoulder and tugged him towards a corner of the room, near one of the doors, “how about we brainstorm over here.”

“Oh, no,” Santana said as she shook her head and followed, “you’re not getting him to yourself.”

“And I’ll be damned if I’m being left out of it,” stated Mercedes as she joined them.

“Alright, alright,” Rachel submitted, before she called out to everyone else, “the rest of you, divide into two groups of three to discuss song choices, and we’ll all meet in the middle to hash it out after several minutes.”

After she had said that, she turned towards Kurt, and she and the other two girls convened on him.

“What are you doing,” he asked, as his gaze flicked to each of the girls in turn, “what’s going on?”

“How about you tell us what’s going on,” demanded Santana, with a raised eyebrow.

“Yeah, Kurt,” agreed Mercedes, “who was that about?”

“Who was what about?” asked Kurt, defensively.

“The song, Kurt!” Rachel cajoled, “Who was the song about?”

Kurt rolled his eyes with some emphasis. “It’s not about any one person; you did hear what I said before I sang the song, right? About home, and how I found one in glee club?”

“Yeah, we all heard that shmaltz,” Santana dismissed with a wave of her hand, “and I totally bought it, until I saw that dopey look slowly take over your face while you sang about someone playing love songs for you, only for you.”

“We all saw it,” insisted Mercedes, “you’re in love, it’s obvious.” She crossed her arms.

“That’s right,” Rachel tagged in, “we caught you! Now, who is it?”

Kurt stared at them, incredulous. ‘What.’ “I’m not in love with anyone, there is no who.” He then added, without thought, “And why should I tell any of you anything in the first place? Why the sudden interest in the goings on in my life; that’s new.”

The three of them all looked rather taken aback at that.

But, before any of them got the chance to respond, they heard Sue’s voice, muffled behind the door.

“What are you doing out in the halls when you should be in class, Hulu?”
There was a quick beat where the four looked at each other, and then Rachel, who was nearest to
the door, opened it, just a(n admittedly wide) crack. The attention of everyone in the room had
been garnered, and they all gathered near the door.

They saw a boy in a blue long-sleeved t-shirt and jeans and Converse shoes, with a haircut that ran
just past his ears, who stared at the floor, clearly terrified. “My name is Kahula,” he said, quietly.
He stood near the door- had it been to listen in?

“I don’t care,” Sue shot back. “What I do care about is the caning you just earned. Ten for playing
hooky, and you added five more for correcting me, young man. Look at me when I’m speaking to
you!”

He did look up at her, and his look of fear made Rachel gasp aloud.

How Sue and the boy, Kahula, had not noticed them before was a mystery, but they both saw the
group that spied on them now.

Sue glared at them, then at the boy. “Get to class!” she hissed.

As he ran off, presumably to his class, Rachel cried out after him, “Auditions are at three o’clock in
the school theater today! If you can’t make it, there’s another one, same day, same time, next
week!”

Sue pivoted on her heel to face Rachel head on and loom over her.

To Rachel’s credit, Kurt noted to himself, she did not flinch.

“I will not have you interfering with my educating of students, Rachel Berry,” Sue threatened.

Santana swung the door all the way open. “I think you meant terrorizing,” she retorted.

Sue looked at Santana with a face that attempted pity. “Oh, Santana, my Latina princess. How far
you’ve fallen.” She shook her head. “And I had such high hopes for you.”

Santana cocked her hip and crossed her arms. “You can definitely stop saying that every time you
see me.”

Sue shook her head again, and then returned her address to Rachel. “Mark me, you are going to
fail. And I am going to enjoy watching it happen.”

Rachel did not shrink. “I hope you are watching, Sue Sylvester. Because we won’t fail. The arts are
coming back to McKinley.”

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3:30 PM.

Rachel’s earlier words began to ring a bit hollow in their memory. Even after Roderick’s amazing
audition.

The aforementioned Roderick shifted in his seat. “Do I have to stay and wait with you?” he asked.
“I really should be going home.”
Rachel let out a deep sigh. “Yes,” she acquiesced, “I guess we should call it a da-”

“-wait.” They all turned in their seats, to see someone at the auditorium doors. It was Kahula.

He fidgeted, as he explained, “I live really close to the school. Very close. Across the street.” He paused, then continued, “I went home, and I wasn’t going to come back, but the moment I got home, I changed my mind.” He hesitantly lifted something that was the shape of a guitar case, but too small to be for a guitar. “But that meant I could bring this. ...can I play it, while I sing?”

“Sure,” said Sam. “I got to play my guitar when I auditioned.” He squinted. “What is it?”

Kahula did not reply; he instead walked onstage, set the case on a stool, opened it, took the instrument out, and went and stood behind the mic.

Sam leaned forward, excitedly. “Is that a ukulele? That is so cool!” He sat back in his seat. “Kahula is Hawaiian, right? And you’re playing the ukulele? That’s so awesome! You’re, like, super Hawaiian!”

Brittany, who was sat next to Santana, leaned forward to look at Sam. “I’m pretty sure that was like, super racist.”

Sam’s smile dropped off of his face. “Oh.” He called out to Kahula, “Sorry!”

Clearly embarrassed, Kahula quietly said, into the mic, “It’s okay.”

Brittany shook her head. “No, it’s not.”

Santana patted Brittany’s hand and whispered something.

Rachel soldiered on, and asked, in a clear voice, “Did you have a song prepared?”

“Yeah. Um.” He looked at Sam, awkwardly. “It’s actually pronounced ‘ukulele,” he said, and he pronounced the ‘u’ with an ‘oo’ sound, both of the ‘e’s as in ‘lemon’. He fidgeted again, before he answered Rachel, “I’d like to perform ‘Nothing matters when we’re dancing’, by The Magnetic Fields. If that’s okay.”

‘The Magnetic Fields?’ thought Kurt. ‘Never heard of them, before.’

“It’s more than okay,” Rachel assured Kahula.

“Yeah, it’s fine,” said Santana, “have at it.”

Kahula paused. Finally, with an obvious blush, he began to play his instrument, and then he sang.

~Dance with me,

My dear old friend

Once before we go~

Gradually, he visibly gained confidence, got into the song. By the refrain, he sang wholeheartedly.
~And nothing matters when we’re dancing

In tattered tatters you’re entrancing

Be we in Paris

Or in Lansing

Nothing matters when we’re dancing~

It was doubtful that any in the audience had heard the song before, but, in spite of that, many began to sing backup, like it was instinct. They all swayed in their seats.

When he came to the end, they all gave him a standing ovation.

Santana bent towards the desk mic to declare, “That was amazing! You’re in, island boy!”

Kahula looked quite surprised, like he’d never been so praised before. “Thank you.” He swallowed. “I hope what I heard one of you saying, before...about home...” He looked to the ground, then back at them. “I hope it’s true.”

Rachel, with passion, said, “It is.”

Kurt looked around at the group in the auditorium, at his former glee club. Even in these beautiful moments in which they had gained two new members, he couldn’t help but remember that, this found family...had all just, disappeared, until now. And so, to himself, he thought, ‘Until it isn’t.’

All while he maintained his smile, in case Kahula, who desperately needed to see it, looked at him.

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While Kurt hid in the (thankfully) empty bathroom at the Lima Bean, he tried to sort through his emotions. Why was he horrified. Why was he devastated?

He had thought he was over Blaine. Completely.

Apparently not.

There he had sat, as he innocently enjoyed a coffee, and then Blaine entered the café…

...with Dave Karofsky.

(“Kurt! Hi!” “...Blaine! How’ve you been?” “Really good, actually.” “Hey, Kurt!” “Dave, what are you doing here?” [They had looked at each other, and blushed. They held hands. Blaine answered.] “He’s my boyfriend.” “...I’m sorry, will you excuse me? This is so embarrassing, but I desperately need the restroom.” “Oh, okay.”)

Kurt was a mess. Why?
‘...why am I trying to figure this out on my own?’

He got his phone, and called Elliott.

It went straight to voicemail.

“Does he ever remember to charge his damned phone?” he muttered as he called Keiran, with the hope that he was with Elliott right then. He should be, five o’clock on a Wednesday.

It had barely rung before it was answered.

“What the fuck happened,” Keiran demanded, “whose arse do I need to beat?”

“*Put it on speakerphone, Keiran,*” Kurt heard Elliott say, and then, clearer, “Kurt, it’s Elliott, are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” replied Kurt. He then, after a moment, confessed, “Actually, I’m not fine. I just saw Blaine.”

“The fuck did the cunt do?!” Keiran blared. Kurt heard Elliott whisper something like ‘settle down, Keiran’.

“He didn’t do anything,” Kurt defended, “but he’s with someone, someone I know. Someone who bullied me, and it turned out he bullied me because he had a crush on me, and Blaine knew all that, but now he’s dating him, and I just don’t know what’s going on, I haven’t felt right since I got here, I don’t even know how I feel about any of it, and I just-” Kurt cut himself off, and barely resisted the urge to burst into tears.

“He’s dating your bully? And he just paraded that in front of you? That cunt!” Keiran sounded like he was in the middle of a fit. “He-”

“-didn’t know I was going to be here,” Kurt interrupted, and the facts of it all swirled in his brain, “he didn’t know I’d ever be back in Lima, he unfriended and blocked me on Facebook, so I never even had the opportunity to see any pictures or anything of him with Dave, and we just bumped into each other by chance in the coffee shop, just now. ...and they seem really happy together.”

There was a pause before Keiran said, in an uncertain tone, “It was a subconscious thing, then, meant to hurt you, even if he wasn’t aware of it, I’m sure-”

“-shut up, Keiran,” said Elliott, and he sounded tired.

“...fuck off,” was the familiar response, but there was no storm behind it.

“Kurt,” came Elliott’s kind voice, “why is this bothering you so much?” After a long pause, in which Kurt did not answer, Elliott asked, “Do you still have feelings for him?”

“No!” Kurt declared, vehemently. After a moment of silence, he admitted, “I have no idea what it is that I’m feeling right now. But I don’t want him back, that I’m sure of. It’s just...” He sighed. “Everything has felt wrong, ever since I arrived in Lima. There were even some genuinely good moments...that I just couldn’t enjoy. And now, I see Blaine with Dave, of all people, since when is Blaine even into bears, when did that happen, and...I feel like my brain just broke.”

It was quiet on the other end of the line for awhile. Then, Elliott said-

“It sounds like it’s time for you to come back to New York.”
Kurt blinked repeatedly. “What?”


“Kurt,” Elliott said, his voice now louder, like he had leaned closer to the phone, “were you the only one that showed up, or did some of the others come to help, too?”

Kurt paused. “Everyone came, actually.”

He heard Keiran scoff. “Oh, so they’ll turn up for Rachel, then. Ow.” Elliott must have flicked him, again.

“That means she has all the help she needs,” stated Elliott. Then, softly, “Come back, Kurt. We need you.”

Kurt smiled. He felt it more, from Elliott, than he had from Rachel. Like it really meant him specifically.

But then Keiran said, “Yeah, those frozen cinnamon rolls don’t turn out as nice like they do when you make them. Ow! And we miss you, or something! Fuck.”

Kurt could not help but laugh, then. “You’re such an ass,” he said, fondly.

Kurt would have sworn that Keiran sounded equally fond when he reliably replied, “And you’re a cunt.”

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When Kurt hoisted his large suitcase over the front porch step, and then let it roll on its little wheels behind him along the walkway to the driveway, where Carole waited in the car to drive him to the airport, he was surprised to see Rachel. There she stood, right by the passenger car door.

Before he could say a word, she spoke first.

“You can’t just text me to say you’re going back to New York, and leave it at that,” she pleaded. “Why, Kurt? You literally just got here yesterday.”

He moved around her to open the back car door, and hefted the heavy luggage onto the seat.

“Remember, honey, we need to leave now to get to the airport in time. The TSA takes awhile, especially for New York flights,” reminded Carole, already in the driver’s seat.

“Don’t worry,” assured Kurt, with a smile, “this won’t take long.” He stepped back and shut the door, and then turned to again face Rachel, who seemed shocked.

“This won’t take long’? Kurt,” she pressed, “why are you leaving? New Directions needs you!” She paused dramatically. “I need you.”

Kurt shook his head. “You don’t, Rachel,” he disagreed, “everyone else is here.” He looked at her very seriously. “I can’t stay, Rachel. There are too many ghosts.”
Rachel’s brows furrowed, and she looked confused. “‘Ghosts’? What do you mean?”

“I mean that I have to go home,” he said. He paused. He realized what he had just said. ‘Home.’ He smiled. “My band needs me,” he stated. The only further explanation he planned to give.

Rachel’s expression took on some curiosity. “You have a new band?”

“Yes,” Kurt replied, with pride. He stood next to the front passenger side door, hand on the handle. “Five Star Constellation. Look us up, we’re on every social media platform. We have an album of original songs up on iTunes, and it’s been selling.”

Her eyebrows raised high. “It’s selling?”

“Yeah. Nothing crazy yet, but it’s selling. And we’re starting work on our first music video. I have a lot to do.” His smile turned fond. “And, even if I didn’t, my friends miss me. I need to go. So, goodbye, Rachel. And good luck.”

Rachel looked mildly confused and slightly stunned. “Goodbye…good luck to you, too…”

Kurt nodded, opened the door, got in the car, and shut the door tight.

He chatted energetically with Carole all the way to the airport. When she dropped him off, she hugged as tight as she could while they remained in the car, and said, “I’m sad that you’re leaving so soon. But it’s not quite as hard to say goodbye as it could have been, when I can see how happy you are to go, to be back with your friends in New York. I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

After he had checked his bag and gone through security, while he waited in an uncomfortable chair for his flight, he pulled his iPod out of his small carry-on bag, popped in the earbuds, and hit play to finally listen to the Owen Pallett album, ‘Heartland’. Mahsuri had been the one to give him the mp3s. As he listened, he was surprised to discover that the music was strangely appropriate for his given situation.

Oh heartland, up yours, indeed.

Chapter End Notes

Normally, I’d divide these disparate scenes into their own chapters, but that would have made the stay in Lima feel even longer. No.

I imagine that some of you may think that the hellscape I portrayed went too far. But I firmly believe that that is what you would see in a place without hope, where only perfection is good enough, and there is no relief to the grind. I didn’t come to that view all on my own; in cultures where if you don’t perform at certain level, you are a complete failure, and are thus worthless, the suicide rate is very high. Most of us have heard the stories from Japan about this. And Japan has arts programs. Imagine that culture without art. I frankly think that my putting the number at six was too low, but, with a horrifying concept like suicide, that number is already too much to process. To anyone thinking I made Sue too evil? I’d like to know what show you watched.

I just pulled that 3:00 PM audition time out of my ass. I cannot understand how class
schedules work in McKinley. Watching the second episode of season six, Homecoming, I can’t pin down when, if ever, people are actually attending classes.

Rachel did say auditions were ‘next week’ in show, but, fuck if I’m having Kurt stay in that hellhole for that long. So, I added an earlier one.

Harry Shum Jr. was probably too busy becoming Magnus Bane, so it makes sense that Mike wasn’t there in the show, but such things do not hinder me. So he’s there now.

Songs in this chapter-

**How To Return Home** by Natalie Weiss
(Of course, ‘girl’ becomes ‘boy’, ‘she’-’he’, ‘daughter’-’son, Kurt’.)

**Our House** by Crosby Stills and Nash

**Nothing matters when we’re dancing** by The Magnetic Fields
I know, another OC, it’s ridiculous. He didn’t even exist before I started writing this chapter, he just happened! I had a sudden thought that my AU that brought a slightly changed Kurt with it to McKinley ought to have some effect, some change to the Lima story.

How good is Kahula Palakiko at the ukulele? About this good.

**Home** by Iggy Pop

**Oh Heartland, Up Yours!** by Owen Pallett
The arrivals level in Terminal B at the LaGuardia Airport were crowded, as one would expect in a New York City airport, but Kurt still spotted Elliott and Keiran immediately.

“Welcome home!” cheered Elliott, arms wide for a hug, which Kurt gladly accepted, along with Elliott’s peck on the cheek.

“Elliott!” he returned, almost giddy. It was silly; he’d literally only been gone for a day, why was he so happy to see them?

...and why so much happier than he had been to see the friends in Lima that he hadn’t seen in almost a year?

When he and Elliott had released each other from their hug, Kurt turned to Keiran, determined to hug him as well, but stopped short when he’d had a proper look at him.

“Keiran,” he said, confused, “you’re in a suit.” Keiran was in the suit he and Elliott had made for him months ago, ‘just in case’, they had said, in spite of Keiran’s protests that the only suit he’ll ever wear will be the one he’d be buried in. He looked amazing, of course; he and Elliott were craftsmen; but Keiran in his black suit and bow tie looked a little strange next to Elliott in his black jeans and charcoal grey dress shirt.

Keiran scratched the back of his head and rolled his eyes. “I know I look stupid,” he replied, “but it’s part of your welcome home, alright?”

Kurt slowly shook his head, as he looked him up and down. “Au contraire,” he disagreed, as he looked him in the eye, “You do not look stupid.”

Keiran looked at him with a raised eyebrow. “You’re right,” came the response, “the correct word is ‘wanker’.”

Elliott let out a short laugh, and said, “Shut up, Keiran.”

“Fuck off.”

Kurt took a moment to enjoy the familiar exchange, and then asked Elliott, “But you’re not in a suit. So why...?”

Elliott laughed again, and explained, “We’ve got a little something prepared we think you probably need, and Keiran insisted on having a sort of costume to do it in.”

Keiran crossed his arms. “For something that cheesy and ridiculous,” he defended, “I need to make like I’m in a panto.”

Kurt squinted at them both. “What are you-?”

“-you’ll see when we’re home,” assured Elliott, as he took the lead for the walk towards the baggage claim area, “let’s get your luggage and grab a taxi.”
Keiran threw an arm across Kurt’s shoulders, and held him close to his side as they walked. “And we want to hear you tell us all about the horrors of Bean Town while we ride back to our flat,” he requested. “Confess us some of the older stuff, once you’ve gone through the events of yesterday.”

Kurt gave Keiran a bit of side-eye. “You know now that it’s not after the bean.”

“Whichever,” Keiran dismissed, “it’s still full of beans. Impressive you smell as good as you do, coming from there. Relatively speaking, d’ya know what I mean?”

Kurt smirked, and shook his head. “You’re such an ass.”

Keiran grinned at him. “And you’re a cunt.”

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“Mother Mary!” cursed Keiran, as he took his turn in the hoist of Kurt’s luggage up the stairs, thankfully the final flight. “Just how long did you pack for?”

“Five days,” answered Kurt, matter-of-factly.

Keiran set the suitcase down at the top of the stair, now finally on the floor that their flat was on, and stared at Kurt. “This was for five days?”

“It’s only one suitcase, Keiran,” said Elliott, as he pulled out the retractable handle and towed the luggage along, Kurt ahead of them at the door.

Keiran stared at the two of them. “You’re both mental.”

“The real question is,” Elliott phrased as they waited for Kurt to unlock and release the several latches, (Keiran and Elliott had just learned on the taxi ride over that the latches had been added following the break in by their principal to have sex in every part of the apartment, with a man she had just met. Don’t worry, he and Rachel had disinfected everything, ) “how on Earth did you get Artie up here?”

Kurt paused. “You know,” he said, slowly, “I don’t properly remember.” He undid the final latch. “...it doesn’t make much sense, does it,” he murmured, as he slid the apartment door open.

“Your entire life involving anything from Bean Town reads like some wacky parallel universe,” quipped Keiran as he moseyed in after Kurt, Elliott, and Kurt’s large suitcase, respectively.

Kurt turned to face Keiran and gave him a cocked eyebrow. “You are never going to stop calling Lima that, are you?”

Keiran resolutely shook his head. “Nope.”

While Kurt rolled his eyes, Elliott rolled the suitcase into the kitchen area, left it to wait next to the table, grabbed a chair, and moved it to face the empty central area. “Have a seat, Kurt!” Elliott chirped.

Kurt, duly curious, sat down in the indicated chair. He watched as Keiran walked to the coffee table to pick up...a top hat, and a big black walking stick that had an oddly shaped brass topper? Huh?
His attention to that was briefly diverted by Elliott, as he had begun to strum on his guitar and hum a tune Kurt did not recognize, only to be snapped back to Keiran when he suddenly banged out a

**Ra-ta-ta-ta-tat!**

on the floor with the walking stick, now stood next to Elliott, and he did look charmingly silly in the now completed outfit, especially since the hat was a bit too big for him. If not for Keiran’s hair being such a wavy mop of thick red chaos, it would have certainly slipped and covered his forehead.

Kurt clapped, delighted, a big smile already on his face.

Keiran grinned, and he sang-

~*Who wouldn’t love you, who wouldn’t care?*

**Ra-ta-ta-ta-tat!**

*You’re so enchanting, people must stare!*~

And so went the long what Kurt thought must be a verse. After almost each line, Keiran rapped the floor with the cane.

~*Darling!*

*Who wouldn’t love you, who wouldn’t care?*~

No bang of the cane, Keiran doffed his hat with his right hand, bowed dramatically, and put his hat over his heart, clasped the knob of the cane with his other hand, the end point on the floor in front of him, as Elliott sang what turned out to be an exact repeat of what Keiran had sung. This time, Kurt took notice of what sounded like a word he had not heard before today, if he had not misheard.

~*You’re the dream that dreamers want to dream about!*

*You’re the breath of spring that lovers gadabout, are mad about!*~
‘Gadabout?’ Kurt thought, ‘I can’t be hearing that right. ‘Get about’? ‘Gab about’? ‘Gag about’?’ Kurt pursed his lips in thought. ‘I’ll have to ask.’

Elliott finished his verse, only for Keiran, after he had placed the top hat back on his head, to talking that very same verse, cane bangs still absent, while Elliott whistled. The delivery of each repeat had been different, so it didn’t feel that repetitive, actually. ‘And we let Daft Punk get away with it all the time,’ Kurt reasoned to himself. Then, when the line came by again, Kurt listened closely. ‘...the word is definitely ‘gadabout’. What the heck is a ‘gadabout’?’

The verse ended with a

Ra-ta-ta-ta-tat!

and then Elliott sang, punctuated by bangs of the cane from Keiran.

~Who wouldn’t love you, tell me, who wouldn’t buy?

Ra-ta-ta-ta-tat!

The west side of heaven, if you winked your eye?

Ra-ta-ta-ta-tat!

You’re the answer to my ev’ry prayer!

Darlin’!

Who wouldn’t love you?

Who wouldn’t care?~

Ra-ta-ta-ta-tat!

There was a final decisive strum of the guitar, at which Keiran struck a pose, his arms splayed out, stick in the left hand.

Kurt broke out into applause, a standing ovation, and laughed. “That was great, thank you!” he enthused. Then, with head tilted, he asked, “Now, where did you even hear that song?”

“Minnow,” they answered, simultaneously. Then, also together, “Yesterday.”
“Minnow?” Kurt blinked a few times. “So they count that mention of ‘heaven’ as a sky reference?”

They both shrugged.

“Guess so,” Keiran said.

Kurt, after a pause, also shrugged, and moved on to the next question. “I heard it four times, so I know I’m not mishearing something; what the heck is a ‘gadabout’?”

Elliott chuckled. “Yeah, that one threw us, too.”

Keiran answered, “It’s a 1940’s word meaning ‘pleasure-seeker’, so the song isn’t even using it right. Minnow is very upset about that.” Keiran donned a lopsided grin. “They introduced us to the song so they could complain about it. Reece was busy.”

Kurt smiled at that. “Now,” he then continued, “where did the top hat come from?”

Elliott rose his hand. “It’s mine,” he answered.

“The pimp cane is his, too,” added Keiran. He held it upright, for Kurt to better look at it.

Kurt squinted at the aforementioned cane. “...is that a face, on the knob?”

Elliott and Kurt both chose to not acknowledge the little snerk Keiran made at the word ‘knob’.

Instead, Elliott hypothesized, “It’s meant to be a gargoyle, I think.”

Keiran’s face became contemplative as he turned it to his view and regarded it, and he countered, “Looks like some sort of demon-pug, to me.”

Kurt almost snorted at that. He looked at the two of them again, inquisitive. “Okay, last question. Why did you sing me that song? I mean, I loved it, don’t get me wrong,” he insisted as he waved his hand in denial, “but it’s...kind of a weird choice.”

Elliott, who, during this conversation, had gone and put the guitar back on its stand and then walked back to them, answered, with a slightly put-upon expression, “I wanted to do ‘You’re The Top’, but, Keiran insisted, ‘it’s been done’.”

“Well, excuse me for wanting to be original,” Keiran retorted, “fuck off.”

Kurt laughed again, and he grinned at Keiran. “Keiran,” he very fondly said, “when you aren’t being an ass, you’re ridiculous.”

Keiran crossed his arms, which was tricky with the walking stick still in his hand, and pouted. “Fuck off,” he said, “that was the point.”

Kurt grinned even wider. “I know;” he replied, as he stepped forward and hugged Keiran, finally, “it’s great.”

“Ugh,” groaned Keiran, but offered no struggle, even when Elliott joined in.

For a few more moments, the incredible joy of the prospect, and then the reality, of returning to New York, that had been with him since when he had earlier left his house...his parents’ house, to get to the airport, remained.

But then, suddenly, it left. He thought of all those kids in McKinley, that so desperately needed
help, a path to regain hope...and he had just left them.

Elliott and Keiran had felt him go limp, and both released the hug, stepped back to try to assess what might be wrong.

“...Kurt?” asked Elliott.

After a long pause, Kurt said, “I’m so selfish.”

Keiran and Elliott quickly looked at each other, then back at Kurt.

“The fuck?” Keiran questioned.

Kurt looked up, at both of them, and then looked back at the floor. “All those kids...they need help. And I left after one day because I was a little bit unhappy.” As he said this, he had stepped back, and dropped himself back onto his chair.

Keiran sounded incredulous as he declared, “You were not ‘a little bit unhappy’. You were a lot bit unhappy. You sounded on the edge of a meltdown when you called us last night.”

Kurt said nothing.

After nearly a full minute of silence, Elliott softly reminded, “You weren’t the only one that showed up to help, Kurt. In fact, you said everyone did.”

Kurt shifted in his seat, looked off to the side. “Yeah, but…”

And then, after a beat, Keiran suggested, “It sounds like you’re wanting to mop a clean floor, Kurt.”

Kurt looked up at him. “Huh?”

With a close to grim expression, Elliott nodded. “He’s right,” he agreed, “this is just like when you used to always clean up after us, even when we had cleaned up already.”

“I understand why you don’t trust them to be competent,” said Keiran, “but a bunch of them together have got to add up to someone who can manage, and even manage well, d’ya know what I mean?”

Kurt rested his back on his chair, sighed, and considered. “You’re right,” he concluded.

“I’m always right,” was the quick response.

Kurt rolled his eyes. “You know,” he said, with a tilt of his head, “it’s really annoying just how often you actually are.”

He grinned. “Yeah,” he nodded as he nearly preened, “I’ve heard that before.”

Kurt stood as he shook his head at him, and then beckoned. “C’mere.”

Keiran raised his eyebrows. “No,” he rejected.


Keiran looked at Elliott as he slowly approached, and raised a wagging finger. “No. Not twice in one day.”
But they continued to approach, and he waited too long to attempt his escape, and they had him.

“No! What is it with you Yanks and all the hugging!?”

Kurt hugged tighter than he would normally, amused by Keiran’s exaggerated distress.

He still felt a little shred of guilt, of course. It seemed to be hardwired into him. But he would work on this feeling. Because Elliott and Keiran were exactly right.

The world was not his responsibility.

Chapter End Notes

Song in this chapter-

**Who Wouldn’t Love You?** by the Ink Spots

I was grumpy when I found out Glee had already done ‘You’re The Top’. I spent a good amount of time looking for another song that fit; something at least showtunesish, if not actually from a musical, for them to tell their Broadway Boy that they think he’s awesome. I have a large collection of old songs, and I thankfully found what I was looking for there.

If there was an elevator, and I forgot, apologies. There is a hard limit to how much I’m willing to watch again, and, being that I can’t pick out where I need to look, and would need to go through all New York scenes involving the apartment for *two seasons*, sorry, can’t do it.
Kurt breathed deep, and attempted to steady his nerves, as he waited in the hallway.

Elliott and Keiran had brought up Adam again, that morning. As they had been for about once a week since the start of the semester in the last week of August, when he had learned that, yes, Adam had returned to NYADA, for his senior year. He had a chance, an opportunity, to approach Adam and apologize.

And he...hadn’t. On Thursdays, at 11:15 AM, they pass in a particular hallway on their respective ways to class. Seven times he had passed Adam in this hallway, seven times he had just kept his head down and walked faster.

This morning, Elliott and Keiran revealed that they were fed up with letting him ‘wait until he was ready’. Keiran hypothesized that he’d probably finally ‘feel ready’ a month after Adam had graduated, and he was long gone.

Then Keiran had said that, if he didn’t do it today, he was going to shave Kurt’s head. When Kurt replied that Elliott wouldn’t let him do that, Elliott had said that, not only would he allow it, he’d be the one holding Kurt down.

(“After all, it will grow back.”)

Well. Fear can be a hell of a motivator. So, here he was.

And, there was Adam.

‘Oh, god,’ Kurt thought. ‘...would a wig be such a trial?’ He shook his head, irritably. ‘No. Elliott and Keiran are right. I’m being ridiculous, childish. Oh god, he saw me.’

He breathed deep again.

Walked right towards Adam. Who stood there, and waited for him to come to him. Kurt was unable to read his expression.

Then, he was up close, face to face.

“Adam,” he said.

Adam blinked at him. “Kurt?”

Another breath, and then-

“I used you. I hurt you. I’m sorry. You shouldn’t forgive me.”

And then Kurt fled, did not pause or look behind when Adam cried, “Kurt! Wait!” after him. He reached his classroom door, and bolted inside.

Imagine Kurt’s surprise to discover Adam by the door when he left the classroom at 12:15 PM.
Kurt attempted to flee, but Adam only pressed a piece of paper into his hand, and walked away.

When Kurt looked at the small scrap of paper, he saw a message, in Adam’s handwriting.

[Kurt-
Please come to the theatre at 4 PM, today.
-Adam]

‘Oh, no.’
He can’t not go. If he didn’t show up, that would essentially nullify his apology.
Okay, then.
He would go.
Whatever happens, happens.

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When he walked into the university theater, Kurt, for a few moments, thought he was in the middle of a flashback.

There was Adam, onstage...the Adam’s Apples behind him.
And, when he saw Kurt enter the room, he smiled warmly, gestured to the club members, began to sing, and his group provided their beautiful backup vocals.

~’Cause we all make mistakes sometimes...

And we’ve all stepped across that line.

But nothing’s sweeter than the day we find, we find...~

Kurt dropped himself into a seat next to the center stairs, confused. He did not know this song.
But he soon understood, as the later verse progressed.
When he heard the full chorus, the message was clear.

~We all need forgiveness
We all need
We all need
-Mr. Hendricks!-

And then, the most beautiful black man Kurt had ever seen in his entire life, sang a verse.

~And I don’t know if I can hear
“I’m sorry”
Being spoken.
But those forgiven much
Should be quicker to give it
And God forgave me for it all
Jesus bled forgiveness~

When Adam resumed the chorus, it happened.
Kurt began to cry.
‘Why are people so good to me, when I don’t deserve it?’
It was very quiet at first, and Kurt initially concealed it well, so Adam failed to notice.

~And we all stumble, and we fall
Bridges burn in the heat of it all!
But nothing’s sweeter than the day,
Sweeter than the day
We call…
Out for forgiveness~

But by the time Adam had finished that chorus, it had become impossible to miss. Adam ceased to sing, held out his hands, and hushed the choir.

“Everyone, I think we ought to take a five minute break. If you will excuse me.”
Adam walked offstage, straight towards Kurt. When he was stood next to him, he drew him up into a hug.

Kurt cried into Adam’s shoulder, as his own shoulders shook. “Why are you forgiving me,” he hiccupped, “why? I don’t deserve it.”

“But I am,” shushed Adam, as he cradled the back of Kurt’s head in one hand, and gently placed his other hand between Kurt’s shoulders. “I’m no longer upset with you. Your past just had this hold on you that you couldn’t break, and it pulled you back.” He leant away to look at Kurt, his face full of empathy. “Nostalgia has deceived all of us, at one time or another, Kurt. Sometimes, in devastating ways.”

Kurt sighed. Adam had successfully calmed him, and his tears were dried, his senses returned. “Adam…so that you know…” Kurt gazed off to the side. “I’m not trying to win you back. And I don’t think I ever…”

“Shhh,” said Adam, as he gently put a finger to his lips for a moment, and then took it away. “No need to make this more complicated than it is. I’m fine, Kurt.”

Kurt looked back him. “Really?”

Adam smiled. “Really. I’ve moved on. Things are good.”

Kurt tilted his head. “You mean…?”

Adam bowed his head, as if he was suddenly shy, and stepped back. “Yes,” he confessed, “I’m seeing someone.”

It was Kurt’s turn to smile. “Who is it? Is he here?” Kurt asked, and he looked this way and that, among the scattered Adam’s Apples.

“He is, actually,” Adam admitted, as he indicated where to look with a nod in the right direction, “his name is Haji, and he’s right over there. He’s the one who had that second verse in the song, earlier.”

Kurt eyebrows raised, and let out a soft laugh of surprise. “Wow,” he said, as he shook his head, “one hell of an upgrade, huh?”

Adam’s brow pinched, and he frowned, slightly. “Kurt…”

Kurt waved a hand in dismissal, before he looked directly at Adam, and said, sincerely, “I’m really glad that you’re happy, Adam.”

Adam smiled, again. “And I’m really glad that you’re happy, too, Kurt,” he returned, then shrugged, “it’s perhaps a bit unconventional, but happiness and love take all forms.”

Kurt blinked at him. “Huh?”

Adam said, in a tone like it was a clear explanation, “I’ve been keeping up with your band, Five Star Constellation. That new music video you recently put up for ‘Home Isn’t There, It’s Here’, is amazing.”

Kurt laughed. “Oh! Hmm,” he stated, “it’s not even done yet, actually. We wanted to put it up to see what the response was, and how it looked online. The plot of the video is the only thing that’s really finished. I assume that’s what you’re calling amazing, I don’t see how it could be the visuals
Adam grinned, suddenly. “Well, I do hope whatever changes you make don’t spoil the romance of the video. It shines through so beautifully, as it is.”

Kurt blinked at Adam again, this time more rapidly. “...what?”

“Ah, of course.” Adam raised his hands, palms towards Kurt, fingers splayed. “I understand. You’re not ready to talk about it. That’s quite alright.”

Kurt stared at him. “What?”

“Never you mind, Kurt,” Adam said, and winked, “now, my Adam’s Apples ought to get to rehearsing. Best of luck to you, Kurt.” He then turned around to better see his club members, and called out, “Break is over, everyone! Now, let’s go back to learning that number Nari put together, okay? Thank you so much for indulging me, earlier.” He looked over his shoulder to beam at Kurt. “Goodbye, Kurt.”

“Goodbye,” Kurt replied, and then left. He was terribly confused, but he soon forgot about what confused him. What he remembered was, deserving or not, he had been forgiven.

...and that Adam was currently dating an Adonis. Wow.

Chapter End Notes

Song in this chapter-

Forgiveness by TobyMac

Oh, shit, Adam was a senior when Kurt met him. My punishment for researching for this chapter. Well, Glee ignored Blaine being older when Kurt met him, screw it. Adam’s only a year older than Kurt in this AU now, okay? Okay. Dammit.

It’s hard to say whether the events in chapter two of Meanwhile, At McKinley took place before or after the events in this chapter, but they for sure take place before what happens in the next chapter of this story.
Kurt blearily stumbled into the kitchen, and registered that someone had made waffles when he sighted the stack on the plate in the center of the table. It must have been Elliott; an empty plate with a knife and fork on a napkin beside it waited in front of his usual chair, ready for him. Napkins mean Elliott. He walked over and plopped himself down into his seat, and immediately grabbed two waffles as he mumbled a ‘good morning’.

“Didn’t sleep well?” he heard Elliott ask, and a mug of coffee was placed next to his plate, presumably by the hand of Elliott.

“No,” he answered, as he grabbed the mug and drank from it, gratefully.

When he did not hear a snarky comment in an Irish accent, he looked up and around for Keiran, but he didn’t need to look very hard. There he was, in his customary spot- across the table from Kurt. And he had an odd little smirk on his face.

Kurt rolled his eyes. He set down the coffee and picked up the nearby maple syrup. Too early in the morning to allow Keiran to annoy him.

That resolution lasted a few seconds.

“What?” demanded Kurt when he finished with the syrup and had set it back down where it had been.

“#I like your weird smile#,” said Keiran, with a grin.

Kurt sighed, and said, “#I’m too tired to deal with your insults this morning.#”

“HA!” cheered Keiran. He looked utterly delighted. He looked at Elliott. “I told you he spoke French!”

Elliott smiled at him as he sat down and finally helped himself to two waffles. “You called it; well done.”

Kurt paused. “That was French?” He stared at his waffles. “That was French. I am way too tired.” He cut off a bit of waffle, lifted his fork, took a bite, and thought as he chewed. ‘And I replied in French, without realizing. I slept worse than I thought.’ He swallowed, and asked Keiran, “You speak French?”

“Oui,” Keiran affirmed with a nod, “learned it in school, made sure to remember it.” He grinned cheekily. “I like how it feels in my mouth.”

“Ugh,” groaned Kurt, while Elliott laughed.

“And I wasn’t insulting you,” added Keiran, “I do like your weird smile.”

Kurt blinked. “Huh?”
“Aw,” was Elliott’s opinion on the matter, and his eyes practically sparkled.

“Fuck off, Elliott,” Keiran retorted, with a mouth full of waffle.

Kurt frowned, confused. “You like that my smile is weird?”

“No,” Keiran clarified, and he punctuated with his fork between bites, “I like your smile, full stop. It being unique is just a bonus.”

“Awww!”

“Fuck off!”

Kurt idly tapped his plate with his fork a few times, in thought. After a short silence, he murmured, “No one’s said that to me, before…”

Keiran looked up, and squinted at Kurt. “Wazzat?”

Kurt smiled, and shook his head. “…nothing.” He looked up, suddenly. “Has either of you gotten the mail, yet?”

“Oh, fuck,” said Keiran. He swallowed, pushed back his chair, stood up, and walked over to the table by the door. “Sorry, just tossed them here on the way in. And never even looked through them.” He picked up the stack of mail, and began to flick through. “Ad, ad, another fucking ad….the fuck is this?”

Elliott shifted in his chair, to look at Keiran. “What is it?”

“It’s a posh looking envelope, and it’s addressed to Kurt.” Keiran brought it closer to his face, and narrowed his eyes. “The return address is…aw, fuck, Santana Lopez and Brittany Pierce; Bean Town gobshites.”

Kurt shoved his chair back and bolted over before Keiran pitched it into the trash, and swiped the letter away from him. “Give me that!” He glared at Keiran while he opened the very large envelope and tugged out the matching huge card a bit aggressively. He looked at the front of the cream colored card-

[You Are Cordially Invited
To Attend…]

Kurt tilted his head. He opened the card to read-

[The Wedding Of Brittany Pierce
And Santana Lopez!]

There was the information of how to RSVP via snail mail or email, the location of the wedding, et
cetera, but his attention was diverted from that by the handwritten message on the left side of the card, in pink gel pen ink, clearly by Brittany, that started in already small writing that got progressively smaller as it filled the card.

Before he could read it, Keiran demanded, “Alright, what do those cunts want?”

Kurt sighed heavily. “Keiran. Look,” he said, as he stared at him, “I understand why you’re so protective of me, and I appreciate it. I really do. But my situation with my old friends is not the same as it was with yours. They didn’t do anything…” He shrugged. “They just forgot about me.”

Keiran crossed his arms as he peered at Kurt through narrowed eyes. “Neglect isn’t exactly trivial, Kurt. And you were collateral damage for their crazy, even when you weren’t the intended target.”

Kurt sighed again. “Brittany and Santana are getting married; it’s an invitation.”

“The fuck if you’re going.”

Kurt glared more intensely than before. “I can make my own decisions about my life, thank you. If you don’t mind, I’m not done reading this.” He referred back to the card, and to Brittany’s message in bright pink.

[Dear Kurt,

Santana didn’t want to invite you, because she’s still mad about you ditching after only one day, but I told her that you were obviously super sad the whole time you were here, and everyone else was there to help, so we totally didn’t need you. We argued for like an hour, but she agreed to invite you, and then we had AWESOME makeup sex, which wouldn’t have happened if you hadn’t made us fight, so thank you! I’d really, really, really like you to come, and I’m thinking you won’t be sad this time, because you can bring somebody! I tried to convince Santana to let you bring more than one person, like your whole band (I know because Rachel told us about your band and I looked you up and saw all your stuff. It’s so awesome that your name is Five Star Constellation, because I work for NASA now, so it’s totally like the universe is saying it’s meant to be.)-

Kurt had to pause for a second. Brittany is working for NASA?

He decided to worry about that later, and returned to the letter.

[-but she wouldn’t budge on it being only plus-ONE for everybody, and I eventually agreed, because it wouldn’t be fair to everyone else, and then we had make-up sex again, thank you! I’ve run out of space, so bye. Please come!]

Kurt shook his head with a smile. Brittany was so strange. He had actually missed that.

“I’m going,” he declared.

“The fuck?!”

Kurt put a hand on his hip, and looked at Keiran intently. “I can’t just skip my friends’ wedding,
Keiran!

Elliott ceased in his quiet observation, and agreed, “Yeah, Keiran. Come on. It’s a wedding.”

Keiran pursed his lips in a slight pout. He seemed to be in thought. “The Cheating Cunt will be there, with that new boyfriend, won’t he?”

Kurt frowned, nodded, and gave a little shrug. “Probably,” he acquiesced.

“And does the invite come with one of them ‘plus-one’s?’” he asked.

Kurt leaned back slightly, and tried to analyze the way Keiran’s gears appeared to busily grind. “Yes. I can bring a guest.”

Keiran snapped his fingers, then pointed at Kurt. “That decides it. You’re bringing Elliott, as your date.”

Kurt’s eyes flew open wide. “As my what?”

Elliott had gotten up and walked over to join them, and his eyebrows jumped, too. “Date?” He shrugged, and said, “I’d love to go, I love weddings,” he ignored Keiran’s small noise of apparent disgust, “but why should I pretend to be his boyfriend?”

Keiran, clearly exasperated, looked at them both like they were complete idiots. “Because bringing a friend as your plus-one is sad. Bringing a hot boyfriend?” He pointed towards the ceiling in punctuation. “Not sad. Besides,” he continued, “you don’t need to pretend anything. Just act as you are.”

“Act as we are’?” asked Kurt.

Elliott frowned thoughtfully, then nodded. “We are pretty affectionate,” he agreed.

Kurt considered this. “Hmm.”

“And you’re definitely in a loving relationship,” Keiran added, sly, “a friendship is a relationship.” He crossed his arms with a proud smirk. “Remember,” he advised, “the best way to tell a lie—”

“-is to tell the truth,” finished Elliott, softly. He then grinned. “Awesome.”

Kurt lifted his hand and rubbed at his chin. He looked at Elliott, and smiled. “Elliott,” he proposed, “would you do me the honor of being my ‘plus-one’?”

“Definitely,” was Elliott’s emphatic response. “Oh!” he realized, “I get to dress up! Is there a theme?”

“Oh, um,” Kurt referred back to the typed, ‘official’ part of the card, “uh, yeah, there is a theme. ‘Heaven’.”

“Go as Satan,” Keiran gaily suggested.

“Keiran!” Elliott and Kurt scolded, in unison.

-----
While Elliott parked the rental car (oddly far away from the barn, but Kurt decided to not be a backseat driver), it occurred to Kurt that they better go over their talking points, get their stories straight. They had not hashed that out those very important things on the trip over, no; instead, they’d spent most of that time in a detailed conversation on the nature of originality. They agreed that homage and reinterpretation was not plagiarism, and that everyone that called Lady Gaga a Madonna ripoff was full of it.

“Elliott,” Kurt said, as Elliott put the car in park and shut the engine off, “what if someone specifically asks, ‘is he your boyfriend?’”


Kurt squinted at him. “How do you mean?”

Elliott’s smile became a grin. “I am a boy, and I am your friend.”

Kurt laughed, and he opened his car door. “Wow, we really did get here early,” he said, as he looked around. “There are only a few cars. I don’t see anyone; the few that are here must already be inside.” He got out of the car, and shut the door behind him.

Elliott, after he had done the same, walked around the car to stand beside Kurt. “Oh, when we refer to each other,” he suggested, “I’ll call you ‘my Kurt’, and you can say that I’m ‘your Elliott’. Also true; you’re the only Kurt I’m friends with, and I’m the only Elliott you’re friends with, but we both know of other people with those names.”

Kurt hummed, satisfied with that. “When did we realize we were in love?”

Elliott began to slowly walk towards the barn, and Kurt followed. They talked quietly, almost at a whisper.

“Hmm. Well, we moved in together at the beginning of May for financial reasons...” As he wove their story, Elliott threw an arm across Kurt’s shoulders, and tugged him close. Kurt instinctively put his own arm around Elliott’s waist. “After a little over two months had passed, we realized that a relationship had changed into something closer.”

After a beat, Kurt comprehended. “Ah. July 14th. When Keiran and I finally caught on to the fact that we were friends.” He looked at Elliott out of the corner of his eye, and smirked. “Sneaky, Elliott.”

“But true,” Elliott mischievously replied.

“Wow,” Kurt laughed, “we really don’t have to lie at all.”

“Thank G-d,” Elliott deadpanned, “You are a terrible liar.”

“Hey!” Kurt protested loudly, and he playfully shoved Elliott away.

Elliott half turned towards him, and raised an eyebrow. “Oh,” he asked, “you’re going to shove me?” He raised his arms, and wiggled his fingers menacingly. “Then I’m going to tickle you!”

“Ah!” Kurt squealed, as he failed to dive away in time. He batted uselessly at Elliott’s hands, and laughed. “Stop! You’re going to mess up my hair!” He managed to slip away, and made for the door that was only two more yards away, and got just to the entrance when Elliott caught him,
again. “No!”

“Porcelain.”

Kurt and Elliott froze.

Kurt looked up to find Sue Sylvester, stood at the door, just inside the building. They both straightened, tugged their clothes back into place, and attempted to regain the dignity of adults.

“Sue?” Kurt attempted to state this confidently, but, in the given circumstances, failed.

Sue peered suspiciously at Elliott, in a way that made Kurt even more uncomfortable. “Who is this man attacking you?” she inquired, in a dangerous tone.

Kurt quickly roused himself. If he could do this in front of Sue, he could do it in front of anyone. “This is Elliott. My Elliott. He’s my plus-one. And he wasn’t attacking me.” He lost a little fire after that, embarrassed as he explained, “...he was tickling me.”

Sue crossed her arms. “Tickling is used as a form of torture in many countries, and it’s one I’ve employed myself.” She turned to face Elliott head on. “You claim that your name is ‘Elliott’?”

“Uh, yeah,” said Elliott, as he got over the apparent shock of this imposing woman, “Elliott Gilbert. I take it that you’re Principal Sue Sylvester! I’ve, uh, I’ve heard a lot about you.” Elliott extended his hand in a clear offer of a handshake, and presented a friendly smile.

Which Sue ignored, and instead asked, “Why do you look like Adam Lambert?”

Elliott awkwardly withdrew his hand. “You’re not the first person to tell me that, actually.”

Kurt stared at Elliott, surprised. He squinted, tilted his head, then shook it as he said, “I don’t see it.”

Elliott shrugged. “Me neither.”

Sue’s eyes narrowed to slits. “And what, precisely, is the nature of your relationship with one Kurt Hummel? I trust that you are only friends?”

Something about the way she said it made Kurt feel like he was under attack. He stood straighter, chest out. “Actually,” he said, as he took Elliott’s hand in his, “we’re more than friends.” He looked at Elliott, Elliott at him, and they smiled at each other.

“A lot more than friends,” Elliott agreed, reverently.

They heard Sue make ‘tsk’ noises, and when they looked back at her, they saw that she shook her head. “Surely,” she said, in a very condescending tone, “it can’t compare with what you had with Blaine, can it?”

Kurt stared at her for a moment, dumbfounded that she’d say such a thing. He then said, “You’re right. It can’t compare.” He looked her right in the eye. “It feels a lot more real than it ever did with Blaine.”

He heard quiet intake of breath. He looked to see that Elliott’s eyes were wide with surprise. “Kurt,” he murmured.

Kurt smiled, again. “I mean it, Elliott. You’re the best thing that’s ever happened to me.” ‘No need for acting,’ thought Kurt, as he lifted their joined hands to kiss Elliott’s; it was like a reflex.
Elliott looked like he might have said something back, but he never got to.

“No,” said Sue. They stared at her again. “No,” she repeated. She shook her head emphatically.
“No, no, no, no,” she insisted, “this can’t be true. My ship will not sink!” She went over to the nearest chair, picked it up, and threw it against the wall. “No!”

“What the freaking hell are you doing?!” shouted Santana as she suddenly appeared and charged across the barn to Sue. “This is why I didn’t want to invite you, Sue Sylvester!” She pointed at the chair. “You better pray to your god that you didn’t break that, because we don’t have any spare seats. Actually,” she said, and cocked her hip, “scratch that, I hope you did break it, because then you’ll be sitting on the floor.”

“It’s not my fault,” Sue protested, hands up in a defensive gesture, “I was provoked.”

“Kurt,” whispered Elliott as he leaned close towards Kurt’s ear, “just how exactly did you hold onto your sanity in high school?”

“I have no idea,” Kurt muttered back.

“Well, would you look at that. It is broken.” Santana glared at Sue. “I’d kick you out, but Brit wants you here, and you did convince my abuela to attend. Just keep in mind,” she threatened, “if you try to trick or force someone else to sit on the floor so that you can have a chair, you will not be allowed to stay for the reception. Do you understand?”

“Santana-”

“- Do you understand? ”

Sue looked at least mildly chastened. Mildy. “Yes, bridezilla.” See?

Santana got up in Sue’s face. “I will tear off your wings if you ruin my wedding, Mothra.”

Sue’s eyebrows went up, and, this time, she sounded a lot more sincere. “Understood.”

Santana nodded. “Good. Now,” she pointed at the chair again, “I would like you to pick up the remains of what was a chair, and take them to the woodpile behind the barn.”

To Kurt’s surprise, Sue quietly did just that. Not to his complete surprise, mind- Santana had, truly, looked ready to kill.

Her rage had not completely faded away when she turned her gaze towards Kurt and Elliott, to their discomfort, but she soon smiled. “Kurt,” she said, “you’re here. I know you RSVPed, but I still thought you’d flake. Hopefully you won’t leave in the middle of the wedding.”

Kurt sighed. “Santana-”

She threw up her hands in a gesture meant to placate. “I know, that’s not fair, you were depressed or something. I believe I can speak for even the worst of McKinley when I say we all prefer seeing you leave over watching you blow your brains out.”

Kurt raised an eyebrow, slightly. “Thanks.”

Clasped hands over her heart, she said, “You’re welcome.” She looked at Elliott. “You’re Kurt’s plus-one? How sweet,” she stated, as she looked at Kurt again, “don’t listen to what anyone else says; it’s definitely not sad to bring a friend to a wedding.”
‘Goddammit, Keiran,’ thought Kurt, ‘why do you have to be right all the time?’ ‘Actually, Santana,’ he replied, ‘Elliott isn’t here as a friend. He’s a lot more than a friend.’ He felt Elliott let go of his hand, and then reach with that arm to hold him close. Kurt gratefully relaxed into the embrace. They had only been here for around ten minutes, and he was already exhausted.

Santana’s eyebrows practically shot up. ‘Really? Elliott is your boyfriend, now?’

“Yes,” Elliott answered, and briefly held Kurt a bit tighter, “I am.”

“Wow.” Santana looked impressed. She lowered an eyebrow, left the other raised, and, to Kurt, directed the question, “How the hell did you pull that off?”

Kurt frowned at her. “Huh?”

“Sorry, can’t stay and chat,” she said, and turned away, “only an hour and a half until go time, and I’m not even in my dress yet.”

That explained the jeans and t-shirt. “I was about to say,” began Kurt.

“-don’t even start, pixie-boy,” Santana called out, as she walked away.

For an hour, Kurt and Elliott chatted, and sold their relationship to anyone who asked. And, usually, a sale hardly needed to be made; they only had to confirm an already formed opinion.

When Blaine and Dave showed up, Kurt had thought it would be difficult. But it wasn’t. It had been as easy as it had been with everyone but Sue. Blaine was genuinely happy for him. In fact, to Kurt’s own surprise, he was happy for Blaine.

Blaine had not been good for him. He had trouble imagining him being good for anyone. But, he had learned over the months of living with Keiran and Elliott that, maybe, he hadn’t been that great for Blaine, either. It didn’t justify it, but maybe Blaine had just...reacted poorly, to Kurt’s own flaws.

Because, with Blaine and Dave...he saw a, a warmth there, that he wasn’t sure he had felt between himself and Blaine.

...he might have just imagined it. He can’t know for sure. Blaine may be just as bad to Dave as he’d been to Kurt. But, something just told him that Blaine and Dave were actually happy.

After Blaine and Dave had walked away, Kurt sighed, suddenly, and grabbed Elliott to hug him tight.

Elliott hugged him back, just as tightly, and whispered, “Kurt. What’s wrong?”

He could take no risk. “Nothing’s wrong,” he answered, “it’s a wedding.” He hoped Elliott would understand.

It seemed he did. “I love you, Kurt,” said Elliott, “I love you so much.”

And Kurt smiled. “I love you, too.”

Friendship wasn’t sad.

But then someone grabbed him by the arm. When he looked, it was Sue.
“Excuse me?” he asked.

“There’s no time,” she said, as she somehow managed to wrest him away from Elliott and drag him away, “there’s an emergency that requires your presence.”

“What.” he protested, but he was not heeded.

She dragged him through the crowd, and into a room that held Brittany, who wore a large smile, Blaine, who seemed even more confused than he was, and...

...two matching wedding suits. One had a picture, on the hanger, with his face on it, and the other featured Blaine’s.

There was a pause where no one said anything.

Then Kurt channeled Keiran and said, “The *fuck*?”

Everyone stared at Kurt in shock for a moment.

“...I do not echo his words,” said Blaine, after he had blinked a few times, “but I do echo the sentiment.” He waved his arm at the suits. “What *is* this?”

“I really looked up to you and Kurt in high school,” explained Brittany, “I really admired your relationship. And I mentioned this to Sue-”

“-and I explained to her that that was because Klaine is the be-all and end-all, the one true pairing, the couple that is, above all others, Meant To Be,” spoke Sue, with a zeal that disturbed Kurt as much as the actual content did.

“After me and Santana, that is,” Brittany corrected.

“Quiet, Brittany,” Sue dismissed.

Brittany frowned, clearly upset.

“So,” questioned Blaine, as he squinted hard at Sue, “you thought you would just *force us* to marry each other?”

Brittany said “No,” but Sue said “Yes,” even louder.

Brittany stared at Sue. “If they’re really meant to be,” she said, slowly, “then they don’t need to be forced. Love is like a fart. If you have to force it, it’s probably crap.”

“Brittany, hush,” scolded Sue, “you don’t understand love like I do.”

Brittany’s mouth dropped open in shock, but it was Kurt that spoke, finally.

“You need to be institutionalized,” he said, aghast at Sue.

“Yeah,” agreed Blaine, “I’m in a happy relationship!”

“As am I,” stated Kurt.

Blaine crossed his arms. “This is ridiculous.”

Kurt nodded. “We don’t belong together.”
And then Blaine fired the first shot. “He is cold, distant, and mean.”

Kurt flung right back, “He is smothering, he cheated on me, and he lied constantly.”

Blaine turned to stare at him. “He keeps bringing up the past!”

Kurt glared back. “Because the past kept repeating!”

“What the hell is all this racket?” Santana demanded as she barged into the room. She stopped, stock still, when she saw the suits. “What the hell are those?” she asked, in low voice that was dangerous.

Brittany, confused, said, “Sue told me that she told you, and that you were okay with it.”

“I have no memory of that,” Sue denied.

Santana’s eyes fixed on Sue. “That I would be okay with what?”

Before she could get an answer, Elliott and Dave pushed into the room.

“Kurt!” Elliott cried out, “There you are! What’s happening?”

“Are you okay, Blaine?” asked Dave, “I heard yelling- why are there two suits with you and Kurt’s faces on them?”

“They’re wedding suits!” Blaine’s voice became almost shrill, “they were going to force us to marry each other! Kurt and me!”

“What?” Elliott, Dave, and Santana all shouted.

“Sue lied to me,” said Brittany, with a quiet anger, and then addressed Sue directly. “You lied to me,” she repeated. “They don’t love each other at all. Klaine is terrible. It was all in your head.”

“In what universe,” Santana carefully enunciated, “would having two men be tricked into taking over my wedding, mine and Brit’s celebration of love, making it all about them, the only thing anyone would talk about or remember, in what universe would I be okay with that!?”

“That really should have occurred to me,” apologized Brittany, her voice small, “that doesn’t make any sense at all. I’m sorry, Santana.”

Santana walked to Brittany, smiled, and took Brittany’s hands in hers. “It’s okay, baby,” she assured her, “she’s an awful, selfish, evil, pathological liar, that you were just a victim of. It’s not your fault.”

“I can hear you,” said Sue.

“Yeah,” stated Santana, “I was counting on that.” She turned her head to glare fire at Sue. “Leave.”

Sue had the actual gall to seem shocked. “What?”

“Leave!” She dropped Brittany’s hands, and turned to face her. “Don’t make me get blood on my wedding dress,” she warned, “leave. Now. You are no longer even slightly welcome.”

Sue crossed her arms, still defiant. “Even though I am the reason your grandmother came at all?”

Santana would not have it. “You burned through most of those credits when you threw a chair
across the barn and destroyed it. You’re kind of running at a deficit, now. Karofsky!” she ordered, suddenly, “will you assist me in escorting this bitch out?”

Before he could reply, Sue muttered, “I can see myself out,” and walked out of the room.

“If you don’t mind,” said Santana, “I’m going to follow her, to be sure that she does leave.” She then kissed Brittany on the cheek and added, “I’ll be back for you, baby. Love you.”

Brittany smiled, and hugged Santana. “I’m so sorry. I love you.”

“You don’t need to be sorry about anything.” Santana’s face turned cross again as she turned and stalked out the door, after Sue.

Dave wrapped a comforting arm around Blaine, and guided him out of the room, and Elliott did the same for Kurt.

“ Seriously, Kurt,” Elliott whispered, “how are you still sane?”

Kurt sighed, and shook his head. “I have no idea.”

-----

The service had been wonderful. Now, it was the reception.

And Kurt...wasn’t terribly happy. As he looked at the happy couples scattered about the wedding, listened to the love song Kahula sang as he played his ukulele...he started to wonder if, maybe, to only have friendship was, in fact, sad. He genuinely had not felt like that, for months, until today. He knew it was irrational, but, there it was.

After Kahula’s song, there was quiet, filled only by conversation. Kurt sighed, and lifted his champagne flute for another sip.

~Drink up, baby, down

Are you in or are you out?~

Kurt looked up and to the right, in some surprise.

It was Elliott that sang. He had gotten out of his chair, and now stood, hand outstretched towards Kurt.

For a moment, Kurt just stared. But he smiled when Elliott got to the lines-

~'Scuse me,

Too busy?
and he shook his head, got up out of his seat, and took Elliott’s hand.

Elliott lead him to the dance floor, of course, and guided him into a rumba. It was smooth, and natural; a product of the months of lessons from Keiran. It had taken Elliott a lot longer to learn than it had Kurt, so many stepped on toes, but, by September, his feet were as nimble as Keiran’s and his.

If one compared him to Elliott, Kurt still was the better dancer, and ought to be, logic dictated, the one who lead the dance, but…

...he needed to be lead, this time.

~So let go!
So let go
Jump in
Oh, well
What you waiting for?
It’s alright
‘Cause there’s beauty
In the breakdown~

Whether it was only the two of them on the dance floor, or if there had been many couples with them, Kurt could not have told you. He was purely in the moment, with Elliott and Elliott alone.

‘What need do I have for romance,’ he thought, ‘when I have this?’

At some point, Kurt thought he heard others joining in as backup, but he couldn’t be sure whether it was imagined, or not.

On and on, they danced, eyes only for each other.

~So amazing...here...

...

‘Cause there’s beauty
In the breakdown~
Song over, they stood there, in each other’s arms.

Until they suddenly, on impulse, leaned forward, and kissed.

...and almost immediately broke apart, giggled into each other’s shoulders, and held each other.

‘Yeah,’ Kurt thought, again, ‘who needs romance?’

Chapter End Notes

'Bonus Scene'
"I Like Birds!"
-in which I very easily fix Tina’s characterization and make her likable, all thanks to a short conversation she has with Elliott.

Songs in this chapter-

Kahula’s song was Honestly by Ekolu
(If you're wondering why Kahula is there, I'll remind you that the 3.0s were there, in the show.

Let Go by Frou Frou

Example for the rumba.

There were celebrities that were established as existing in the Glee-verse, that then portrayed people who were not themselves on the show. John Stamos and Gwenyth Paltrow were mentioned in the show itself, and Neil Patrick Harris and Adam Lambert in a separate but still canon short, a Sue’s Corner titled 'Sneaky Gays'.(The joke is that Jane Lynch is a lesbian, but the character of Sue did time and time again reveal herself to virulently homophobic. Glee wasn’t a straight comedy, so you can’t make a character so racist, homophobic, transphobic, and downright evil in a myriad of other, unrelated ways, and then have them suffer no real consequences and act like it’s funny, running on the rule that ‘it’s okay if Sue does it’. Fuck off.)(Almost forgot; Blaine got away with everything he did, too. What he did was so less atrocious than the shit Sue did, it slipped my mind.)

Once, just once, I wanted so badly for the show to make this joke: “Did anyone tell you that you look just like (celebrity the person is)?” “Yeah, I don’t see it.” OR “No, never. You think so?”

Chronologically, the events in chapter three of Meanwhile, At McKinley take place after this chapter and before the next one.
5:00 PM on a Friday. All members of Five Star Constellation, done with work and/or classes, were at Kurt, Elliott, and Keiran’s apartment, seated around the kitchen table, ready to get ready for the Halloween party that they would host that night.

But, first, Kurt had an announcement.

“Elliott and I have been talking,” he began as he gazed at the other three, “and we’ve decided. We are closing down our Etsy page.” After a beat, he looked at Elliott. “...is that the right way to say it? ‘Closing down’?”

Elliott shrugged. “I understood you.”

“Well?” Keiran objected, he almost could have been described as angry, “You were loving it!”

“Emphasis on ‘were’,” Kurt replied.

Reece sat up a bit straighter. “‘Were’?” she asked, “You don’t like it, anymore?”

Elliott shook his head. “That’s not quite the way to put it, but-”

“-we are over-burdened,” Kurt explained. “As our band keeps getting more attention, slowly as it does, the Etsy page did, too.” He put his hands in a ‘what can you do’ position, palms towards the ceiling. “We can no longer keep up with the workload.”

“College, work, band practice and gigs, music videos,” Elliott listed, “we can’t do all of that and be filling all the orders for our Etsy.” He grinned, suddenly. “We’re too popular.”

“We have already set it so that no new orders can be made,” said Kurt. “We’ll delete the account after we’ve filled the last order.”

“It was really fun, for awhile,” Elliott said, as he stretched. “I’m glad we did it.”

Kurt looked at Elliott, and smiled. “Me, too.”

“So I’m just fired, then?” drawled Reece. She cocked an eyebrow at Kurt. “Where was my two weeks’ notice?”

Elliott and Kurt both winced.

“Sorry, Reece,” Elliott apologized.

Reece shrugged, and smiled. “S’fine. I love our band more,” she said, and she looked at Kurt, “and your little sewing hobby was starting to cut into that, Kingly.”

Kurt’s mouth dropped open. “‘Sewing hobby’??” He put on the face of being offended, but his eyes showed that it was only a face, and not a feeling.
“Reece,” Elliott scolded with a grin, “how dare you.”

She grinned at Elliott, but leaned forward to have better look at Keiran. “Quit sulking, Irish. They’re quitting because your idea was good, too good.”

Keiran shifted in his seat, and glared back at her. “I’m not sulking,” he denied. “And that’s not what I’m upset about.” He crossed his arms. “I live with these two, and this my first hearing about it.”

“Aww,” Kurt cooed, “Keiran!”

“Fuck off,” he grumbled.

“Kei-ran!” Elliott cooed, as well.

He glared at them both, and sulked (because that was the word for what he did then) further. “Fuck off, the two of you. Fuck right off. Off, you shall fuck.”

“No,” responded Kurt, with a smirk, “that was Elliott and you, remember?”

Elliott's teasing grin fell right off. “Really, Kurt?” he asked, with a disappointed expression.

Keiran rolled his eyes dramatically. “Fuck sake! Will you never let that go?”

“Being that it has been seven months since he learned that information,” Minnow stated, “it seems highly unlikely that it will cease being an issue for him.”

Keiran stared at the ceiling. “Fuck sake.”

-----

The first guest to arrive was an odd young man named Chozai, someone that Elliott knew from temple, who introduced himself to Kurt with a magic trick. Before an exchange of names had been made, there was a deck of cards. Kurt played along and picked a card, did not tell Chozai what card he chose, and put it back in the deck. Chozai dramatically shuffled the deck, and as he did so he idly asked Kurt to check his right trouser pocket. Kurt frowned. He unbuttoned and moved his Victorian style coat out of the way, (which was awkward to do, it was heavy fabric that completely covered the pocket) and reached inside his trouser pocket. He pulled out what felt like a card, and brought it close to his face to stare at it.

Low and behold, the three of hearts.

“I would swear that I’ve been looking at your hands this whole time, how-?” Kurt protested.

Chozai grinned. “Magic,” was his reply.

Chozai barely spoke the whole of that evening, besides the occasional magic trick. Which would have been annoying had the tricks not been as impressive as they were.

He seemed a strange sort of friend for Elliott to have, and Kurt had some small suspicion that Chozai was a bit of a pity invite.
But he was nice, and the tricks were genuinely good, so, not a problem.

Next was a woman named Dayana whom Reece had clearly invited to be her date. Kurt had an instinct that this would not go any better than any other romance he had witnessed her attempt. (His instinct proved to be accurate when, much later in the evening, a drunk Dayana said something horribly anti-semitic to Elliott.)

Shortly after her, Xander arrived. Kurt and Elliott had agreed that Kurt would tell Xander, and Elliott would tell Mahsuri, that their modeling services were no longer needed.

“Ah. Well,” said Xander with a sigh when Kurt told him, “that’s a shame.” While Xander was clearly disappointed, he still smiled. “At least Reece is now spared the hassle of inventing new ways to obscure my face.”

“She enjoyed that, actually,” Kurt replied. He twisted his hands. “Sorry. I know it was a lot of fun for you both, and-”

“-don’t you dare,” Xander interrupted with a grin. “You *were* spreading yourselves too thin, and everything *was* starting to show the strain.” Xander stretched, arms crossed above his head, back in a small arch.

Kurt, as he so often was when in the presence of one Xander Hernandez, was momentarily distracted and lost his train of thought. When he mentally returned, he gave his head a little shake, and stated, “I still can’t quite believe that you came dressed as Zorro.”

Xander grinned wider, and struck a pose. “How could I not?” he queried. “He’s Batman, if Batman were more handsome and charming and dashing, and a great deal less gloomy.” He leaned in close suddenly. “He is suave. Seductive….”

Kurt’s video feed buffered.

Then Xander stood straight again, and concluded with a shrug, “…and heterosexual. But no one’s perfect.”

Kurt huffed out a breath, looked at Xander in some mild irritation. “Stop *doing* that.”

Xander smirked. “Not a chance. Too much fun, and it doesn’t work on Elliott or Keiran anymore.”

Kurt rolled his eyes, but smiled, nonetheless. “I’m still sorry,” he apologized, “it was a nice excuse for us to hang out.”

Xander nodded. “That it was.” His gaze turned thoughtful. “It helped me a lot, becoming friends with Mahsuri, and it’s all thanks to you.” He pursed his lips, slightly. “I still feel kinda weird about her basically being my sugar mama, but-”

“-Mahsuri isn’t your sugar mama,” Kurt vigorously disputed, “she’s just renting out a room in her apartment to you at a very low rate.”

A raised eyebrow is what Xander sent back to Kurt. “$2000 a month is a lot more than ‘very low’. She won’t tell me, but I’d be shocked to learn that the monthly rent for her apartment is even a dime under $50,000 a month. And then she takes me out to eat, takes me shopping…” He trailed off for a moment as he looked at the ceiling, and then back at Kurt. “How is she *not* my sugar mama?”

Kurt fidgeted for a moment, but replied, “Because you’re not...giving her sugar.”
Xander relented, “True. You’ve got me there.” He paused for a moment, as if that had been a reminder. He brought his hand to his chin, and looked at Kurt with a serious expression. “There’s something I’ve needed to tell you about,” he began, “but I was never sure how to bring it up. But you’re going to find out tonight, and I should at least give you a head’s up.”

Kurt’s eyebrows lifted. He leaned towards Xander. “A head’s up about what?”

Before Xander could answer, the door to the apartment slid open, and Mahsuri dazzled in. A man followed right behind, his hand in hers, and he looked nervous, like he felt he shouldn’t be there.

“Brody?” Kurt quite nearly exclaimed. His brain managed to provide the good sense to control his volume, and neither Mahsuri or Brody seemed to hear.

“...a head’s up about that,” murmured Xander.

Kurt’s gaze snapped back to Xander. “Quickly,” he demanded, “how did this happen? Is he her date? How did this happen?”

“It’s not complicated,” Xander answered. He seemed a bit startled by how affected Kurt appeared to be by this. “After facilitating the reconciliation between you and Brody, Brody and I became friends, good friends. And, as you know, friends often meet their other friends. Mahsuri and Brody just sort of clicked, they’ve been dating for a little over a month. And he’s also been renting a room at Mahsuri’s apartment, since last week.”

“And she knows that he’s...your co-worker?”

Xander took on the appearance of someone at least slightly fed up. “Why are you still so precious about that? Yes, she knows he’s a whore. ...at the moment.”

Kurt squinted at him. “What do you mean, ‘at the moment’?”

Xander looked a little uncomfortable, which was a strange look on him. “She’s been hinting that she could probably pull some strings, whisper in some ears, get him acting roles. And, for both of us...she’s offered to just...pay our full tuition.”

Kurt's eyes opened wide. “Really? She wants...like Pretty Woman?”

“Basically,” Xander confirmed. “And Brody will probably say yes, at least to the tuition.”

Kurt looked at him inquisitively. “But you won’t?”

Xander sighed. “I don’t know. I don’t hate having sex for money like Brody does, but...it would mean I could put my full focus into my studies. I just...don't want to be rescued.”

After a moment of consideration, Kurt told Xander, “If taking her money means you can be a better student, that will also make you a better doctor.” He raised his eyebrows, slightly. “So you owe it to your future patients.”

Xander stared at him. “Dammit,” he said, with a little laugh and a shake if his head, “you're right.” He bowed his head and looked at Kurt, abashed. “Zorro has been too proud.”

Kurt shook his head. “I've been there, Xander. We've all been there.”

This was when Mahsuri finally glided to them, Brody in tow. “What's this I hear about being fired?” She put her free hand on her hip. “Elliott informed me. How dare you rip away my new
favorite hobby.” While her tone scolded, she wore a smile on her face.

“Sorry, Mahsuri.” Kurt apologized, “maybe we can find something else to do together once a week.”

“You bet your cute pert ass we will,” Mahsuri chided.

Kurt let out a little laugh, but he realized he ought to greet the man she held by the hand. “Hi, Brody,” he attempted, awkwardly.

“Hi, Kurt,” was the amiable, but also slightly awkward, reply.

After a tense beat of silence, Kurt squinted at Brody’s costume, a suitable conversation topic. Half of his face was done up in makeup to look like a skull, the other half more the appearance of a zombie’s rotting flesh, but in an atypical choice of bruised blue and purple. His whole costume was like that; half skeleton, half zombie flesh.

Kurt nodded in approval. “Refreshing approach to the zombie costume,” he said. “A zombie much farther along the process than we usually see.”

“It was a compromise,” said Brody, in clear agreement of this being a conversation they could fake their way through, “I wanted to come as a skeleton, but Mahsuri insisted that that wouldn’t really match her costume.”

Kurt gave Mahsuri’s costume a look, and, for the first time, did not agree with Mahsuri. She was a glamorous sorceress, decked in blue and purple definitely-actual-silk. Stunning. As always. He cocked an eyebrow at her, and asked, “How can a zombie be a better match with a sorceress than a skeleton? You could have easily given the bones blue and purple shading.”

“First of all,” she corrected and raised a finger in the air, “he's not a zombie. He's a necromanced corpse. Second of all,” she continued, with an expression that just approached embarrassed, “it’s really because I just don’t think skeletons are all that scary.”

“But you think zombies are?” Kurt immediately asked, somewhat incredulously.

Mahsuri raised an eyebrow, and looked a bit put-upon. “Why are you getting salty with me? On the same day I got fired!”

“Hey now,” called Keiran to Mahsuri as he unexpectedly sidled up to them, “did I hear you just say that skeletons aren't scary?”

“They're not,” Mahsuri argued, “they're...kitschy.”

Keiran grinned at her, and then turned to shout at their friend at the keyboards, “Minnow! Spooky Scary Skeletons!”

A scant few seconds later, there was the strange trembling trill of the opening, and Keiran wriggled his fingers and waved his hands as he sang.

~Spooky, scary skeletons

Send shivers down your spine!

Shrieking skulls will shock your soul
Seal your doom tonight!~

After Keiran had sung the next four lines, Kurt joined in, and leaned towards Brody conspiratorially.

~ We’re so sorry, skeletons
You’re so misunderstood
You only want to socialize
But I don’t think we should!~

Mahsuri laughed, and pulled Brody to her to dance.

Keiran sang the next two lines, and then, for the repeats of ‘spooky, scary’, Elliott added his vocals, and the three sang together.

~Spooky
Spooky
Spooky
Spooky
Spoo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo!~

It turned out that Brody, unexpectedly, knew the song, and he sang the next bit, a big smile on his face.

~Spirits supernatural
Are shy, what’s all the fuss?
But bags of bones seem so unsafe
It’s semi-serious!~

Elliott, Kurt, and Keiran sang two lines each, and all four sang the final two, and the repeats of ‘spooky, scary’, Brody and Keiran the most animated.

When the song had concluded with a jovial “Spooky, scary skeletons!”, Mahsuri cheerfully bowed in submission to the four of them.
“Alright, fine,” she sighed, but smiled all the same, “you convinced me.” She then fixed a rather sardonic look on Keiran. “But did you really have to hammer it home like that?”

“Yes,” Keiran replied, immediately.

Mahsuri rolled her eyes, but she grinned. “So much drama,” she murmured, before she looked at Brody and stated, apologetic, “I’m sorry I didn’t let you be a skeleton.” Her eyes then scanned all around her. “Who’s got makeup to fix Brody up with, remove the rotted flesh and leave him as bones?”

Brody, surprised, protested, “You don't have to-”

“-yes, I do,” she smoothly cut him off. Mahsuri took his hand in hers. “Come on, Elliott is waving like Hermione at Hogwarts, let's get skeletal.”

-----

A little over an hour later, Keiran playfully shoved Kurt and declared, “You’re such a cunt!”

“And you're an ass,” was the immediate return, this time a bit defensive. He had not meant to be rude to the trio, (one girl, Tham, two guys, Arman, and Matias, the one-night-stand-turned-friends-of-Keiran that he had met that night on the last day of May, when Keiran and Elliott had taken Kurt ‘out on the pull’), he'd just worded things poorly, and Keiran knew that. Kurt raised an eyebrow. “A drunk ass,” he added.

Keiran raised his own eyebrow. “I'm hardly even buzzed, and you know that.”

Kurt smirked. “Yeah,” he admitted, “you're just like this all of the time.”

Keiran laughed. “You're such a cunt,” he cried, in what seemed like delight. He then appeared to have gotten an idea. He dashed over to Elliott, and whispered something in his ear. Elliott grinned at him, went and retrieved his guitar and amp, plugged them in, waved at Minnow to stop playing their creepy instrumentals of various ‘spooky’ songs, and began to play.

Keiran spun towards Kurt, hands pressed flat in the center of his own chest.

~Love me cancerously

Like a salt-sore soaked in the sea

High maintenance means

You're a gluttonous queen

Narcissistic and mean~

‘Oh my god,’ thought Kurt as he had watched Keiran step towards him, and literally fall to his knees at Kurt's feet at ‘narcissistic and mean’.
Kurt flicked Keiran hard between the eyes.

Keiran only blinked before, utterly undeterred, he pushed forward, and sang even louder. Minnow and Reece traitorously joined in with their respective instruments.

~Kill me romantically!
Fill my soul with vomit
Then ask me for a piece of gum~

‘Sweet lord, he isn’t going to stop.’

~Bitter and dumb
You’re my sugarplum
You’re awful, I love you!~

Kurt glanced around at the people all around him, and took in how amused they all seemed. At least they all enjoyed this.

~Must be the sign on my head
That says, oh
Love me dead!~

Keiran had gotten up, and pursued Kurt when he dived away, practically chased him about the apartment. Kurt found no help in the room, only spectators and accomplices.

~You call me a drunk
Does the fun ever start?~

It was at that point that Kurt decided he was just being a wet blanket. He grabbed Keiran’s hand, and lead him into a slow swing. This got a few cheers and whistles from their audience, and Keiran’s face just lit up.
~He moves through moonbeams slowly

He knows just how to hold me

And when his edges soften

His body is my coffin~

With all the innuendo there, Kurt knew what thoughts were likely on Elliott's mind. He'd have to scold Keiran later for feeding into Elliott's delusions. They danced about the room, and the crowd moved to accommodate them in their kicks, lifts, dips, and, at one point, a flip.

~Love me cancerously~

Keiran whistled, and then they both jumped slightly when half the room threw in the

~ DA DA DA-DA-DA DA, DA DA DA-DA-DA DA!~

But Keiran recovered in time to crow,

~How's your old boy?

Does he know about me?

You've got the Mark of the Beast

You're born of a jackal!

You're beautiful!~

It was really something else. Keiran was such an ass right then, as he always was, but...Kurt was happy. Really happy to be dubbed a spawn of Satan by a spawn of Satan in a room full of people, in a serenade and dance, no less.

How strange.

Half the room sang back up as the song came to a close.

~Love me dead!

Love me dead!
Song and dance over, they stood faced towards each other, breath a little heavy. Kurt had the slightest urge to slap that puckish grin off of Keiran’s face.

Instead, he placed a hand on each of Keiran’s shoulders, and said, “It's mutual.”

Keiran’s smile dropped in confusion. “What is?”

Kurt smiled. “You're awful, I love you.”

Keiran’s face lit up again, grin returned. “You ponce.”

Kurt made an exasperated noise and shoved him away. “You're such an ass!”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the very long delay. Had a bit of life drama.

Songs in chapter-

Spooky Scary Skeletons by Andrew Gold, remix by The Living Tombstone
(Obviously, they wouldn’t be able to imitate the remix perfectly, but, if you’re familiar with Pentatonix, you know that they can get pretty close.)

Love Me Dead by Ludo
It's actually ‘call me up drunk’, I know.

Example of their swing- like the second and fourth couples, that are both French. Those couples capture the playfulness and fun of Kurt and Keiran’s dancing; the sexiness of the first, third, and fifth couples doesn’t fit them at all. Too serious.
Kurt stumbled into the kitchen, not the least bit rested despite his full night’s sleep. Elliott and Keiran, who had conversed quietly until he had arrived, looked up at him, startled. Elliott’s expression became very concerned when he saw Kurt’s haggard look.

“Are you okay?” Elliott asked, “Did you not sleep well?”

Kurt dropped himself down into his chair, grasped the mug that waited for him, and held it out to be filled, which Keiran did dutifully, with a look of small amusement. After Kurt had had a sip of tea and winced because it was still too hot to drink, he answered, “No. I did not. I had a horrible nightmare. Which makes me apprehensive, because I haven’t had any nightmares since the two of you moved in, aside from the two that both immediately preceded news involving...my old life.”

Keiran grinned, and asked, “So, what then, you think you’re psychic?”

Kurt glared at him, annoyed. “First of all,” he said, “psychics aren’t real. Second of all...yes.” He looked at the table, embarrassed, but looked back up and glared at Keiran when the redhead laughed at him. “And it’s your fault.”

Keiran raised his eyebrows and pressed his fingertips to his chest. “Me? My fault?”

“Yes, you, your fault,” Kurt was irate, “this didn’t start happening until after you started telling me stories about fairies, about that Stone on that Hill that, after it got knocked over during road repairs, that previously safe road kept having accidents, all of these stories that got in my head and started to make me think dreams actually mean something, this is your fault, you leprechaun.”

“Oh, guys-” tried Elliott in an attempt to break the tension.

But Keiran raised both of his hands in a defensive pose, and said, “Hey now, you fearing the supernatural is no cause for being a racist, and, um,” he paused, looked side to side, then back at Kurt, “you shouldn’t be saying that any human being is a member of the Good Folk, alright? Don’t go inviting trouble.”

Kurt knew it wasn’t right to pick a fight like this, but the dream had messed him up, and he wasn’t in a rational state of mind. “Raised Catholic, turned atheist, but he believes in fairies, is scared of fairies!”

“We’ve been over this,” Keiran threw back, “I’m not an atheist, I can’t credit a benevolent god, and, listen,” he sounded very serious, “weird things happen, you know what I mean? So you don’t mess with it, and you sure as fuck don’t call them.”

“Guys.” Kurt and Keiran both quieted and looked at Elliott, whom they had both momentarily forgotten was there. He did not look happy with either of them. “To start with, being a Jew, talking about my G-d not existing; I’m not too keen on that.”

“I said I don’t believe in a benevolent god,” Keiran protested. “I’m perfectly open to Yahweh being real.”
Kurt’s eyes went a bit wide at that comment, but Elliott shrugged and murmured, “That’s fair,” before he looked at Kurt and said, “How about we try to get ahead of it, this time?”

Kurt squinted at him. “What do you mean?”

“I mean,” he said, as he shifted to get his phone out of his pocket, “we take a look at the news in Lima, then check Facebook. If you find it before it finds you, maybe that will give you a sense of contro- oh, shoot.”

“Is your phone dead?” Kurt drawled.

“...maybe,” Elliott said quietly. He gladly accepted Keiran’s phone when he handed it to Elliott with a smirk. There was a moment of silence while Elliott pulled up Google and typed in the search.

“...you really don’t have to do that, Elliott, you don’t need to humor me-”

“My G-d.”

There was a quick beat of silence where Kurt and Keiran glanced at each other and then back at Elliott.

“...Elliott?” Kurt asked, as tension built between his shoulders.

“What’s the news from Bean Town?”

“Stop calling it that.”

“Never.”

Elliott did not acknowledge them as they bickered, all of his focus on what was on the phone in front of him. “Kurt,” he asked, quietly, “you know that blonde woman we saw at your friend’s wedding? Sue?”

Keiran sat up straight, suddenly very attentive. “You mean that looney woman that tried to force Kurt to marry the Cheating Cunt, the lady that fucking threw a chair at both of you?”

“She didn’t throw it at us,” corrected Kurt. He didn’t care to even vaguely defend Sue, but accuracy matters.

“She poisoned the school water supply at McKinley.”

Kurt and Keiran both went very still and wide-eyed. They looked at each other, then stared at Elliott.

“She did what?” they both asked, but with different tones of voice- Kurt’s was one of bewilderment, while Keiran...if his statement had been written on its own, the ‘what’ would have been in italics. And in bold.

“...and she firebombed a car in the school parking lot,” Elliott murmured, almost as if to himself, eyes still locked on the phone.

“Oh, lord,” Kurt softly said, slightly stunned.

“Oh lord’?” questioned Keiran, and he stared at Kurt like he was completely, utterly mad. “She poisons children, ignites a bomb near children, and all you’ve got is ‘oh lord’?”
Kurt shrugged uneasily. “Well,” he stated, “it’s Sue.”

Keiran seemed truly incredulous. “It’s terrorism!”

Kurt sighed and looked off to the side as he said, “It’s admittedly a good deal more insane and evil than her standard-”

“-how the fuck are you alive?”

Kurt slowly shook his head. “I have no idea.”

“Ten people had to be hospitalized, eight minors,” read Elliott, seemingly unaware of anything but the article he held in his hands, “two of the minors are still in recovery.” He paused, and then whispered, “My G-d.”

“It’s just like what my relatives in Northern Ireland went through…”

“She is considered a flight risk and is being held without bail-”

“Wait, what?” asked Kurt, finally truly surprised, “she’s in jail? She’s been arrested?”

“What?” cried Keiran. “Why are you shocked by that, and not the rest?! Of course she’s been arrested, wasn’t all that she did at least two felonies?”

“Three,” was Elliott’s quiet voice, “arson, damage to federal property, and child endangerment.”

“Three felonies!” Keiran all but shouted, “in what universe does someone commit three felonies and not face consequences?!”

“Until now, Sue’s.” Kurt, stunned, asked again, “Is she really in jail?”

“No,” Keiran barked, and sarcasm soaked his words, “she’s getting ready to be on the campaign trail for president.” He threw his arms up towards the ceiling. “Of course she’s in jail!”

Kurt fidgeted for a moment, before he said, “Remember that expose about her with Geraldo Rivera?” He fidgeted a bit more. “That was the closest she’s had to consequences in all the time I’ve known her. Sure, she lost her job as principal, but I saw on Facebook that she almost immediately after became coach to the glee club Vocal Adrenaline.”

“Are you serious?” Keiran looked about stupefied. “Years of encouraging eating disorders among students, assaulting adults and children alike almost daily, endangering kids’ lives even before this, all of that, and the worst thing that had happened to her up to that point was being humiliated on national television?” He sat back in disbelief. “Has she got the entire Ohio justice system under blackmail?”

Kurt shrugged again. “That’s what I’ve always figured, yeah.”

Keiran ran a hand threw his hair. “Well, she’s committed acts of terrorism on federal property, and it’s seeming like she doesn’t have the FBI in her back pocket.”

“Wow,” said Kurt, as he repeated his earlier shake of his head. It was amazing.

“Clarence and Ruby.”

Kurt and Keiran both looked at Elliott, and at last registered that he was Not Okay.
“Elliott?” asked Kurt, with concern.

“The two kids still in the hospital,” Elliott whispered, so quiet they could scarcely hear him. His lip ever so slightly trembled; he was very visibly shaken. “What if they die? They’re both fourteen. Kids.” Elliott finally looked away from the phone, and up at them both. “What if she killed two kids?”

For a moment, no one spoke.

Keiran then said, darkly, “She’ll be taken care of in prison, that’s what.”

“Keiran,” Kurt quietly admonished.

He looked at Kurt. He nodded. He got up, walked the few steps to Elliott. “Come on, mam,” Keiran said, as he took the phone away from Elliott, set it down on the table, and then coaxed Elliott to stand up.

Not another word was said as Keiran pulled Elliott into a hug, as Kurt then got up and stepped over to curl around the other side of Elliott.

For several minutes, in silence, the three stood there.

And held each other.

Chapter End Notes

Nobody died.

This takes place in conjunction with the final chapter of Meanwhile, At McKinley. The title is, yes, a reference to Hamilton. Here is a link to the relevent part of the song it comes from, The Reynolds Pamphlet.

Song in this chapter-
When You’re Evil by Voltaire

You might have guessed that, in this universe, Santana agreed to be interviewed by Geraldo, and dragged Sue through the mud. And, I have a reason for why things turned out more realistically for Sue- one of the ten people that had to be hospitalized was one Brittany Susan Pierce-Lopez, a NASA employee and YouTube star that had been using her YouTube channel to talk about astronomy in her usual very Brittany way. A minor celebrity and a federal employee. Not a person you can get away with poisoning.
“To hell with everything! Absolutely everything! It can all die in a fire!” Reece declared as she charged into the apartment. Elliott, Kurt, Keiran, and Minnow, all already there, were, as a group, startled when she charged up to the kitchen table, and set down a canvas shopping bag. “There’s the challah bread and sufganiyot from Gombo’s.” She looked inside the bag, and, with some significance, stated, “Sufganiyot, you jelly donuts better be as good as I remember from last year, I need it.”

The four all halted their dinner prep, Keiran and Elliott in their preparation of the latkes, Kurt and Minnow in their icing of the Star Of David shaped sugar cookies. Kurt, Keiran, and Elliott all glanced at each other, while Minnow only looked in Reece’s direction, as they removed their chew pendant from their mouth.

“I take it you had a good day?” quipped Keiran, with a raised eyebrow.

Reece sighed. “Today was fine. It was Saturday. Budge over, lemme chop some onions, or something.” Keiran and Elliott each stepped in opposite directions so as to allow her to slip inbetween them. She washed her hands in the sink behind her, grabbed a nearby knife, and chopped onions with more energy than was strictly necessary.

“Saturday?” Elliott asked as he squinted at her. “It’s Tuesday; why haven’t you said anything until now? What got you so angry that we haven’t even seen you until now?”

“I’m not that angry,” she grunted unconvincingly, as she finished with the onions and moved on to shred the potatoes (that Keiran and Elliott had peeled just before she had arrived) with the grater over a bowl of cold water, “I just thought I’d save it to complain today because I can punish potatoes at the same time this way.”

“What happened on Saturday?” asked Minnow, already returned to icing the cookies.

After a beat of hesitation, Kurt also resumed icing, and added, “Yeah, what did happen? It clearly wasn’t nothing.”

She finished with the first potato, onto the second. Elliott noted her speed, and wove around everyone to get to the stove, and turned on the burner so that the skillet would be heated and ready to go. “Alright,” she said, “I was at the Cubbyhole, and I get to talking to this girl who was, if I’m being completely honest, a 6.5 out of 10, tops, but, she seemed nice, ya know?” Now the third potato. “So, we go on back to her place, all the way to her bedroom, she gets in bed, and I’m set to join her, when I hear a toilet flush. Several awkward seconds of nothing but sounds of running water later, this man appears in her bedroom doorway.” Potato four. “It’s her goddamned boyfriend. They were just hoping to spice things up that night, see, and it didn’t even occur to this woman to let me know there was gonna be dick involved.”

She had finished with the fourth potato, and Keiran handed the fifth and final potato to her with a laugh, and said, “Bad luck for you. That would’ve been a fantastic night for me. S’happened twice, actually.”
“That happened to me, once,” Elliott commented, as he cracked the eggs into a bowl, “Luckily. Otherwise it would have been a bad night.”

“Ah, right,” Keiran remembered, “you told me about that. Night you lost your virginity.”

Elliott nodded as he whisked the eggs. “And found out for sure that I was gay.”

Reece had finished with the last potato, so she had to just let the potatoes soak for two minutes, and would be denied something to do with her hands in that time, which didn’t help her mood. “I’m sorry, assholes,” she sniped, “but my story wasn’t about you. Now,” she looked at Elliott, “is that blandest thing since unsalted saltine crackers in the oven already?”

“The kugel is baking, yes, alongside the seitan brisket. ...it’s not *that* bland.” Elliott set down his bowl of whisked eggs. “Sorry for taking your story like that; would you like some tea?”

“No thanks,” she mumbled, then turned on the oven light and peeked at the kugel through the oven window. “Probably another ten minutes, how’s the matzo ball soup?” she asked as she stood and lifted the lid to look inside the big pot before anyone could answer, grabbed a ladle and sampled a sip. “Good, better than last year.”

“Did you stay?” asked Minnow, as they added tiny icing flames to the tiny icing menorah candles.

“Hell no,” Reece replied, as she went back to the bowl of shredded potatoes, took it to the sink, and dumped them into the colander that waited, “knowing there would be dick was already more dick than I could stand.” She picked up the colander, shook it, then upended its contents onto a nearby towel that Elliott had placed the chopped onions on, which she rolled up and twisted after she had set the colander back in the sink.

“Shame,” remarked Keiran. He held out what had contained the potatoes a moment ago for her to deposit the onion and potato mixture in, which she did. “You’ve not been getting any pussy for awhile.”

Reece glared at him, and aggressively tossed the towel into the sink, grabbed the bowl out of his hands. She did not acknowledge Elliott while he shook his head and added the eggs and salt to the bowl she held. “For bringing that up, I curse you. The next blowjob you get comes with teeth.”

Keiran’s eyes opened wide, and he threw his hands in the air. “Well, fuck, Reece!” he cried, and sounded horrified.

Elliott somehow managed to maneuver himself to the sink, in order to wash the dishes that had accumulated so far. He patted Reece comfortingly on the arm as he moved, and said, “Hang in there, Teresa.”

“Yeah, Reece,” Kurt consoled, “I’m sure it’ll turn around soon.”

Reece grunted as she mixed the ingredients contained in the bowl in her hands with a wooden spoon she snatched from the table. “It better.”

“Batteries are getting expensive,” Keiran chirped cheerfully.

The movement of her spoon halted when Reece lifted her gaze to glare at him again. “Teeth.” she hissed.

Keiran sputtered. “Come on!”
Kurt paused, and straightened, looked contemplative. “If it helps, Reece,” he offered, “I don’t think any of us are, you know, ‘enjoying the nightlife’.” Embarrassed, he then added, “I mean, I shouldn’t assume; do you have anything going on, Minnow?”

Minnow maintained their focus on their cookies while they answered, “No. I do not, have not, will not. I have no interest.”

Kurt furrowed his eyebrows in confusion. “Huh?”

“They don’t do sex or romance,” Reece explained, as she carried the now ready mix towards the stove, and dropped the first two latkes into the ready skillet. (Kurt almost didn’t hear her very quietly mutter, to his further confusion, “Of course you three ain’t ‘enjoying the nightlife’, how dumb do you think I am?”)

“Asexual and aromantic,” Minnow defined.

Kurt blinked. “So, you’re an agender, asexual, aromantic Asian-American?”

Minnow had completed the final detail on their last cookie. They grinned wide. “Aaaaa!” they cried, and then laughed like it was the best joke they had ever told.

Kurt couldn’t help but smile when confronted with such delight, even he didn’t understand why they had yelled, or what was so funny.

On that note, there was something else he didn’t understand. He decided he had better ask before he forgot. “Hey, Elliott,” he finally questioned, “why aren’t you going home for Hanukkah, at least for the first night? It’s kind of a family holiday, isn’t it?”

Dishes washed, Elliott dried his hands on a towel that had not just held potatoes and onions. He frowned. “Not really,” he said. “It’s not even one of our more important holidays. Either way, thing is,” he shrugged, “I’m a bit more Jewish than the rest of my family. Aside from my grandparents, and they live in Florida, so…”

Kurt blinked again, slightly taken aback. “Really?”

This was apparently news to Reece, too. “That goes against the usual pattern, don’t it?” she remarked.

“And you call yourself a millennial,” Keiran teased. Kurt was unable to ascertain whether this was also new information to Keiran.

“I’m not Orthodox, or anything,” Elliott protested, “I think I’m still pretty casual? But the rest of my nearby family is basically only ethnically Jewish at this point. Especially my aunt Sarah, who married a Christian, an Evangelist, no less. I think she converted, too. We haven’t spoken since she found out I was gay, ‘we’ including my mom and dad, they were also done with her, so, I can’t be sure.”

Reece looked over her shoulder to squint at him. “So your parents don’t celebrate Hanukkah, then? Why do you?”

“Why do I?” Elliott frowned some more. “I guess I just need some tradition more than they do.” He shrugged again. “They light the candles and eat the food, but they’re not as formal about it. In fact, it’s Christmas that I’m going home for.”

“That’s right…” Kurt murmured. He was slightly embarrassed that that fact had not fully registered
until just now. But, with Christmas mentioned, it was a good time to inform his band about something he’d been putting off telling them about for a few days. “Speaking of Christmas,” he began, “Five Star Constellation, I have an announcement to make.”

He had clearly said that with too much gravitas; everyone went still and attentive, tense.

Except for Minnow, who happily arranged the baked goods on plates, the challah, sufganiyot, and cookies all put on display.

“Oh, fuck,” said Keiran, “who died?”

This got Minnow’s attention. “Someone died?”

Kurt made a tiny sound of aggravation. “Nobody died.”

“Who’s got cancer, then?” asked Keiran, arms crossed and eyebrow raised.

“It’s not bad news,” Kurt said, defensively.

Minnow went back to the cookies.

Reece turned her gaze back to the latkes, and stated, “Tell that to your face.”

Keiran tongued at the tooth behind his canine as he nodded in her direction. “What she said.”

Kurt sighed and put his hand to his forehead, briefly. “My dad and my stepmom are coming to our Christmas Eve party,” he explained, “because they want to meet my new friends.”

Aside from the quiet sounds of baked goods being arranged on plates, and of latkes frying, the room was silent.

Apparently satisfied with their placements, Minnow ceased their task and, after a pause, remarked, “You do not seem to be at ease, Mr. Hummel.”

“Let’s open the wine up early, shall we?” declared Keiran, as he snatched the bottle and looked for the corkscrew.

“I’m fine,” Kurt protested, “I don’t need any wine.”

“Maybe it’s not for you, Broadway Boy.” Keiran did a little grumble while he searched for a corkscrew Kurt knew he would not find, because he saw when Elliott grabbed it and put in his pocket, just after Keiran had lifted the bottle.

“Grab a glass for me, Irish,” said Reece. “And here I thought Christmas Eve was going to be the fun I got before seeing my sexist and homophobic as hell uncle the next day. Give him the corkscrew, Ellie.” Her eyes had remained on the latkes that entire time. How she had known that he had it, it could not be discerned.

“You can’t be drunk when you light the menorah, guys,” Elliott argued while he batted Keiran’s hands away.

“The rule is,” Keiran argued back as he tried to get at Elliott’s pockets, “you’re not to eat prepared food or drink alcohol a half hour before you light the menorah, and we’re not doing that for over two hours from now, give it.”

Elliott slapped Keiran’s hands. “How about,” he stated with some surprisingly strong assertion,
“I’m the Jew, this is my day, and I say what happens. No getting drunk.”

Keiran rubbed at his hands, eyes wide. “Well, fuck,” he murmured.

Elliott immediately looked apologetic, but Kurt spoke before he got the chance to say he was sorry.

“Nobody has to get drunk, because it’s not going to be bad, you guys,” he defended.

Reece’s gaze went to him for a moment, then back to her cooking. “Again, tell that to your face.”

Keiran raised an eyebrow. “Again, what she said.”

No support from Elliott. “It doesn’t work to tell people not to worry if you look worried, Kurt.”

Keiran’s expression pinched in clear distress. “Aw, fuck,” he said, “it’s me isn’t it? You know the ginger fuck-up will embarrass you.” He rubbed gently at the corner of his eye while he wore an ironic smile. “Happy fucking Christmas to me.”

“What? No, Keiran, I’m not worried that you’ll embarrass me at all,” Kurt protested.

To go by the stares from Reece, Elliott, and Keiran, his tone did not convince.

“...maybe I am a little worried that you will speak in your usual...colorful language,” Kurt reluctantly admitted.

“Which applies to me as well,” sighed Reece, who turned to look at Keiran, and held up her hand in the mime to hold the glass of wine they had both been denied. “To His Majesty having utmost faith in us, Keiran.”

Keiran copied her gesture, imaginary glass in hand. “Sláinte.”

They both ‘drank’ in ‘toast’.

Then there was support from Elliott. “Guys, it is natural to be nervous about introducing people you care about to your parents.”

Minnow was immediately receptive to this, a thoughtful expression on their face. “That is true,” they agreed. “If he were completely unconcerned, that would suggest that he is indifferent to our existence, and would not be at all bothered if his parents thought badly of us. Him being worried means he loves us.” Minnow smiled brightly. “I love you too, Mr. Hummel!”

Kurt smiled back. “Thank you, Minnow.”

“You are welcome!” was the chipper response.

Reece did a thoughtful hum. She flipped a latke. “Yeah,” she acquiesced, “I was a ball of tension the first time I brought Minnow along for dinner. I was sure something would go wrong.”

“Something did,” Minnow stated factually, “several things did. All of the things that went wrong involved your uncle, however, so one could argue that only one thing went wrong. He asked if you had finally stopped being a ‘dyke’ and if I was your ‘boyfriend’, referred to me as ‘boy’ several times, called me a ‘chink’, he continued, and continues, to call me a ‘chink’ even after I had corrected him and said I was Japanese.”

“-the list of all the horrible things my uncle can say in an evening is a long one I’d rather we’d not waste time going over, Minnow,” groaned Reece.
Minnow pressed their lips together, and nodded.

After a beat, Keiran asked, with an inquisitive raised eyebrow, “Your dad or your stepmom aren’t cunts like that, are they, Kurt?”

Kurt huffed out a breath. “No. They’re both really nice people, actually.” He then asserted, “Christmas Eve will still be a good time for the five of us.” He frowned. “You just can’t swear. Or make sex jokes.”

Keiran nodded. “I can’t talk. Got it.”

Reece smirked. “It will be a good night, then.”

“Fuck off.”

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It had been a very good meal.

Kurt got reminded that while Elliott didn’t eat meat, he wasn’t a vegetarian.

The seitan had been cooked with beef broth.

Now they were just hanging out until 8:00 PM, which was when they would light the menorah. Minnow had offered to stand outside and come back in when the stars were out, which would definitely happen long before 8:00 PM, but Elliott turned them down.

Talked them out of it, if one were more honest about the circumstances.

As they waited for that time, Elliott brought out the gelt, chocolate coins wrapped in gold and silver foil, and his dreidel.

“Ready to play, guys?” Elliott asked as he grinned.

Kurt, Keiran, and Reece looked at each other. All, Minnow included, smiled.

“Yes,” said Kurt, “but, before we do, you know that new medley video you showed us of traditional Hanukkah songs, by the Shir Soul Singers?”

“Oh yeah, I’ve been watching it over and over, why?”

Keiran chimed in, “We’ve all been watching it over and over, too. Wanna sing it?”

Elliott’s eyes lit up. “That’d be great! But, wait,” he looked at Minnow in question, “there’s no mention of the sky in any of the three songs. Are you okay with singing them?”

“Yes,” Minnow nodded, “because they are Hanukkah songs, and Hanukkah relates to the sky, because you light the menorah after the stars are visible.”

“After they said that, I then made the argument,” Kurt added, “that since our band’s name is Five Star Constellation, all songs ought to qualify under that logic.”
“And I told him ‘no’!” Minnow cheerfully stated.

They all had a giggle at that.

Elliott then began,

~Dreidel, dreidel, dreidel,

I made it out of clay!

And when it’s dry and ready

Oh dreidel I shall play!~

Five Star Constellation sang their own version of the song, and their smiles never left their faces.

Overall, a very good first night of Hanukkah.

Chapter End Notes

The chapter would have ended better at Keiran’s “Fuck off”, I know, but I was too attached to that scene, I’m sorry.

Songs in this chapter-

An Old Fashioned Love Story from The Wild Party
Medley of Dreidel, Mi Yimalel, and Ma'oz Tzur by the Shir Soul Singers

Hanukkah 2014 started the evening of
Tuesday, December 16
and ended the evening of
Wednesday, December 24
It finally hit Kurt when he grasped the handle of the door into his apartment, as his parents stood beside him.

This was only the second time his dad had come to New York. This was the first time Carol had. And, when he had seen them both at the wedding, it had been more than a year since he had last seen his dad face to face, how on Earth could *that* have been true?

At least he had talked to both dad and Carole regularly over the phone and via Skype, but he could not say the same about anyone else in his life besides Elliott and Blaine from October 2013 to March 2014; his coworkers and classmates hardly counted.

And Blaine had been even worse, Kurt could not recall him ever so much as even reaching out to anyone in that time span.

Well. No small wonder he and Blaine had had a complete meltdown. Blaine had made his entire life about Kurt, and Kurt had quite nearly done the same.

How had they even lasted until March?

“Kurt? Honey?” asked Carole, gently, “Are you alright?”

“Where’d you go, kid?” was the question from his dad.

Kurt shook his head, and looked over at the two of them to smile. “Yeah, I’m-”

The door suddenly slid open, the handle essentially ripped from his hands. Elliott, Keiran, Reece, and Minnow all stood before them.

And it was patently obvious by where the stares of Elliott and Reece were directed just who had made the door open with a loud bang.

“G-ddammit, Keiran,” Elliott chided.

Kurt glared at Keiran while he rubbed his shoulder as he, his dad, and his stepmom all walked forward, into the apartment.

“What?” Keiran defended, “They were the ones making us wait for five minutes, just standing there like a bunch of dumb-” Keiran cut himself off, pressed his lips together, and paused awkwardly. “...people.”

“That’s Keiran,” Kurt introduced in a deadpan, “and for him, that’s a good first impression.”

Keiran narrowed his eyes at him. “You know what you are.”

“And *you* know what you are,” Kurt immediately replied.

Burt then unexpectedly laughed. Kurt looked at him and saw him quirk a smile before he said,
“And here I thought that the whole, what’s it called, ‘persona’, you’ve got in all the videos was just that. You know,” he looked at Keiran with a raised eyebrow, “an act.”

“Nah.” Reece shook her head and crossed her arms, “It’s all real. Toned down a touch, actually.”

“Well,” Burt stated as he grinned and stepped forward, “that’s good to hear.” He clapped Keiran on the shoulder. “Everyone needs at least one smartass in their life, right?”

Keiran grinned back at him, and his whole face lit up. “I like you.”

Kurt closed his eyes. “Oh, no,” he moaned.

He had been so concerned that his dad and Carole wouldn’t like his friends, that it hadn’t occurred to him how awful it would be if they liked one of them in particular.

Carole offered a temporary respite, when she cried, “Oh, Reece! I love your hair even more in person, I can really see how vibrant a blue it is, now.”

Reece, too, looked relieved. “Thank you, ma’am! I love your blouse.”

“Please, call me Carole,” she beamed, “and thank you. Kurt made it for me a few years back, actually.”

“Aha, thought I recognized the style,” said Reece as she nodded. She gazed at Kurt and gave a grin and a wink. “Nice job, Kingly.”

Kurt smiled back. “Thank you.”

Minnow spoke up suddenly. “Are we not going to introduce ourselves?”

“Oh, well,” said Burt, surprised, “we all know who we all are, we’ve Skyped and such…”

Minnow frowned and shook their head adamantly. “This is the first time we are meeting in person,” they insisted, “there are supposed to be introductions.”

“Of, course,” concurred Elliott, “sorry, we forgot, Minnow. How about you start, since you remembered?”

Minnow smiled and nodded. “That is a good reason for me to be the one to begin, even though this not my apartment or my parents.” They smiled a little brighter, and bowed. When they again stood straight, they began, “My name is Minori Yamane. My four friends all call me Minnow, and the both of you are welcome to do so, as well.”

“Um,” Carole paused, before she smiled and returned, “It is very nice to finally meet you-”

“-only names,” Minnow interrupted.

Carole and Burt both blinked and glanced at each other, taken aback.

When Carole recovered, she hesitantly said, “My name is Carole Hudson-Hummel.”

“I’m Burt Hummel,” said he, after his own pause.

They were clearly each slightly confused by Minnow’s delighted grin in response.

After she raised her hand to signal that she would speak next, Reece then said, formally, “My name
is Teresa Messina. My friends all call me Reece, and so can you.”

Elliott stepped forward, a wide grin worn on his face. “I’m Elliott Gilbert.”

Keiran waved. “Keiran Connolly.”

‘Am I supposed to go next?’ “Um,” uttered Kurt.

Minnow again interrupted. “You have met your parents,” they cheerfully stated, “so you are exempt, Mr. Hummel.”

“Right.”

Burt repeated his act of a raised eyebrow, but in a more puzzled spirit, this time. “‘Mr. Hummel’?” he asked his son.

Kurt could only shrug. “They call me that.”

Burt paused for a moment. “Huh.”

The awkward silence Kurt had feared arrived.

Blissfully broken when Keiran declared, “So I thought we should go ice skating! You know, at Central Park; they’re open on Christmas Eve, right?”

Five pairs of eyes stared at him.

Elliott tilted his head. “Skating?”

“I barely know how,” said Reece, an eyebrow arched.

“Yeah,” Keiran enthused, “that’s the idea! We all get to watch each other land on our arses, and have a grand laugh. Come on, let’s do it for the craic!”

“For the what?” asked Carole, wide-eyed.

“C-R-A-I-C,” Kurt explained, quickly, desperately, “it’s Irish for ‘fun’.”

Keiran frowned, but he thankfully seemed to know it would not be helpful to complain about oversimplification at this time.

Minnow’s eyes nearly sparkled. “I like that idea very much. I know how to skate.”

“Ah, right,” Reece grinned, “you really do.”

Elliott raised his arms in a ‘stop’ gesture. “We can’t be making Burt and Carole do that right now, guys,” he argued, “they must be tired from their flight, right?” He looked at the pair.

“Yeah,” Burt agreed, “at least let us rest for an hour, okay?”

Keiran sighed, but acquiesced, “Alright, fair enough.”

“We can’t be going anywhere before we’ve all had my hot apple cider, anyway, Keiran,” Elliott gently scolded. “We can start drinking it, it’s definitely ready by now.”

“Oh, yes please,” came from Carole, “that sounds lovely.”
“Apple cider?” questioned Burt, as he became second in line after Carole to get a mug of cider, freshly ladled by Elliott from the pot on the stove in which it had brewed, “not eggnog?”

“Not eggnog,” Kurt confirmed while he got in line after his dad, “Keiran fiercely vetoed it, and the rest of us held no strong feelings about it.”

“It’s rank,” said Keiran with a screwed up face as he, too, got in the cider queue, “amazing what people will consume because of tradition.”

“Don’t your people eat haggis?” Reece drawled while she got in line behind him.

“Haggis is just sausage being honest,” Keiran replied, defensively, as he half turned to look at her, “and that’s mainly a Scottish thing, ya racist.”

Both of her eyebrows shot up. “What did you call me?”

“We are not having that conversation again,” Elliott called out authoritatively, and successfully; Keiran and Reece dropped the topic immediately, to Kurt’s immense relief.

‘Seems these long hours will be about as bad as I feared they’d be,’ Kurt thought, morosely.

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That prediction proved to be incorrect; while many awkward moments did follow, they had not formed a cloud. His dad and his stepmom had gotten (mostly) used to Minnow’s quirks in the course of that hour. Keiran, the ass, had attempted to embarrass Kurt when he held mistletoe over their heads and demanded a kiss, but Kurt showed him up when he did indeed smooch him, on the lips, and thereby achieved at least temporary silence from Keiran, as planned. When Elliott smirked at him, Kurt only spared a brief moment of exasperation, because he had caught the looks that Carole and his dad had given them, finally remembered that ‘Oh, crap, the wedding; they believe Elliott and I are boyfriends,’ and he snatched the mistletoe from Keiran, marched over to Elliott, held his arm aloft, dangled the plant above their heads, gave Elliott a look, there was a beat of bemusement until Elliott clearly had just then remembered the ruse from all the way back in late October, and he grabbed Kurt, one arm around his waist, and the other reached up and clasped the hand that held the mistletoe, and dipped him.

Elliott and Kurt were both performers; they sold it.

To wolf whistles from Keiran, the ass.

Beyond that, everything had been normal as they had enjoyed cider, and then an early meal, in the midst of which Carole had wished Elliott a happy Hanukkah, he had informed her that the final night of Hanukkah was this very evening, she had asked if they could take part in the lighting of the menorah, and he had said, of course. After that, Kurt revealed to them all his grades for the fall semester: Each grade an A, except for his work study, which was a B minus. Reactions of incredulity had filled the room. Carole exclaimed that that couldn't be true, their final video for ‘Home Isn't There, It's Here’ was like a short movie made by a famous director, and Keiran seemed actually kinda angry, which hadn't been a surprise, really. (“What does Mrs. Trudeau want? Blood?” “For the last time, it's Madam Tibideaux.” “Whichever.”) Kurt explained that she thought they had used too much green screen and computer graphics and not enough practical effects, to which Reece replied that practical effects were a lot more expensive and time consuming, meaning
that whatsername did, in fact, want blood. Minnow said it was their fault because it had been their idea to do scifi, and it took a bit of effort to convince them otherwise. Kurt believed that it was then that his dad and Carole came around on Minnow, while they helped the others persuade Minnow that they weren't to blame for him ‘failing’ his work study, as Minnow had put it.

Then, about a half hour after that, they were at the ice rink in Central Park.

It was a little after 6:45 PM, more than twenty minutes after they had arrived, and Kurt had just miraculously avoided a face-plant onto the ice.

And ‘avoided’ meant that his hands were on the ice, and his ass was in the air, his body a triangle that he desperately tried to maintain and not allow to collapse into a line.

He heard wolf-whistles for the second time that evening, only this time it was Keiran and Elliott both.

“Don’t objectify me!” he hollered, mortified.

“Come on, Kurt!” Keiran cheered, “It’s Christmas!”

“Let us show gratitude for our gift!” Elliott jovially added.

Kurt angrily bit out, “My parents are here!”

“Ah, right,” said Keiran, and then turned to Burt and called out, “Good work, Burt!”

“Thanks,” was the amused reply, “but it was mostly his mother in the looks department.”

“Oh my god,” Kurt groaned. ‘What did I do to deserve this?’

“Seriously, Kurt,” complimented Elliott, “your glutes look amazing.”

“Thanks,” Kurt said, sarcastically, and then, with irritated urgency, “now how about you perverts help me?”

The two skated to either side of him, and another miracle took place, in which they had successfully helped him up. Each had one hand on his chest, their other arm around his waist.

They should have been around his waist, that is.

“Get your hands off my rear!” he protested.

Neither did; Kurt instead felt a squeeze.

“Dammit, Keiran!” he barked.

Then a pinch.

“Ah! Keiran, you ass!”

Keiran chuckled. “Wasn't me that time, Broadway Boy.”

“Et tu, Elliott?” Kurt demanded, before he sighed deeply. “The two of you are evil; you're doing this because I can't push you away.”

“Yep!” they chorused.
"I know I haven't been skating long, now, but I've had enough. Let's all just go join Reece by the barrier and watch Minnow skate, okay?"

"I'm with you on that; think I got my fill of bruises," Elliott agreed good naturedly.

The three began to slowly, cautiously, make their way in the direction where Reece, Burt, and Carole stood behind the barrier, a small ways away from one of the entrances to the rink, skate rental nearby.

"Yeah," Keiran agreed, "I can satisfy my needs by watching strangers fall on their arses. Not as quality, but it'll do."

"You're such an ass," Kurt muttered.

"And you're a cunt," Keiran replied, carelessly.

Kurt was then reminded that they were very much in earshot of his dad and Carole, because he had seen his dad raise his eyebrows, and Carole do a double take. His cheeks turned even redder than the weather had already turned them.

He could not be completely certain, but Kurt thought he caught Keiran’s own ears turn a bit redder.

Elliott rolled his eyes and shook his head at them both.

After they had taken off and returned their rented skates, they joined Reece, Carole, and Kurt’s dad in their spectator spots.

"Sorry about making you waste your money on skates, dad," Kurt apologized.

"It's fine, I'm considering it the price for admission," his dad dismissed. He looked out at the rink.

"Minnow’s quite the skater. No pro, but pretty impressive."

"Yeah," murmured Elliott, "they really are."

"Be right back," said Burt, as he walked away from the barrier, "gotta hit the john."

After a minute or two had quietly passed, Carole suddenly turned towards Elliott, Keiran, and Kurt. There was a moment where she just gazed at the three, stood close to each other.

"...Carole?" Kurt prompted.

"Oh! Um," she looked away for a second, like she was nervous, before her eyes came back to them. "I'll admit that I don't entirely...understand this," she gestured vaguely, "arrangement, but, I can see that it makes you very happy Kurt, and that's all that matters to me."

"Huh?" the three asked in unison.

She adopted a sweet, motherly smile. "Of course. Whenever you're ready, honey."

Kurt furrowed his brow. "What?"

She patted him on the arm. "Nevermind, Kurt. Let's just watch your friend skate."

She turned back towards the rink, and Kurt followed suit, and so did Elliott and Keiran, very obviously just as confused by Carole’s words as he was.
His dad soon returned. Shortly after he’d done so, Reece began to sing.

~Hark, how the bells
Sweet, silver bells
All seem to say
Throw cares away!~

Kurt was beyond relieved; what better way to end the awkwardness than to sing a Christmas carol while Minnow executed a double axel? He joined in,

~Christmas is here
Bringing good cheer
To young and old
Meek and the bold~

Keiran and Elliott both added their voices. Keiran with the actual lyric, Elliott only with the backup ‘ding, dong’, of course. Elliott was a little sketchy on the words, after all, since he hadn’t really grown up with these songs.

~Ding, dong, ding dong
That is their song
With joyful ring
All caroling~

Reece, Kurt, and Keiran then all sang together, and Kurt felt more and more majestic as the song went on, Minnow’s moves seemed even more and more magnificent.

~Gaily they ring
While people sing
Songs of good cheer
Christmas is here!
Elliott sang with them properly when the verse repeated, more sure of the lyrics, and it was wonderful.

As he watched, to his amazement, Minnow perfectly perform a triple lutz, he would have never guessed they could skate like that, Kurt knew that this was, so far, the best Christmas he’d ever had.

Okay, it was only Christmas Eve, but still.

~On, on they send
On, without end
Their joyful tone
To every hoooooome...~

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about giving you yet another chapter that fails to move the plot forward, but this is an alternate season six, that, unlike canon season six, has a timeline that runs through December, so there has to be a Christmas Episode, right?

Minnow won't be in the Olympics anytime soon, but they're pretty good.

Song in this chapter:

Carol Of The Bells

This is my favorite Christmas song, and I was very happy that this was one of the select few holiday tunes Glee had not done.

(On that note, why the hell was ‘Oh Hanukkah’ the only Hannukah song they did? [Not a serious question; we all know why.][Because Glee barely even gave a shit about what was really only token Judaism.])
Apologies that this took so long! This time, the reason for the delay is that I’ve recently become obsessed with Bendy And The Ink Machine, and have been drawing fanart and writing scripts for some fanimation I may attempt to create. And, on top of that, I’ve had some computer issues. And on top of that, relatives stayed over for about a week, and that was a distraction, believe me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rachel took in a deep breath, and then let it out, slowly. She’d already been in New York for several days, more than settled in the apartment she now shared with one Jesse St. James, an apartment that was more the size and price of what was typical in New York City. She had put this off for too long already; she had not so much as called Kurt to let him know she was back in New York, never even thought to call to tell him she was coming back to New York when she’d decided to do so all the way back in November. She couldn’t think of why she hadn’t, why she had waited this long; wasn’t Kurt her best friend?

Her best friend that she had not spoken to since Brittany and Santana’s wedding? Her best friend that she had not spoken to for over a month before that? Her best friend that, beyond a short text to tell him to watch her incredibly bad pilot of her ill-fated TV show, she had not contacted in nearly a year before then?

It had been as her plane touched down at JFK that it finally hit her-

She was a terrible friend.

She was really, truly, a terrible friend.

She was scarcely a friend at all.

So she had not contacted him until now, because the guilt had been too much to face. She’d made excuses to herself that it was only because she wanted to be properly ‘moved in’ first, but she knew that wasn’t true.

But the spring semester at NYADA started tomorrow, and it would be far worse if the first time he saw her back in New York was then, rather than now.

She wasted a few more moments as she stared at the door, a song by Feist in her head.

So Sorry.

She took in another breath to steel her nerves, rapped her knuckles on the door, and then slid it open.

To her relief, Kurt was sat alone on the sofa, a mug in his hand, laptop on the coffee table. She hadn’t called ahead, and until she had stood in the open doorway, she had not known if anyone
would have been at the apartment at all right now, a little after 2:00 PM on a Sunday.

All her efforts to, if she were to be honest, self sabotage in order to avoid Kurt’s judgement, were thankfully for naught.

Kurt looked up to see who had slid open the door, and his eyes went wide when he saw that it was Rachel.

“Hi, Kurt,” she said, quietly.

For a moment, he only stared at her. “Rachel?” He then gave his head a little shake, set his mug down on the coffee table, closed the laptop, got up from the sofa, and walked right to her. They briefly regarded each other before she stepped inside, and he slid the door closed behind her.

“What are you doing in New York?”

She smiled. “I’ve been accepted back into NYADA.”

Kurt’s own expression remained neutral. “Oh?” He slightly raised one eyebrow. “Another second chance, huh?”

Rachel pressed her lips inward, and looked off to the side. “I know.” Her gaze returned to Kurt’s eyes. “I finally understand how lucky I am, Kurt. How lucky I’ve always been. I won’t waste it this time.”

He nodded solemnly in response, and he seemed to her to appreciate the weight of her words, not doubt them. He then looked at her in inquiry. “But what about the glee club?”

Her smile returned. “Santana, Sam, and Mr. Schue are all still there,” Rachel reassured, “they’re in good hands.”

Kurt’s lips turned upwards, but very slightly. “Good.”

This was far removed from the worst case scenario she had envisioned; there were no shoves, no slams of the door.

But this was also far removed from the best case scenario.

She felt like a stranger.

...well, she was a stranger, wasn’t she?

“I’m sorry, Kurt!” she blurted.

He leaned back, both of his eyebrows up this time. “You’re sorry?” he asked, in a tone that matched his posture and facial expression.

“Yes, I’m sorry,” she apologized, and her words tumbled out in a mad rush, “you’re my best friend, you are, and I haven’t treated you like one in years.”

Kurt blinked and breathed in before he said, “Well, a year and a half, really, not years plural-”

“-don’t make excuses for me, Kurt!” she interrupted sharply, and then clapped her hand over own mouth. She withdrew her hand, gently curled it onto her chest, and whispered, “...sorry.”

He smiled at her then, and it was warm, fond. “So,” he questioned, “I take it that you’re the repentant villain in this scene?”
Rachel became abashed. Kurt was right; she had made this into a performance. “More like the prodigal friend,” she mumbled, “not that I was expecting forgiveness and a feast.”

Kurt squinted at her. “Huh? A feast?”

“The Prodigal Son,” she meekly explained, “Quinn told me about it. It’s one of Jesus’ parables, and, oh, nevermind…”

Kurt’s eyebrows again leapt up. “You were discussing the New Testament with Quinn?” he asked, somewhat incredulously.

“Not exactly,” she fidgeted, “my whole situation reminded her of the story, and she told me about it, that’s all.”

“Huh.” He considered this for a moment, before he asked, “What does ‘prodigal’ mean?”

There was a pause of further embarrassment before Rachel answered, “‘Wastefully extravagant’.”

A tiny grin then adorned Kurt’s face.

She glared at him. “Shut up,” she groused.

“I didn’t say anything,” he innocently replied.

Rachel crossed her arms and crossly repeated, “Shut up.”

Kurt let out a little breath of laughter, then turned and walked towards the kitchen area. “Do you want anything to drink? I have some tea, black tea.” He gestured towards a teapot on the kitchen table.

“Oh. That would be lovely, thank you.” For a beat, Rachel stood awkwardly and looked about, and then decided it made the most sense take a seat on the sofa, next to where Kurt had sat just before. Shortly after she sat down, Kurt arrived with her mug of tea, and handed it to her. He then resumed his seat and took his own cup back into his hand. When he had a sip, she tentatively had one herself, to find it the perfect temperature, with the right amount of sugar and lemon.

He remembered how she took her tea when she wasn’t performing.

She had no recollection of how he took his.

More guilt for her to contend with.

Kurt spoke then, thankfully, as her own mind had gone almost completely unresponsive.

“Hey,” he said, “Rachel. Since you’re here. It’s the new year, so I’d like to apologize for leaving early when you were reinstating the glee club.”

She blinked. “Oh!” She shook her head. “I decided to forgive you when I saw you at the wedding. It was such a contrast, how happy you were then to how…not…you were, in September. I don’t completely understand why you were quite so depressed at homecoming, but it really was best for you, and the group, that you left. So, thank you for leaving, actually.”

Kurt wore an odd little smile in response to that. “You’re welcome.”

Rachel then frowned. “But, what do you mean, ‘it’s the new year’, what does that have to do with it?”
“Well,” Kurt replied, a brighter smile on his face as he set his mug down on the coffee table and leaned towards her slightly, “back in early October for Yom Kippur, Elliott made this whole thing about apologizing to everyone for ‘ways he had wronged us’ the previous year. And they were all things we’d all forgotten about, already.” He looked at Rachel with a grin the likes of which she was not sure she had seen grace his face before. “He even apologized to me for not apologizing to me last Yom Kippur. He’s ridiculous.” He then sobered a bit, and peered at Rachel. “Apparently that’s a Jewish tradition? Go around and ask forgiveness so you start the year with a clean slate?”

Her cheeks became warm. “Oh. Right,” she quietly affirmed. She’d seen her dads do that every Yom Kippur, but she had never done it herself. “I always forget to do that,” she claimed. “But I’m kind of doing it now?”

There was a pause in which Kurt seemed to see right through her. “Mm.” He closed his eyes and shrugged, and then directed his gaze towards his cup of tea, which he picked up and took a long drink from. “Well,” he stated, “I thought that that was a good idea that non-Jews ought to try out.”

“Ah. Um.” She paused. “You are forgiven,” she said sincerely, if awkwardly.

“Thank you.”

There was another uncomfortable moment.

Rachel smiled weakly. “That’s really nice,” she said, softly, “that you’re so engaged with your boyfriend’s faith.”

Something about that comment seemed to surprise him, to her confusion, but he quickly recovered. “It’s important to him, so it’s important to me.”

Silence settled into the room again, but not quite as awful as before. Rachel would have liked to let the quiet just sit there for awhile, despite the uneasiness, but she had other news that Kurt had to hear. “…there’s something you need to know,” she murmured. “I’m not the only one coming back to New York.”

He had been about to take in another sip of his tea. He stilled. “…who else is back?” he asked, in a tone that was almost valiant in its attempt to sound neutral.

“Blaine. He’s been accepted into NYU.”

She saw his eyes go very wide indeed. He set his mug back down on the table as he questioned, “What? Why? He finally figured out he wanted to be a teacher, didn’t he? He doesn’t have to go to New York to get a teaching degree, he could go to a college in Ohio, stay nearby to Dave-”

“-Blaine and Dave aren’t together, anymore,” Rachel interrupted. After a heavy pause, she continued, “He’s coming to New York to win you back.”

“What? Why? How could they have broken up, what happened?”

Rachel bit her lip and briefly looked away. She cradled her mug in her lap as she returned her gaze to Kurt and answered, “…it was Sue.”

His expression went a bit stony. “What do you mean,” he carefully intoned, “‘it was Sue’?”

She lifted her cup and took a quick drink before she said, “She made them break up.”

Kurt squinted at her. “What? How?”
She placed her mug down on the table; she needed to be unburdened by beverages for awhile. “I’m sure she did more than this,” she began, “but, what I know is, before she...was arrested, she arranged for all of Dave’s exes, who he’s all still really good friends with, too, apparently, to show up to one of their dates, as if that would matter, I doubt that would have worked on its own.” She stopped to take in a breath. She knew the angry look on Kurt’s face was for Sue, not her, but she still had to hold back the urge to babble. “Then she convinced Blaine that he and Dave were cousins.”

Befuddlement. “What?”

“I think that was a lie, but,” said Rachel, as she tucked some of her hair behind her right ear, “even if that was true, it was third cousins, and isn’t second cousins already a gray area?”

“We are not having that discussion,” Kurt flatly responded.

“Right, well,” Rachel gave a little cough, “it worked, and they broke up. From then until I last saw him, the day before I left, he didn’t seem quite right, either.”

Kurt sat back and stared forward. “So,” he muttered, “Sue’s delusions led to...damn it!” He slapped the coffee table, which made Rachel jump, and he turned his head to stare at her. “He was happy! He was fine! And you’re telling me she destroyed what he had so her creepy fantasy would come true?”

Rachel nodded, solemn. “Yes.”

He sighed. “Even after Sue’s gone, we still have to deal with her chaos.”

Rachel furrowed her brow. “She’s in prison, Kurt,” she said, “not dead.”

“A man can dream, Rachel.”

That provoked a laugh from her, despite her not being much of one for dark humor. “I thought you ought to know before he just...showed up. He hasn’t already, because his family insisted he stay in Ohio until the day before classes start. An insane thing to insist on; they obviously knew something was wrong. And I told him to leave you alone, and to leave Elliott alone.”

“Thank you.” His mouth formed a firm line. “Tell him again, please. If I directly contact him, I’m sure that will just make it worse.”

“Yes, I agree.” She pursed her lips, and added, “I wouldn’t worry about it for now, actually. He gave me this speech about ‘romantic gestures’, displays of love on days of love being ‘guaranteed success’. I’m pretty sure he won’t show up until Valentine’s Day.”

“Hmm.”

For what felt like a long time, nothing more was said.

Rachel then broke the silence. “Kurt,” she paused briefly and traced the rim of her mug with her index finger before she pressed on, “now that I’m back, I hope to reconnect with you. I want us to be close, again.”

After a moment, Kurt replied, “That would be nice.”

She wasn’t deaf; she could hear the lack of heart in his words. “I detect a ‘but’ in there. What’s wrong?”
Kurt sighed heavily. “Rachel,” he began, “even when we lived together, we hardly saw each other. I imagine that if we hadn't shared an apartment, we wouldn't have seen each other at all.”

For second, she didn't know what to say. “That's an exaggeration,” she lied.

“It was better over the summer, but,” he continued, as if she had said nothing, “after we all parted ways in October, nobody contacted me, not even in reply to my texts on holidays, except for Mercedes on Christmas. Not even from Artie, and he lives in this city. And then, in April…”

He just stopped there. Nearly a minute passed before Rachel couldn't take it any longer, and asked, “What happened in April?”

Kurt’s smile was sad. “Nothing.” He took a drink of tea and let her sit in confusion, but after he swallowed, he did explain. “That was when we were supposed to reunite in New York; you made us all promise. Four in the afternoon, on the twelfth.”

It was like a Tony had dropped hard on her head from a great height. “Oh,” she started, as her eyes went wide, “Oh, my G-d! I—”

“-forgot. Along with everyone else. Except me.” He drank deeply from his mug.

“Kurt,” she cried, “I'm so sorry!”

He shrugged in reply. “I'm sure you are, Rachel.”

She could see that he meant it, that he believed her when she said she was sorry.

He went on, “But that doesn't change the fact that we don't talk to each other. We all have phones and the internet, but we live like those things don't exist.” He sighed again. “I...I don't think we're that tight family we claim to be, Rachel.”

The room resumed its quiet. They both drank their tea.

Then, Rachel whispered, “What are you trying to say, Kurt? That we aren't friends anymore?”

To her surprise, Kurt let out a little laugh in response to that. “Rachel,” he answered, a more genuine smile on his face, “I'm pretty sure we'll always be friends.” He shrugged, smile sad again as he concluded, “What I'm trying to say is, we shouldn't make promises we both know we won't keep.”

“Kurt,” she attempted, but before anything to argue with could come to her, the door to the apartment slid open, and four people walked in, Elliott in the lead.

They were the members of Kurt’s band, Five Star Constellation. She had managed to at least take the time to visit their YouTube channel and watch a couple videos.

‘Couple’ meant ‘exactly two’: she was better than she had been before, when it came to taking interest in what other human beings besides her did, but Kurt was right to be skeptical.

She had watched one video where they competed, with a female guest, in two groups of three, Rachel vaguely recalled that the guest's name started with an ‘M’, to see how many songs one on the team could guess by the other two singing the intro. The two trying to guess being Kurt and the young man bizarrely named ‘Karen’. That had been very funny, they were both so competitive.

The other video she had watched was their one proper music video so far, ‘Home Isn’t There, It’s
Here’, in which the five work together to escape a dying planet and find a new one to call home.

She cried while she had watched that one.

“Oh!” Kurt called out, clearly delighted to see them, “hey, guys!” He stood and walked over to greet them. She awkwardly followed.

“Hey, Kurt!” Elliott called in return, “I ordered a pizza on the way over; should be here in fifteen minutes.”

She had seen Kurt smile plenty of times before, but right then was a grin the likes of which that she thought she had only seen a few times; once at the wedding, and the second time today; she couldn’t quite remember when she saw it before those times, but she must have. She could see his teeth. It was a smile that was unrestrained. She could not help but to beam with him; he was so in love! It was amazing! It was a bit sad that she failed to recall to have seen that expression on him before, when he had been with Blaine, (but that couldn’t be true, it must have happened at least once, maybe near the start of their relationship, right?), but, what mattered was that he had found happiness with someone now!

She still felt out of place there, but it was easy to feel happy in the presence of her friend’s joy.

“Oh, my romantic heart might just burst!”

“Thanks, Elliott!” said Kurt, as he gave him a hug, and Rachel was pulled back into the moment, “How do you do that? I wanted a pizza.”

Elliott smiled brilliantly, then shrugged after Kurt had released him. “I have a gift.”

“Hey!” cried the one she knew to be Karen, “I know you! You’re Rachel!”

And suddenly, there was a tension in the room. Elliott had briefly looked very happy, if surprised, to see her, but then gave a look that seemed a bit nervous towards Karen, as did Kurt and Reese. Not Minnow, though; Minnow (if her/his name was spelled like the fish) stared right at her in a manner that left Rachel slightly disconcerted.

“Um,” she said.

“Saw that shite show of yours,” he stated, with a grin.

Her face went scarlet.

“Keiran,” Elliott admonished sternly.

“What?” was his response. “Anyway,” he continued, unabated, “I’ll get right to it- I think you quitting school was the right call. The whole point of going was to get a job on Broadway, and you had got a job on Broadway! As the lead in a revival of some big classic, ‘Silly Girl’, making it a sure thing.”

“It’s called ‘Funny Girl’, actually,” Rachel corrected.

“Whichever,” he dismissed. “Point is, asking you to quit that job to go back to school to learn how to get that job was fucking mad. NADA is a scam school.”

“It’s ‘NYADA’,” she again corrected, “New York Academy for the Dramatic Arts.”

“And I go there,” said Kurt, flatly.
“And I applied there,” Elliott added, hand on his hip.

“Whichever,” the redhead dismissed again, and then looked Rachel right in the eye, “ Quitting your dream job to fuck off to Hollywood was where you were a dumb cunt.”

Rachel’s mouth dropped open in shock.

There was a beat of silence in the room.

“Irish,” Reese then drawled, “do you ever just stop?”

He looked at her and raised an eyebrow. “Why?”

Kurt sighed, put a hand on the man’s shoulder, and introduced, “Rachel, this is Keiran.” Kurt gave him a Look. “He’s like this.”

There was no move to displace the hand on his shoulder when he crossed his arms and demanded, “The fuck is that supposed to mean?”

Kurt removed his hand on his own as he stepped back and crossed his own arms. “You know exactly what it means,” he returned with a smirk.

A grin and a shake of the head. “You’re such a cunt.”

“And you’re an ass.”

He tilted his head to the side. “You know that I’m being nice right now.”

Another sigh from Kurt, this one almost fond. “I do. It’s appreciated. But you’re still an ass.”

Kurt’s grin returned, about as bright as the one that had shown for Elliott. “You’re always an ass. She deserves a warning.”

Karen looked at Rachel. “He’s always a cunt, but you must know that already.” Then he looked a bit thoughtful, and shrugged. “Then again, maybe not. Fish don’t know they’re wet.”

“ Keiran,” Elliott admonished, again.

“What?”

Elliott seemed to abandon it as a lost cause, and instead looked to Rachel and said, “...would you like to stay and eat with us, Rachel?”

Kurt nodded. “Yeah,” he agreed, and turned his gaze towards Rachel, “We’re going to watch ‘Swing Time’-”

“- ‘How Stella Got Her Groove Back’-” Reese chimed in.

“- and Wall-E!” Minnow excitedly finished.

“Drew the short straw and didn’t get to pick one,” Karen grumbled.

“We both did, Keiran,” Elliott reminded, “don’t complain. Besides, you’ll like the dancing in ‘Swing Time’, that’s why you picked it, Kurt, right?”

“Right,” Kurt affirmed. “And you were just going to make us watch ‘Die Hard’ again, anyway,” he said to his grumpy friend.
“Fuck off,” Karen retorted, “I wanted to watch ‘Captain America’.”

“Well,” Elliott moved right along, “wanna join us, Rachel?”

“I-” she began, but then paused. She had planned to spend the rest of the day with Jesse. ‘But, I do live with him, now. I’ll still see him tonight. There is no good reason why I shouldn’t stay, no good reason why I had not planned to stay in the first place. I’ll text Jesse to let him know I won’t be back until, let’s see, three movies, around 9:00 PM. You become a better friend today, Rachel Berry.’ “Of course!” she enthused, “I had no other plans. I always have time for my friends.”

Karen raised an eyebrow at her. “Do you?” he queried.

“Keiran,” Elliott practically hissed.

“What?”

“Uh…” Rachel shifted her feet for a moment, and then rallied herself to say, “Anyway! It’s very nice to finally meet you, Karen, Reese, Minnow.”

And Karen basically glared at her. “My name isn’t ‘Karen’.”

“What?” Rachel asked, helplessly.

“His name is ‘Keiran’,” declared Minnow. He/she (‘Please oh please someone say one or the other, you can’t just ask somebody,’) no longer stared directly at Rachel, and her/his eyes were now fixed at a spot just above her right shoulder. Rachel wasn’t sure whether or not that was better. “K-E-I-R-A-N,” she/he spelled. “Since you had his name wrong,” Minnow continued, “to assure that you know all of our names correctly, ‘Reece’ is R-E-E-C-E, ‘Minnow’ is M-I-N-N-O-W, ‘Elliott’ is E-L-L-I-O-T-T, and Mr. Hummel’s name is spelled K-U-R-T.”

“…thank you…” She gave Kurt a side-long glance. “‘Mr. Hummel’?”

“Just go with it,” was all he replied with.

“Ah,” was all she said, as she remained confused and a touch mortified that she’d had two of his friend’s names wrong.

“To speak of names,” Minnow went on to say, seemingly oblivious to Rachel's bewilderment, “Mr. Hummel told me that you used to accompany your signature with a gold star sticker at the end.”

“He told you that?” asked Rachel, and looked at Kurt again. When all he did was shrug, she returned her eyes to Minnow. “Yes,” she confirmed, “I did. It was very silly.”

Minnow’s face became somewhat stern, to Rachel’s further confusion. “No.”

“...no?” she asked, meekly.

Minnow executed a firm shake of the head. “It was not silly. It was a metaphor.” After a pause of significance, he/she declared, authoritatively, “Metaphors are important.”

With those words, Rachel lit right up. Never before had she met someone who understood. “I like you.”

And with those words, Minnow sparked her/his own bright light. “I like you too, Ms. Rachel!”

Rachel looked at Kurt in askance yet again. “‘Ms. Rachel’?”
“Just go with it,” was all she got, again.

“The metaphor was that you are a star,” said Minnow. It was not a question, but a statement of fact.

Rachel brightened further. “Yes!” she cried, “Exactly!”

Minnow nodded, and then stated in a tone that ought not to be questioned, “You should resume placing a gold star sticker at the end of your signature.”

Up until that point, Rachel had felt like she didn’t belong in this room. But right then, she knew that to come here had been the right decision.

“...maybe I will,” she agreed.

Chapter End Notes

Go easy on Rachel on the gender thing; she’s from Ohio.

Song in this chapter- 
So Sorry by Feist

A scene that takes place after this chapter and before the next.
“This is fucking stupid,” Keiran grumbled for the third time that day. Because it was fucking stupid; the three of them had been stuck in the apartment to await the arrival of The Cheating Cunt for hours, and it had been a hell of a task for the three of them, especially for Kurt, to get Valentine’s Day, which was on a Saturday this year, off from work. Keiran could not understand why they had had to patiently wait for the fucker; he’d wanted to corner him in the NYU cafeteria and punch the fuck out of his face while Elliott held him down, but Kurt told him ‘no’, and Elliott and him neither had any classes with him, and had somehow managed to not catch sight of him, anyway.

The reason he’d been given was that the only way to get Blaine to back off, the only way to shut down a ‘dramatic declaration of love’, was a dramatic rejection. When Keiran asked if that meant he’d get to break his jaw, he was again told ‘no’.

Kurt had a fucking speech prepared, apparently.

Keiran predicted that a speech would do exactly fuck all.

Kurt had also wanted all of his friends there as visual proof that he had no use for the Gelly Baby, but all he could get was Keiran and Elliott. Reece and Minnow hadn’t been able to get the day off from work, and Mahsuri, Brody, and Xander were all in Paris.

Without Reece, Keiran knew this ‘dramatic rejection’ would fail; she’s the only one of ‘em who's proper scary, with all her height and muscle and ‘don’t fuck with me’ aura, or whichever. Fucking Amazon.

“Shut up, Keiran,” Elliott said, half-heartedly.

Kurt, who had been in the midst of yet another silent rehearsal of his apparently magical fucking speech, whipped his head to the side to glare at him. But before he could tell Keiran off for his ‘insolence’, or whichever, there was knock at the door.

The three all looked at each other.

Then, Kurt walked to the door, Keiran and Elliott right behind, and slid it open.

As expected, there stood The Cheating Cunt, in fucking tuxedo and a fucking massive bouquet of red roses in his arms.

Keiran was utterly disgusted by the metaphorical ‘hearts in his eyes’, and his fucking cherubic
smile, and...oh, fuck.

Kurt Hummel clearly just forgot his fucking speech, fucking fuck.

And then, the fucker started to sing.

~You’re a,

One of a one!

A one of a kind...

That you only find

Once in a lifetime!~

The three of them just stared in silence, like a bunch of dumb cunts.

And then the Cunt reached forward and grabbed Kurt’s limp hand!

~They say

One man’s trash

Is another man’s treasure,

When I found you, it was all pitter-patter!~

‘Oh, fuck this, I’m not letting him ruin this song for us further; ‘Double Rainbow’ is one of Minnow’s songs, Cunt. I won’t be letting you use it to fuck with my best mate’s mind.’ Keiran thought.

“Alright, we won’t be having that,” is what Keiran said outloud.

Just to hear Keiran speak seemed enough to snap Kurt out of whichever spell had been cast, and he ripped his hand away from Blaine. As he stepped back, Elliott wrapped his left arm about Kurt’s shoulders, and Kurt leant into him.

Blaine looked surprised, like he hadn’t noticed that there were two other people there until Keiran had spoken. “Who are you?” he demanded of Keiran.

“Why should I tell you; you’re the fucking home invader,” Keiran shot back.

“So,” uttered Kurt, which grabbed everyone’s attention, “I’m trash, Blaine?”

Panic in the Cunt’s face. “No, no!” he denied, as he pressed a hand on his own chest, “I’m trash.”

“You sure fucking are,” quipped Keiran.
“Okay, seriously,” said Blaine, as he shifted the huge bouquet in his arms and glared in a manner that failed to intimidate, and not only because Keiran had just noticed that he was taller than the Cunt; very slightly, but he definitely was, “who the hell are you?”

“Okay, seriously,” Keiran sarcastically echoed, “how the fuck do you not know who I am?” He energetically gestured with his hands as he said, “I’m a member of the band that is led by your ‘treasure’, and we’re on YouTube, Twitter, Insta-, fuck, we’re fucking everywhere.” He put his hands on his hips and raised an eyebrow. “What kind of pathetic excuse of a stalker are you?”

“Stalk-ex curse me?!” He directed his angry gaze at Kurt, and cried, “Who is this crazy, crazy Irishman in our apartment, Kurt?!”

“‘Our’?!” Kurt repeated, incredulously.

“Blaine,” said Elliott, somehow calm and cool, mam could always keep his head, “I think you should leave. No one but you wants you here.”

“You!” Blaine’s madness fueled glare shifted to Elliott. “Get your hands off my future husband! After all,” he hissed, as he walked closer to try and fail to get in Elliott’s face, due to the fact that, not only was Kurt pressed against Elliott’s chest, but Elliott was about a mile above him, “what could you possibly have to offer that could satisfy all of Kurt’s needs?”

And that was when Keiran had a fantastic idea.

It was no Reece, but it was a real winner, Keiran could feel it.

“Well,” Keiran drawled, “Elliott’s got a hell of lot, trust me. But, whichever he doesn’t got,” he stepped close to Kurt and Elliott, threw his own arm around Kurt’s shoulders, and did his best to melt into the two, “I can fill in the gaps, d’ya know what I mean?”

Elliott, dependable Elliott, hardly missed a beat when he smoothly added, “Oh, yeah. He can fill in the gaps, he really can.”

Keiran was pretty sure that Kurt’s face did not match the story he and Elliott tried to sell, but, as he expected, it hardly mattered when one was in front of someone completely off their nut.

“What?!” Blaine essentially screeched, and dropped the bouquet. “I, I knew it! I knew you were bad news,” he thrust an accusatory finger at Elliott’s face, “that you would corrupt my Kurt, pure and perfect before he met you!” His manic gaze went towards Kurt. “Never fear, my love,” he cooed, “I will free you from this, from this den of sin. I will again make you mine.”

Keiran felt Kurt’s shoulders stiffen.

“No,” Kurt nearly growled, “I was never ‘yours’ to begin with. People don’t ‘belong’ to people.” Kurt suddenly stood like a soldier, back straight, chin up, jaw firm. Elliott and Keiran both released him, and stepped back. “And I’m a grown man that can make his own decisions. If I want to live in a ‘den of sin’ and have two boyfriends, I sure as hell can.” Kurt must have dealt a hell of a glare just then, because Blaine suddenly recoiled. “And it’s not as if you have any grounds to tell me what’s moral, you liar, you cheat.” There was a moment of silence, cold as a stone in winter. “Get out of my home.”

A memory struck Keiran in the back of his skull.

Blaine began to slowly retreat. When he reached the doorway, he said, “This isn’t over. I will win you back.” Then, he turned and fled.
Lost in a flashback, Keiran yelled after him, “Fuck off, you adulterating cunt! You’re no fucking father of mine!”

After a drawn out silence, Elliott whispered, “Kieran.”

Like that, the flashback was over. Keiran closed his eyes and said, “Fuck.”

But Keiran was spared, at least right then, of any required exposition, because Kurt cried out—

“Oh my GOD. What did we just do? Did we really just tell Blaine that we’re a triad?! And he believed it! He believed it, and he’s going to tell everyone we know, and we can’t just say that we made it up, oh my GOD. .”

“...and what’s wrong with that?” Elliott quietly asked, as he bent to collect the roses.

Kurt stared at him like he’d gone mad. “What’s wrong with sleeping around with two men at the same time??”

Now, Keiran had not been on the pull for awhile, for some reason he couldn’t place he just hadn’t had the drive to do it, (on the path for some carpal tunnel though, he was,) but when he had been, he had fucked two, and a lot more than two, people at the same time plenty often. “The fuck?”

Kurt waved a dismissive hand at him and stated, “It’s fine for you, but we’re from Ohio, remember?”

“‘The fuck?’

“Shut up, Keiran,” Elliott hushed. He had removed the shiny pink paper the roses had been wrapped in, and had put the flowers into a vase, and had filled the vase with water. Of course Elliott wouldn’t throw the roses out. He’ll say something like ‘It’s not the roses’ fault,’ if he’s asked to, and Kurt and Keiran would give in and let him keep them. “He’s just panicking.” Roses put on display to his satisfaction on the table next to the door, he went to Kurt, and put his hands on his shoulders, made Kurt look at him. “It’s not ‘sleeping around,’” he stated, calmly, factually, “it’s a closed, consenting, committed relationship between three people.” He tilted his head to the side. “We know a trio like that, remember?”

Kurt blinked, and said, “Oh, yeah. We do. Tham, Arman, and Matias.” He looked over at Keiran. “They’ve been together for five years, right?”

Keiran shook his head. “Eight,” he corrected.

Kurt nodded. “Yeah. Okay. That is different. And that’s what we made it sound like.” He allowed himself to be led to the sofa by Elliott. He gratefully sat down, and Elliott joined him, wrapped an arm around him, pulled Kurt to him.

A raised eyebrow from Elliott was all Keiran needed to know that he was to make them all tea, and he willingly went right to it.

“That’s right,” Elliott murmured in affirmation. “And why should you care about what a bunch of people,” he questioned, “who haven’t been very reliable, think of you?”

There was a long pause. “...you’re right,” Kurt agreed, softly.

There was a beat of complete quiet, after which Elliott said, cheekily, “I’m always right.”
Kurt groaned, while Keiran laughed and said, “Shut up, Elliott.”

Chapter End Notes

Song in this chapter-
Double Rainbow by Katy Perry
Kurt slowly slid the door closed behind him, walked to the sofa, rotated on his heel, and collapsed into it. After he had properly registered that Elliott was also seated upon the sofa, he kind of just fell over, and put his head in Elliott’s lap.

“...did Blaine show up at the diner again?” Elliott asked, quietly, as he transferred his mug of tea from his right hand to his left so that he could place his right hand on Kurt’s chest.

Kurt only groaned in response.

Keiran made a sound of disgust from his seat in the armchair by the TV. “Not even a week, and that’s twice, already.” He shifted the sketchbook in his lap and tapped his pencil on his thigh as he said, “If you really won’t let me knock out his teeth, you ought to at least get a restraining order.”

“I told you already, Keiran,” Kurt sighed, “I really don't want to get the law involved.” He shifted onto his back, clasped his hands over his belly, and stared at the ceiling. “I'm sure I can resolve this myself, somehow. I can figure out a way that will make him give up, understand it's hopeless.”

Kurt sighed again. “It's my fault he has hope, after all. When I saw him on Valentine’s Day, I had a moment where I remembered how things were...in the very beginning. When I first met him. He sang Katy Perry then, too.”

“You told me that it was love at first sight, for you,” murmured Elliott.

“It was.”

“Yeah, that's a load of shite,” Keiran muttered, as he returned to his sketch. Kurt could hear by the sounds the pencil made that he pressed the implement a bit too hard into the paper.

Elliott frowned. “You don't believe in love at first sight, Keiran? Not at all?”

Kurt raised an eyebrow at Elliott. “I'm surprised that you're at all surprised to hear that.”

Keiran grunted, and said, “I do believe in ‘love at first sight’, actually. But it's just candy floss.”

Kurt somewhat painfully strained to look at Keiran, and Elliott’s own gaze went towards the redhead. “Candy what?” they both asked, in unison.

Keiran rolled his eyes and explained, “You Americans call it ‘cotton candy’.” He closed his
sketchbook, set it aside on the floor next to him, and carefully placed his pencil and eraser on top.
“It's real, and it's sweet and lovely, but-"

“-it melts away almost immediately,” Kurt finished.

Elliott frowned a bit more.

“Exactly,” affirmed Keiran. He idly poked at his knee. “And if you try to hold on to candy floss, make it last, it eventually loses all its fluff, and just turns into this lump that's not nice at all to eat.” He shrugged. “Proper love develops over time, and it sort of gradually sinks in, soaks into you, sometimes without you noticing.”

“...so you do believe in love?” Elliott asked, expression curious.

“Yes, I feel like that for my friends. Especially the two of you. All of proper love is friendship, really.” He chewed on his lip for a moment. “There’s a lot that we call love, that’s not, d’ya know what I mean?”

“What do you call the love you have for your family, then?” asked Elliott.

“Obligation,” was the matter-of-fact response. He tilted his head and looked intently at the two of them. “If they’re people you would never in a million years spend time with willingly, for no other reason than spending time with them, how’s that love? I can buy that you care about them, maybe, but caring isn’t loving.”

Elliott squinted at him. “I don’t think I agree with you, Keiran.”

Keiran sat a little straighter. “You love your parents, Elliott. You insisted that they come up to New York some months back because you’d found this Indian restaurant you’d knew your dad would rave about. I can’t even imagine you doing that with that aunt of yours. You care about her, ’cause you care about everyone, mam, but you don’t love her.”

Elliott looked like he was about to argue some more, but Kurt had already been exhausted when he came into the apartment.

“I am not going to listen to you two have a semantics argument for the next hour, because that’s all this is,” he moaned as he turned his head to face the ceiling once more, and pressed a hand to his forehead. “All I want to do right now is listen to the ‘Les Mis’ soundtrack on full blast.”

Elliott seemed to forget the debate entirely, all attention back on Kurt. “Perhaps something not so...gloomy? How about...‘The Music Man’?”

Keiran snorted at the suggestion. “That’s got a con man as the protagonist. I’d say that’s a mite bit worse than the one about people dying in a successful revolt against a corrupt government.”

Elliott sighed and acquiesced, “It wasn't that revolution, but you’ve still got a point.” He smirked and raised an eyebrow. “What do you recommend; Riverdance?”

“Fuck off,” said Keiran with a grin. He then shrugged and offered, “I’ve got a ‘Nine Lies’ album we could yell along to. That’d be therapeutic.”

“You probably wanted to do that, anyway,” Kurt grumbled.

There was a pause. “I’ve got something lined up for tomorrow, actually, that I know will cheer you up, Broadway Boy. The five of us will be having more than dinner tomorrow.” Another pause.
“You know that bloke that wrote ‘In The Heights’? He’s got this new thing out, about the founding fathers–”

Kurt shot up and turned in his seat to stare at Keiran wide-eyed. “‘Hamilton’?” he asked, incredulously. “It only debuted Off-Broadway a few days ago! All the musical blogs are raving about it, it’s already sold out, but how do you know about it?!”

Yet another pause. Keiran seemed oddly hesitant. “Over the summer, I met this guy who said he managed a theatre. An hour after the Cunt came by and went, he, out of nowhere, texted me to say his theatre would be having this show that was going to be the next big thing, and he could get me and my friends in to see it. All five of us, he said.”

Kurt just sat there, flabbergasted.

Elliott’s frown had returned. “I remember him,” he said, “he seemed nice, and you exchanged numbers with him, but when you came back after having spent the evening with him–”

“…I said he was a terrible fuck, dull as a block of wood, seemed he’d used up all his charm in the first few minutes we had met him, and that I hoped he wouldn’t call me.”

Kurt, still flummoxed, hadn’t put it together.

“Did he want you to sleep with him before he gave you the tickets?” asked Elliott, quietly.

“Look,” Keiran said, irritably, “it doesn’t matter; point is, Kurt’s going to be seeing this musical that he clearly wants to see and wouldn’t have been able to, probably, if I didn’t know a guy.”

Kurt then did put it together. “Did you have sex you didn’t want,” he asked, face a different shade of shock, “just so I would get to see a show? Just to cheer me up?”

“I said it doesn’t matter,” Keiran angrily repeated, “and cheering you up is hardly a ‘just’, is it? It’s important.”

“Keiran,” Elliott and Kurt both murmured.

“Fuck off,” Keiran said as he pulled out his phone and began to text, presumably to finally inform Reece and Minnow that they were to go to a show the next day, and refused to hear anything else.

After he had sent his texts, he ordered Thai food.

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“Damn,” drawled Reece, as they made their way towards the exit, “I never expected to like a musical that much.”

“It was very rhythmic,” agreed Minnow, “I enjoyed that a great deal.” They resumed their aggressive chew on their pendant. The crowd in the theater was very…crowded.

“I’m the one that brought you all here,” stated Keiran, “and I can say that I’m surprised how much I liked it.” He adopted a crooked grin. “‘Immigrants! We get the job done!’” he quoted.

Kurt’s smile was bright, until he looked at Keiran, and remembered why they were there. He
sobered somewhat, and said, “Thank you, Keiran. Thank you, for...sacrificing some dignity, to give us tonight.”

Keiran cocked an eyebrow at Kurt. After a beat, he dismissively replied, “Ah, it wasn’t such a trial, really. He’s pretty enough. It was fine when he wasn’t talking.”

Kurt shook his head emphatically, and insisted, “I know you wouldn’t have done it, if not for me. Please. Don’t do it again.”

With a laugh, Keiran asked, “What if I could get you a meeting with Barbra Streisand?”

“No, Keiran,” rejected Kurt. There was not so much as a millisecond of hesitation in his response. “Not even for Barbra.”

Keiran stopped in his tracks, which meant Elliott bumped into him, and one could assume that Reece and Minnow then bumped into Elliott. (They had made it to the lobby at this point, so people could maneuver past the group.) He turned his head to regard Kurt in some surprise.

Which actually might have offended Kurt, that Keiran thought Kurt thought so little of him, if it hadn’t made him sad.

“What the hell are you two talking about?” queried Reece, as she peered at Kurt and Keiran over Elliott’s shoulder.

Before anyone got the chance to attempt to answer, a man had walked up to them and cried, “My goodness! Five Star Constellation!”

In front of Kurt was a young man that was a perfect emblem of sparkling enthusiasm.

“...hello?” Kurt asked.

“Hi!” was the spritely response, the man all smiles. He presented his hand. Kurt awkwardly accepted the hand, and shook it firmly. “I’m Behrouz,” he introduced, “Behrouz Ahmadi. Aspiring playwright, but who isn’t in this part of town, right? Big fan.” He beamed further. “Love the video you made on such a small budget for ‘Home Isn’t There, It’s Here’, very impressive.” He looked at Minnow. “Very ‘Star Trek: The Original Series’, in style.”

Minnow brightened. “That is correct!” they said, with energy.

Behrouz laughed cheerfully, and then he turned his gaze back to Kurt. “Lin Manuel Miranda’s latest piece of art,” he conversed, as if they had already been long friends, “I doubt it will stay Off-Broadway for long.” He leaned in and stated, almost conspiratorially, “I think this is going to be bigger, much, than ‘In The Heights’ ever was.”

Kurt grinned then. “Oh, I agree,” he gushed, “it positively reeks of Tonys.”

“Hmm,” Behrouz said, seemingly contemplative, “Broadway Boy’, indeed.”

Kurt squinted at him. “Excuse me?”

“Are you merely a lover of musical theatre, Kurt Hummel,” Behrouz queried as he resumed an upright posture and crossed his arms, “or have you performed onstage in that area?”

Kurt blinked. “Oh. Yes,” he confirmed, “I have.”

The young man raised an eyebrow. “Had Broadway dreams?”
“Yes,” said the whole group in unison, “he has.”

“Where is this going, Ahmadi?” asked Keiran, with suspicion.

“Nowhere, at the moment,” Behrouz replied with a shrug. He smiled again. “And, please, call me Behrouz.” His eyes took in the group, and he said, “Great meeting all of you. I think I’ve just happened on an idea.” He winked. “May you and your band continue to excel, sir!” he directed to Kurt, “Farewell and goodnight!”

“Uh,” said Kurt, “goodnight.”

Behrouz Ahmadi gave a little salute-like wave of the hand, and then turned and left.

The five just stood there for a moment, as the crowd around them continued to uncrowd the lobby.

“The fuck was that?” Keiran finally managed to ask.

Reece rolled her eyes and shrugged. “Just another New York crazy,” was her answer.

To which Minnow happily added, “But a polite and well-dressed one!”

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Kurt was dreaming.

He was in the Dalton Academy Warblers clubroom, but it was much larger than he remembered, and there was a grand piano in the now expansive empty rehearsal area.

There was Blaine, sat on the bench. He smiled brilliantly at Kurt, and began to play.

~You say
The price of my love's not a price that you're willing to pay~

He got up from the piano, but the music continued to play as he stalked towards Kurt while he sang.

His smile did not change, but as he sang on, it gradually contained more and more menace.

Blaine tilted his head, like a curious puppy.

~Why so sad?
Remember we made an arrangement when you went away~

His smile dropped, and his expression became angry.
~Now you're making me mad
Remember, despite our estrangement, I'm your man~

His smile was back, brighter than before, and he reached out, palms flat, towards Kurt, and slowly shook his head.

~You'll be back, soon you'll see
You'll remember you belong to me~

When Blaine had gotten only a few feet in front of him, Kurt began to step back in time with Blaine's every step forward.

~And when push comes to shove
I will send a fully armed battalion to remind you of my love!~

Kurt then finally turned to flee, only to find himself at the top of the Dalton staircase where he had said 'yes' to Blaine's proposal. All the way down the staircase, and in the entire visible hallway beneath it, was everyone that had been there on that fateful, infamous day.

New Directions, the Warblers, Vocal Adrenaline, and the Haverton School For The Deaf's show choir. The mob sang at Kurt, with jubilant enthusiasm.

~Da da da dat da dat da da da ya da
da da dat da ya da!
da da da dat da da da da ya da
da da dat da…~

Kurt turned again to run, and of course Blaine was there, in his face. He was taller than Kurt knew him to be, and he loomed over him, his expression vicious, and his tone full of condescension.

~You say our love is draining and you can't go on!
You'll be the one complaining when I am gone…~

They were in an empty hallway now. Kurt could see no doors along this hallway, that went forever into darkness. He yet again tried to turn away, but Blaine grabbed him by the shoulder and forced him back to face him. He wagged a finger in Kurt's face.

~And no, don't change the subject!
Cuz you're my favorite subject!~

Blaine then cupped his jaw,
~My sweet, submissive subject...~

and caressed him.

~My loyal, royal subject...~

Kurt’s skin crawled; he wished to leave his body.

~Forever~

A manacle suddenly clamped shut around Kurt’s neck. A glance behind himself revealed that it was on a chain, bolted to the floor.

~and ever~

A manacle around his right wrist, similarly attached to a chain that was bolted to the floor.

~and ever~

His left wrist.

~and ever~

His right ankle.

~and ever...~

His left ankle.

Immobilized, vulnerable, now no hope of escape, Blaine bopped him on the nose with his index finger, and then proceeded to slowly walk around him. His fingertips trailed across Kurt’s chest,
along his shoulders.

~You'll be back  
Like before  
I will fight the fight and win the war  
For your love, for your praise  
And I'll love you till my dying days!~

Blaine was in front of Kurt again, with a manic grin.

~When you're gone, I'll go mad!  
So don't throw away this thing we had  
Cuz when push comes to shove  
I will kill your friends and family...~

Out of nowhere, the members of Five Star Constellation appeared, along with Burt, Carole...and Finn.

They stood still, unaware, helpless, as Blaine went up to them with a knife.

One by one, he slashed their throats, and down they fell. Dead.

Blaine turned to face Kurt, a broad grin on his features.

~To remind you of my love!  
Da da da dat da dat da da da da ya da  
Da da dat dat da ya da!  
Da da da dat da dat da da da da ya da  
Da da dat—  
Everybody!~

Everyone that had been at the proposal was back, but now they all wore red blazers. Arms around shoulders, they formed a chorus line, and kick-stepped in the pool of blood, so much blood, like from a thousand dead, which caused it to splatter everywhere.

~Da da da dat da dat da da da da ya da  
Da da dat dat da ya da!~

Kurt fought against his bonds as they sang.

The chains broke and disappeared, along with the manacles.
Again, he turned around, and again, he ran.

This time, he got away, and the voices slowly faded to nothing behind him.

~Da da da dat da dat da da da da ya da da da da
Dat dat da ya da...~

He woke, and was up and out of bed like a shot. He nearly ripped his curtain from its rings as he pulled it aside.

“Elliott!” he shouted, “Keiran!”

He heard muffled grunts behind their respective curtains, before Keiran emerged first.

“The fuck happened?” he asked, concern clear.

Kurt didn’t exactly burst into tears.

He only nearly tackled Keiran and held him tight as he shook slightly. Tears slowly slid down his cheeks while Keiran wrapped his own arms around him.

“Kurt?” he heard Elliott mumble, before he felt Elliott join in the embrace.

Kurt said nothing. For several long seconds, no one said anything.

“The fuck happened?” Keiran repeated, in a quiet murmur.

Kurt didn’t answer.

Instead, he stated, with firm resolve, “I know what to do.”

After a pause, Keiran and Elliott both asked, “What?”

“Let go of me,” he said as he shrugged them off, and they obligingly stepped away, despite the fact that they were clearly confused, “I need to call Mahsuri. She has the money to persuade the Williamsburg Music Hall to let Five Star Constellation hold a concert there tomorrow. Well, technically today.”

“You can’t call her this late,” Elliott protested, “it has to be something like 3:00 AM.”

“3:47, when I glanced at my clock,” Keiran said, and continued in a flat tone, “It’s Mahsuri on a Friday night. She’s definitely awake.” His voice then sounded curious when he inquired, “Why are we having a concert, Kurt?”

Phone in hand, he located and selected Mahsuri on his contacts list, and answered as the phone dialed and connected, “It’ll be called, ‘Ex Marks The Spot’.”

Sleepy Elliott did not understand, but Keiran flashed a grin.

“Fuck yes.”

Chapter End Notes
Trigger Warning- non consensual bondage, depictions of violence, and major character death in a dream sequence.

Song in chapter-
You’ll Be Back from the musical ‘Hamilton’. Which debuted off-Broadway in February of 2015!
Kurt always had nerves before a performance, but, on this evening, he felt as tense and tight as the cables that held up a suspension bridge.

Right there, at a table near center of the audience space, sat Blaine.

...along with three others.

Rachel, Santana, and Brittany.

Kurt got over his surprise rather quickly, because, of course Blaine recruited backup.

And Elliott had been worried that Blaine wouldn’t even show.

Blaine looked angry, Rachel looked confused, Santana looked suspicious, and Brittany…

...looked cheerful?

Never mind.

The show must begin.

“Hello, Stars!” Kurt called out to the gathered crowd, “Welcome to another Five Star Constellation performance! I have to say, it’s a real thrill to see so many familiar faces when this was so spontaneous, Twitter is amazing.”

“Shut up and sing! Get on with it!”

Ah, of course. At every single show since the days of Pamela Lansbury, always there to heckle.

“Fuck off, Brian!” Keiran yelled back at him, as always. To cheers from the audience, as that was part of the show, by this point.

“I’m also delighted to see so many Stars,” Kurt pressed on, “despite having been informed that this show, having a bit of a message, will be about half covers.”

“Screw your message, just sing already!”

“Fuck off, Brian!”

More cheers.

To see that now all four, not just Rachel, looked very confused, bolstered Kurt. “Yes,” he said with a smile, “let’s start the concert that I’m calling, Ex Marks The Spot.”
And with that cue, they began. Kurt sang,

~So you quote love unquote me~

and then Elliott,

~Well, stranger things have come to be~

and then Keiran had his turn,

~but let’s agree to disagree~

and then, all five of them, together,

~Cause I don’t
Believe you
I don’t
Believe you~

The quartet’s looks of confusion were gone. Blaine and Santana were angry, Rachel shocked, as if she had not expected an act titled ‘Ex Marks The Spot’ to be one long diss track, and Brittany….appeared to really enjoy the performance in front of her. So much that Santana nudged her with her elbow and glared at her, but to no avail.

Seemed one could always count on Brittany to be the odd one out.

After ‘I Don’t Believe You’ by the Magnetic Fields, they launched into ‘Home Isn’t There, It’s Here’. After that came Green Day’s ‘You Lied’, then Five Star Constellation’s own ‘I Thought I Was Happy’. What followed that was to be a duet with Reece of Lauryn Hill’s ‘I Used To Love Him’.

“Sorry, Stars,” Kurt apologized, “but I may be too white for this song-”

“-cracker, for the last damn time, you’re fine!” Reece interrupted. “What matters is emotion, and you’ve got it, Kingly, let’s do it.”

Kurt flushed, but smiled as he looked over his shoulder at Reece. “Thank you,” he said, before he nodded to signal the start, the other three to first sing the back-up vocals.
~Now I don’t
I used to
Lo-o-ve him
Now I don’t~

Kurt, by this time, had nearly forgotten the whole purpose of the show they were putting on; he was just performing with his band. His friends. He looked at Elliott on his left, Keiran on his right, and was filled with warmth. Love.

As the last notes of the song faded away, Kurt grinned at the audience and announced, “Time for a Minnow Moment!”

He, Keiran, and Elliott left the stage, and Reece got out from behind her drum set to the front of the stage in order to dance to Minnow’s music.

The three arrived at the bar. Immediately after they had gotten their drinks (tequila for Elliott, passion fruit martini for Kurt, whiskey for Keiran), Rachel and Santana appeared.

“What is this, Kurt?” Rachel asked, expression mildly frenzied, “What are you doing?”

“I think the short version is, ‘telling Blaine to fuck off’, ” quipped Keiran. He then took a shot of whiskey, and gestured to the bartender for another.

“She didn’t ask you, Scotsman,” Santana drawled, arms crossed.

His head snapped up, and he stared at her. “The fuck?”

She twitched an eyebrow at him. “English, whatever.”

Kurt grimaced.

Keiran’s eyes went wide. “The fuck?! ”

“I feel that Keiran put it pretty well, actually,” Kurt quickly interceded. He looked at Keiran and smiled. “He’s always good at putting things...succinctly.”

This worked to cool Keiran, who smirked a little towards Kurt as he said, “Thank you.”

Kurt’s smile went a little warm. “You’re welcome,” stated Kurt, in a somewhat superior tone.

Keiran’s own smile did not leave as he silently mouthed the word ‘cunt’.

“Oh, we’re hearing the message, Kurt,” said Rachel, which pulled them both out of that little ‘moment’, “we just don’t understand why you had to go ahead and share that message with hundreds of people!”

Elliott had just finished his one shot of tequila. He squinted at Rachel, leaned back slightly, and crossed his arms. “Really?” he asked, somewhat incredulously, “Are you being real right now? The two of you are telling us not to sing out our feelings in public?”
“We’re not ‘singing our feelings’” Keiran rejected, “We’re singing that we’re pissed off.”

Elliot gave him a flat look. “‘Pissed off’ is a feeling, Keiran.”

Kurt ignored their banter and instead replied to Rachel and Santana, “Have both of you forgotten? Singing about how we feel where everyone can hear is kind of a glee club tradition.”

Santana pursed her lips, and retorted, “Not while making money off of it, penguin.”

Elliot raised an eyebrow. “Did Spotlight not pay you?” he questioned.

Santana closed her eyes, shook her head, and sputtered for a moment before she protested, “That was different!”

“Uh huh,” was all Elliot responded with.

Keiran took his second shot, did not order a third, and asked Kurt, “The fuck are these friends of yours?”

“I don’t know.” Kurt shrugged, and then returned his gaze to Rachel and Santana. “Where’s Blaine? Could he not speak for himself?”

“He ran into the bathroom,” Rachel quietly answered.

“To have an angry shite?” asked Keiran, facetiously.

Santana glared at him. “To cry, you ass!”

“Hey!” Keiran objected, and pointed at Kurt. “Only he gets to call me that!”

“You know, that reminds me,” said Santana, with false off-handedness, “There is no possible way that you are in a scandalous threeway with these two.” She jerked her chin towards Keiran. “Especially not the Irish drunk.”

“The fuck?”

Kurt tilted his head to the side. “And why,” he inquired, “is it ‘not possible’, Santana?”

“Because you would have told me!” Rachel interjected. The look on her face was the one of someone betrayed as she argued, “I’ve been spending so much time with all of you for two months! I would have noticed!” She closed her eyes, took in a breath, and looked Kurt right in the eye while she concluded, “And because you are more moral than that.”

Kurt straightened his posture as his brows lifted. “Excuse me?”

“But mainly,” slid in Santana, “because you of all people managing to convince two attractive men to sleep with you at the same time really stretches credibility. I never even bought the idea of Elliot on his own dating you. You’re high maintenance, and you look like a turtle.”

Rachel’s mouth dropped open, and she stared at Santana in disbelief.

Elliot’s arms dropped to his sides, and his eyes about popped out of his head. “What?!”

“Now, listen here, Ohio!” Keiran barked, clearly furious. He pointed at Kurt with his index finger. “He’s gorgeous.” And then at himself with his thumb. “I’m the ugly one!”
Elliott and Kurt both whipped their heads towards Keiran in surprise.

“Keiran,” Kurt practically gasped.

Elliott shook his head and looked again at Santana. “And maybe we like ‘maintaining’ him.”

“Yeah,” agreed Keiran, “expert mechanics, we are.”

With a derisive smile, Santana snarked, “Oh, I’m sure.”

~Move your dead bones, bones, bones!

Move your dead bones, bones, bones!

Come on boys

Reanimate your feet!~

Kurt, Elliott, and Keiran all blinked and looked towards Minnow.

“That’s the cue,” stated Kurt, “Minnow Moment over.”

Elliott commented, “They made a new one.”

“What kind of name is ‘Minnow’?” asked Santana. She peered at Keiran. “And is your name really ‘Karen’?”


“What?”


With not another word, the three made their way back onstage. As they approached, Kurt saw that a pink-haired little pixie of a girl in a tank top and jeans, covered in tattoos, was by the stage, engaged in conversation with Reece. As they walked up the steps, Kurt thought he spotted her press a piece of paper into Reece’s hand before she backed away from the stage and presumably resumed her seat.

“Play ‘Favorite Little Fish’!” shouted Brian the moment they were back in their places.

“Fuck off, Brian!” Keiran shouted back. Laughter from the crowd.

Kurt rolled his eyes.

Elliott began the opening riff for the next song.

‘...that’s not ‘Learning To Love Goodbye’...’ thought Kurt. He frowned at Elliott. Tried to place the song. He recognized the riff, but it wasn’t anything he had in his iTunes. Keiran clearly had caught on, and had started to play what sounded like the appropriate bass notes.

Elliott began to sing.
~Don’t you be nervous, baby

I didn’t come to bring you down~

Kurt’s eyes went wide. He stared at Elliott. ‘That’s not…’ He noted Elliott’s puckish, flirty grin. ‘Oh my god, it is.’

Minnow and Reece still didn’t know what song was being played, it seemed, but they were adaptive, and joined in. Minnow did look very upset, however.

Keiran then sang, with a lascivious grin,

~This is so natural, baby

Just let my love turn you around!~

Kurt’s eyes went to the audience. And he saw the almost appalled expressions of Blaine, Santana, and Rachel.

Kurt grinned.

He sang his part of the first verse.

~This twisted love affair

Could really take us somewhere!~

Then the three of them sing-shouted the chorus.

~J’aime faire l’amour sur tout a trois!
J’aime faire l’amour sur tout a trois!~

This was when the audience started to scream. ...the audience included Brittany.

Kurt thought he heard Brian bizarrely yell, “I fucking knew it!”

Kurt revelled in the looks on Blaine’s, Santana’s, and Rachel’s faces, and sang his portion of the second verse with gusto-
~I have to laugh out loud

When you say three’s a crowd!~

And even more so when he sang the line that followed the bridge-

~Don’t think that I’m uncouth

I only speak the truth!~

After the final repeat of the chorus, Elliott immediately went into the opening chords of ‘Learning To Love Goodbye’, and they all followed his lead and returned to the setlist like nothing had changed. ‘Learning To Love Goodbye’, a rock’n’roll cover of N’Sync’s ‘Bye Bye Bye’, their own ‘Isolated, Suffocated’, Cake’s version of ‘I Will Survive’, their own ‘Never Bean’, and then, the final song, the last punch.

‘I Wish I Never Met You’ by Sam Sparro.

This was a solo, to be sung by Kurt alone.

~They say it’s insane, when

You think somebody’s gonna change, when

They won’t~

Kurt was nearly overwhelmed by melancholy as he sang. He didn’t regret having organized this concert, not one bit.

~A lonely road to nowhere

That’s all we are~

But when he saw Blaine’s face, so heartbroken, he could not help but feel some empathy for him.

~Nobody’s gonna save you

And I know better than to blame you alone~
Kurt did not believe he would ever hate anyone in all his life more than he hated Sue. It was her fault Blaine was here, it was her fault Blaine was so deranged that Kurt had to go to these extreme lengths to make Blaine give up.

~But love's gonna trick you
Fuck with your ticker

Take it down like a brick that's tied to you
Pulling you down
Watch me drown~

It was Sue’s fault that Kurt had to shatter Blaine’s heart.

~I wish I never met you
That’s how much I regret you~

With that, their concert was over.

“Thank you so much, everyone,” Kurt said to the audience, “To anyone new that enjoyed our original songs, we are available for download on iTunes, and we’ll be selling CDs at a table by the bar in a few minutes if you’re old school like that. We’re all over social media as Five Star Constellation if you want to follow us.” He smiled, and a genuine glow warmed him inside. “As always, we are Five Star Constellation, and all of you, our fans, are Stars with us.” In reliable response, the crowd cheered. He loved their fans.

The curtain fell. They had to now quickly break their set down, clear it out; thanks to Mahsuri they had been able to have as long of a show as they wanted, but this was still a bar that needed entertainment all night, and the stage had to be empty as fast as it could be made to be so that the punk band that was to follow them, Poison Octopus, could move in and begin their own set in half an hour.

They’d hardly started when one Mahsuri Mahawangsa suddenly ducked around the curtain and called out, “Hey!”

“Mahsuri!” Kurt exclaimed, “Thank you so much for-”

“-yeah, yeah, no problem,” she dismissed before she went on to say, “I’m just popping in to say, ‘I’m just popping in to say, before you get the chance to skee-daddle, thank god, the three of you finally figured it out.”

Kurt, Keiran, and Elliott briefly glanced at each other.

“How huh?” Kurt asked.

“Yes,” she replied, “I could see it. Everyone could see it, god knows how none of you three did. I didn’t say anything, because I felt you ought to figure it out on your own.” She pursed her lips, crossed her arms, and cocked her hip. “How no-one else in all this time ever said anything is
Memories of many people who said what had sounded like very strange things flashed across Kurt’s mind. “Huh.”

“But, wait,” Mahsuri pointed her left index finger at the ceiling, and stated, “I should ask.” She gave them all a very serious look. “You three literally ‘putting it all together’ is a recent development, right? You haven’t been a secret poly trio for months?”

After a heavy pause, Elliott attempted, “We weren’t a secret trio, no-”

“DAMN IT!” hollered Reece, and made Kurt, Elliott, and Keiran jump in surprise.

They started again when Mahsuri cheered, “Ha! You owe me a dance lesson, Reece!”

The three looked at each other in bewilderment again.

“What?” asked Keiran.

Mahsuri explained, “She thought you were all hiding it for some reason, and I told her that all three of you keeping that from me was impossible.” She put her left hand on her hip. “Especially for Keiran.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Keiran asked, indignantly.

She raised an eyebrow at him. “You know exactly what it means, baby.” She then shrugged, and continued, “Anyway, speaking of newly formed trios, Brody realized he was bisexual and in love with Xander while we were in Paris. And, fortunately, the feelings were mutual! So the three of us have been having a lot of fun this past week.”

There was a beat of silence while Reece, Elliott, Keiran, and Kurt all just stared at Mahsuri.

“What?!” all four exclaimed.

“Why didn’t you tell me?!” Keiran demanded.

With an impatient look, she answered, “Like I just said, Keiran, we’ve been busy.” Elbows at her sides, she spread out her hands in a gesture meant to placate. “And I’m telling you now, aren’t I?”

Keiran protested, “Yeah, but-”

Mahsuri cut him off, “Message delivered, gotta run. Since you’ve already finished setting things away, I’ll tell Jason and Chad that all they have to do is load your things in the van for you.”

The four looked around to see it was true; Minnow had somehow taken care of all of it themselves while they had been distracted by Mahsuri.

She gave a little wave and declared, “Bye, babies!” before she turned and disappeared behind the curtain as fast as she’d come.

“...bye,” the four said weakly.

“I volunteer for CD duty,” said Minnow, as if nothing that had just transpired had happened, and left.

The four awkwardly stood there, and were just quiet, for a few moments, before Reece finally said,
“You three can head to the dressing room and get changed; I’ll wait here for Jason and Chad, make sure they handle everything right.”

Elliott, Keiran, and Kurt all looked at each other, shrugged, and made their way to the curtained dressing area to change.

A bare second after they are all in the dressing area, before they had even started to remove any clothing, someone again pulled aside a curtain and let themselves inside. It was Brittany.

“Hi, Kurt!” she chirped.

“Another Ohioan?” asked Keiran in a tired tone. His tone then took on the notes of suspicion. “Why are you smiling?”

She frowned at him, clearly confused. “Because I’m happy for Kurt. Why else?”

Keiran looked at Kurt and inquired, “So you do have some proper friends from Bean Town?”

Brittany shook her head. “Oh, we’re not friends,” she denied. She seemed to pause in thought, and then added, “but we’re not not friends, like, we’re not enemies. We always liked each other.” She smiled again. “We made out once.”

Kurt turned red while Elliott and Keiran glanced at each other and then stared at Brittany to ask, in unison, “Really?”

Brittany nodded. “Yeah,” she confirmed, matter-of-factly. “He was still pretending he was straight.” She shrugged. “He wasn’t very good at it.”

Kurt turned even redder while Keiran and Elliott both grinned and asked, in unison, “Oh, yeah?”

Kurt closed his eyes in an expression of pain. “Can we move on, please?”

“Oh, right.” Brittany grinned brightly. “It looks like your band is doing really well. It’s more rock than I thought you would do, so it’s really good.”

Kurt blinked at her. “...thanks.”

“Now,” she began, with purpose, and pressed her fingertips above her chest, “Rachel and Santana didn’t believe the poly emory thing, but I knew it was true right away, because you’re really needy, and should totally be with two people.” She nodded with some kind of authority, like a hypothesis of hers had been verified in her latest test. “It makes perfect sense.”

The three men glanced at each other yet again that evening.

“...right…” said Keiran.

“And the second I saw you all together,” she continued, “it was really obvious.”

Kurt raised an eyebrow. “It was?”

“Definitely,” she asserted. She slightly tilted her head off to one side. “I was surprised that you could keep your hands off of each other.”

After a beat, Elliott said, “Well, we’re very professional.”

Brittany smiled again. “It’s really impressive.”
Kurt blinked again, a touch more rapidly, and managed, “Thank you, Brittany.”

“You’re welcome!” was the spirtely response. She practically sparkled when she went on to say, “You three should get married. I mean, you can’t really, it’s not legal, but I think there are these people who worship the moon or something that do poly emory marriage, so you can at least get fake married.”

Another beat of silence in which the trio just stared at her, until Elliott finally said, “...okay.”

“I should go, now.” She leaned forward and said, “I’m gonna go buy a CD before we leave, not because I want a CD, CDs are a dead media platform, but because your robot is selling them, and I have to meet them!” She stood straight, turned on her heel, and ducked under the curtain with a “Bye, Kurt!”

“...bye, Brittany,” murmured a slightly dazed Kurt.

“The fuck was that?” demanded Keiran.

Kurt shrugged. “That was Brittany.”

Elliott frowned, and asked, “Was she talking about Mormons, or Wiccans, with the moon thing?”

Keiran squinted at Elliott. “Do Wiccans do plural marriage?”

It was Elliott’s turn to shrug helplessly. “Maybe?”

“I think she may have been referencing the Moonies...” supposed Kurt.

“The what? ” asked Keiran, but he quickly pushed that aside to question, “Did she just call Minnow a robot?”

Kurt sighed. “With Brittany, it’s best not to spend too much time trying to figure her out.” He adopted a ‘what can you do’ expression. “But she’s mostly a nice person, so...”

Elliott nodded and quietly commented, “She was very sweet to me, at the wedding.”

“Whichever,” dismissed Keiran, and asked “the fuck was that about ‘needy’?”

Elliott’s eyebrows lifted. “Yeah,” he agreed, and gave Kurt a serious look. “You’re the most independent person I’ve ever met.”

“Maybe she meant, ‘needs attention’,;” speculated Keiran, “'cause that’s definitely true.”

To which Kurt defensively asked, “Excuse me?”

“You started a band, Kurt,” said Elliott, flatly, as he finally took off his vest.

‘Right, we’re here to change out of our sweaty clothes.’ Kurt sighed and took a seat in a nearby chair, began to tug at his shoelaces. “Yeah, okay. I suppose I am a seeker of attention.”

For the third time that evening, but this time with something that approached aggression, yet another person shoved aside the curtains and barged in.

This time, it was Blaine.

“Fuck sake!” exclaimed Keiran, “we need security.” He grinned. “I know a guy. Estonian, burly,
about eight feet tall.”

Elliott smiled. “Mihkel?” His smile turned salacious. “The one that liked it rough?”

Keiran’s own grin became roguish. “Fuck yeah, he did. Sore for days, and worth it.”

Blaine’s eyes about bugged out of his head. His voice was loud as he gaped at Kurt and asked, “You’re screwing eight foot tall Estonians, too?”

Kurt abandoned his task, stood up, and walked over to Blaine. He would not remain seated for this. “Learn to listen Blaine,” he about deadpanned, “I haven’t met him, yet.”

Elliott and Keiran both let out huffs of laughter at that.

Keiran made sure that he was in Blaine’s line of sight, made eye contact, smirked, and slowly pulled off his shirt. Elliott grinned, and followed his lead. He winked at Blaine, and began to unbutton his own shirt.

Blaine’s gaze was thus stolen away from Kurt’s face for several moments as skin was exposed, until he shut his eyes tight and shook his head, then glared at Kurt and demanded to know, “Why are they disrobing?”

“This is a changing room, Blaine,” was the flat response, “They’re changing clothes.”

“It’s a needed thing,” Elliott said casually, “after rocking hard.”

“Yeah,” Keiran agreed amicably, “all that adrenaline; you get all sweaty and disgusting.” He bent over to remove his shoes.

The only thing Keiran ever did after a show was change his shirt, and only because everyone else had insisted he did.

Kurt resisted the urge to roll his eyes at the show Keiran clearly intended to perform, that Elliott would apparently copy.

“Damn right, you’re disgusting!” Blaine shouted. His eyes were a bit wild. “My God, Kurt,” he cried, “to think you spend your time with men that talk like this, act like this!” He puffed his chest. “I’ll have no part of it!”

“Methinks the lady doth protest too much,” murmured Elliott, as he kicked off his boots.

“When she need not protest at all,” Keiran quipped, as he unzipped his jeans.

Elliott barked out a laugh in response, and took off his leather pants.

Kurt raised an eyebrow at his ex. “I’d like to get changed, too, Blaine,” he said, “but I’m not comfortable getting nearly naked in front of you.”

Kurt had more to say, but had to wait. Blaine was again distracted by the bare skin around him. Elliott and Keiran simply stood there for a couple beats, and then, finally, began to put clothes on.

When Blaine again looked at Kurt, Kurt asked, “What do you want, Blaine?”

“What do I want?” He shook his head in seeming disbelief. “You humiliated me in public, Kurt! In front of our friends. Well,” he said, with a lift of his chin, “in front of my friends.”
“Huh.” Kurt tilted his head to the side. He remembered, then, that one time, years ago, when Blaine had accused Kurt of cheating in front of the entire glee club. For something Blaine would later do himself and insist was innocent. “I wonder how that feels.”

“What?” Blaine asked, somehow confused.


“I came here,” Blaine explained, body coiled with tension, “I came here, to tell you that I will never forgive you for this, not in a million years.”

Kurt looked Blaine dead in the eye, and told him,

“Good.”

Blaine blinked, leaned away, was clearly taken aback. “What?”

Kurt shook his head, tired. “I honestly don’t understand how you didn’t get the message, Blaine.” His next sentence, he enunciated slowly. “I. Don’t. Want. You.”

Blaine said nothing. He sort of...deflated. As if he didn’t expect this response at all, even after about an hour of ‘You Hurt Me, I Don’t Love You Anymore’.

It may have been true that Blaine could be somewhat...unperceptive, at times.

But Kurt didn’t think he could be this blind and deaf to clear communication.

Kurt sighed. Deeply. “Blaine…” He closed his eyes for a moment, and then opened them to deliver a very intent look at Blaine. “Sue manipulated and lied to you, Blaine. You never had the slightest chance of winning me back. I’ve moved on completely. You’re miles behind me.”

And Blaine’s face...changed. Like reality had finally, finally, reached him. His eyes began to well up with tears. “Kurt…” he whispered.

Kurt’s words were firm, but quiet. “Go, Blaine.”

Blaine looked at the floor. Turned around. And slowly walked away.

For a long moment, the room was silent.

Then Kurt fainted.

He came to seconds later.

“Kurt, Kurt!” Elliott cried. He kneeled by left Kurt’s side, and his hands cradled Kurt’s face.

Keiran knelt at Kurt’s right. “Mother Mary,” he said as he shook his head. “Kurt, if you say you regret having done that, I’m going to fucking punch you.”

“No, no,” Kurt assured, while he brushed Elliott’s hands away and sat up. He smiled. “I’ve never regretted anything less in all my life.”

Elliott smiled, too, and he nodded. “A massive weight was lifted off your shoulders-”

“-and you forgot what standing was,” finished Keiran with sudden comprehension.
“Yes,” Kurt agreed, and laughed softly. “Yes.”

Keiran looked back towards the curtains, then back at Kurt. “How about we undress you, just in case the Cunt comes back?”

Kurt shook his head. “No, thank you.” He indicated he wanted space to get back up, and he was given it. He stood, and brushed himself off, as did Elliott and Keiran. “...I can take care of myself.”

Elliott smiled even more. “Yeah, you can.”

Keiran grinned, and nodded. “Nice, yeah.”

“I feel good,” said Kurt, because he did, all the way down to his bones. “I feel good, because…”

He grinned with a bit of mischief. “Because I don’t care.”

Elliott let out a laugh, and Keiran a groan, because they knew to what he referred to. They had only watched the movie a few nights ago.

Kurt burst into song.

~They say I’m crazy, got no sense
But I don’t care!
They may or may not mean offense
But I don’t care!
You see, I’m sort of independent
I am my own superintendent
And my star is on the ascendent…
That’s why I don’t care!~

He right away pulled them both into a swing, first with Elliott, then with Keiran. Keiran may have groaned, but he was always down to dance.

The three danced together, traded partners back and forth, Elliott and Keiran together too.

~Don't try to rearrange me!
There's nothing can change me!
'Cause I!
Do-on't!
Care!~
Chapter End Notes

Bonus scene where Minnow meets Brittany

Songs in this chapter-

I Don’t Believe You by The Magnetic Fields
I Used To Love Him by Lauryn Hill, featuring Mary J. Blige
Example for the type of music Minnow played, but they played their own composition- Virus by M4SONIC
Move Your Dead Bones from Re-Animator, a gory horror movie based on H. P. Lovecraft’s ‘Herbert West– Reanimator’. I haven’t seen it, and I’m not sure how I even got this song I’ve had for years. Something makes me want to say I got it off of Limewire, remember Limewire? You’d search for a song, and along with what you were actually looking for, three or something other songs that share one word with the title or something come up in the results. Anyway, it’s sort of a zombie flick crossed over with Frankenstein.
The French Song by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts
I Wish I Never Met You by Sam Sparro
I Don’t Care from In The Good Old Summertime

Full playlist, with the exceptions of the Five Star Constellation original numbers, of course, and Dr. Reanimator-

Ex Marks The Spot
March 1st was on a Sunday, and it was Minnow’s birthday. Never had Kurt known a birthday where there wouldn’t be cake because the birthday person genuinely didn’t like cake. Instead, the sweet treat would be a few flavors of sorbet, and the candle they would blow out was a large one that would stand on its own, and was shaped like a star.

But the time for that was little ways off. They had to wait for Minnow’s brother, Ryota, to arrive, before they could get things started properly.

Kurt had important news to share, that he felt should wait until Ryota turned up, so he had begun to fidget a bit. But only a bit, and no one noticed, distracted as they all were by Reece as she excitedly shared pictures from her date last night with that pink-haired short girl Kurt had seen at their ‘Ex Marks The Spot’ gig on February 21st.

“She’s name is Aimee Archer,” Reece all but squealed, “look how cute she is!” She grinned, and asked the group, “Wanna know why most of her tattoos are hearts and cupids and all that?”

“It did not occur to me to question it,” replied Minnow, “but I am interested to hear the story, if there is one.”

Reece flicked her finger to show the next photo on her phone, this one a close up of one of the more detailed and elaborate cupid tattoos, and she actually bounced on her feet, a little. “‘Aimee’ means ‘love’, ” Reece explained, with pleasure.

“Oh!” said Minnow, eyes wide. “Love Archer! Cupid shoots arrows that make you fall in love, so he’s a love archer! That’s very clever!” Minnow smiled brightly. “I like Aimee!”

Reece laughed with clear delight at that.

There was a knock at the door. Minnow was there like a shot to answer it. They slid the door open.

And, yes, there was their brother, a large messenger bag at his side, simple frameless glasses with rectangular lenses, white button down dress shirt, black trousers, and black dress shoes, just as shiny as Minnow’s.

It was now Minnow that bounced with excitement, and their hands fluttered in front of them. “Ryota!”

He grinned broadly. “Minori! Happy birthday!”

Minnow, in way of response, splayed their hands out in a gesture like jazz hands and again cried, “Ryota!”

Ryota laughed good naturally. “Minori.” He then looked about at the rest in the room, until his eyes rested on the only person he had not met before. “You must be Kurt Hummel,” he said, as he stepped into the apartment. Elliott shut the door before Ryota could reach behind to attempt that himself, and he briefly nodded at Elliott in thanks, then returned his gaze to Kurt and approached...
him, offered his hand to shake. “Minori has told me a lot about you. I’m Ryota. I am very glad to be meeting you.”

Kurt took the proffered hand and shook it. “Yeah, I’m Kurt. Minnow’s told me a bit about you, too, and it’s also great to finally see you.”

They smiled at each other, and the handshake ended with a final mutual firm but friendly shake.

Kurt put his hands on his hips and took in a breath. Time for the announcement. “Now that everyone’s here,” he began, “I would like to share some news, before we get the party started.” He looked at Minnow. “If that’s okay?”

Minnow seemed to consider before they inquired, “Is it good news that will be like a present?”

Kurt let out a tiny laugh. “Yes,” he answered.

Minnow grinned. “I then approve your sharing of this news, Mr. Hummel,” they declared.

Kurt inclined his head with a smile. “Alright, then. Everyone,” he addressed the room, “I don’t know how this happened, exactly, but…Five Star Constellation made a lot of money in February.”

Elliott, after a short pause, leaned forward, and asked the question everyone clearly had on their minds. “How much is a lot?”

“Oh,” Kurt looked to the ceiling and tilted his head a touch to the side. “…we sold just over ten thousand albums on iTunes this month.”

Looks of shock throughout the room.

Well, almost. Minnow’s appearance would be more appropriately described as ‘mildly surprised’.

“What?” was the exclamation from Elliott, Keiran, and Reece. Ryota said nothing, but his own look of shock gradually turned into one of delight.

“I found out this morning when I checked our account, like I do at the beginning of every week,” Kurt elaborated, and then explained to Ryota, “We won’t know the exact numbers until we get the detailed monthly report nine days from now, this is just the weekly trending report of estimated sales, but, um,” he shrugged, “over ten thousand.”

Reece crossed her arms, and stated, “Must have been how the three of you went about coming out, you drama queens.”

‘Oh, crap,’ thought Kurt, and he could see the same thought was on Keiran and Elliott’s minds. They had avoided the topic so far. He did his best to be vague when people came up to him with questions and/or congratulations. The conversation he had with Adam on Tuesday was the most awkward. He didn’t know what the other two did.

But the three of them were in this situation now, one that Kurt had not chosen to put himself into, but one that he couldn’t be properly mad about, because he suspected that the lie had been a necessary extra ingredient to get the message through to Blaine that he and him were Over. ‘And Santana thinking it was impossible for me to have two boyfriends because I’m too annoying and unattractive really ticked me off, so seeing her jaw about drop to the floor when we sang The French Song felt good.’

But now that they had done that in an extremely public way, they couldn’t take it back. They didn’t
know what to do about it, and had deliberately Not Talked About It. They had all had moments
where they had looked like they were about to Bring It Up, and then said nothing, or talked about
the weather or something else just as banal.

‘We’re going to have to do something, we have to talk about it,’ thought Kurt, ‘but what can we
do? What can we say?’

Thankfully, none of them had to say anything just then, because Minnow said, “That certainly must
have been a contributing factor, based on the messages we have been receiving via social media for
the past week, not all of it positive.” They stood a bit straighter. “However,” they said, “that is not
the main cause. I at least do not believe it is.”

With a raised eyebrow, Reece asked, “Then what is, Minnow?”

And Minnow informed them all, “Brit-ta-ny interviewed me via Skype about our band, and
recommended our music to her viewers, in her latest YouTube video, posted at 7:00 P.M. on
February 23rd. That was Monday. She has one million, two hundred and fifty-five thousand, one
hundred and eight subscribers, so ten thousand albums having been sold seems a bit small, but it
has only been seven days, that is, it will have been, in two hours and forty-eight minutes.”

“‘Fondue For Two’ has over a million subscribers?” Kurt asked, incredulous, “When did that
happen?”

Minnow frowned at Kurt. “Gradually,” they answered, “over the period of years that she has
maintained the channel, Mr. Hummel.”

There a beat of silence after that, broken when Ryota said, with obvious joy, “Over ten thousand
albums sold in a month. Amazing.” He wore a huge grin when he looked at his sibling. “Minnow,”
he exclaimed, “you’re famous! I’m so happy for you!”

“Famous,” murmured Reece, before she grinned and declared, “We should sing that song from that
one musical, Fame! To celebrate!”

Elliott nodded eagerly. “Yeah!”

Minnow asked their brother, “Ryota, did you remember to bring your violin?”

“Of course I did, Minori,” he answered, with a warm smile.

Minnow beamed, and requested, “Then please join us in song, brother.”

He bowed slightly. “I would be delighted, thank you.” He then finally removed his messenger bag
from around his shoulders, gently set it down next to the sofa, and removed a violin case. Seemed
his messenger bag was as mysteriously bottomless as Minnow’s, like Mary Poppins’ carpet bag.
He opened the case, and out came the violin and its bow, and Ryota was quickly posed and poised,
ready to play.

“Oh, wait a second,” halted Keiran, and questioned Minnow, “you did tell her that you’re not a
robot this time, right?”

“I attempted to do so in our email exchange before the interview,” Minnow answered. “She
interpreted my words to mean that I was some kind of secret project, not meant to be known to exist
by the public at large.” Minnow actually sighed. “I will not give up in correcting her, but I have a
limited amount of emotional energy to expend in trying.”
“Yeah,” Kurt also sighed, “I know how that is.” But he quickly brightened, and said, “But never mind our problems, for now, let’s celebrate! Minnow! It’s your birthday, you get the whole first verse to yourself!”

“Thank you, Mr. Hummel!” As they walked to their keyboards, and everyone else to their own respective instruments, the five all lightly clapped, and Ryota tapped with his shoe, as they all but him gently repeated,  

~Remember, remember, remember, remember, remember, remember, remember, remember...~

When the intro was done, Minnow began to play the chords, and sang,  

~Baby look at me, and tell me what you see!~

They sang with obvious pleasure the entire verse, but it was clear which part was their favorite to sing.  

~I can catch the moon in my hand,  
Don’t you know who I am?  
Remember my name!~

Ryota did not sing the chorus with the others, either. Not with his voice, that is; his violin sang for him.  

~FAME!  
I’m gonna live forever!  
I’m gonna learn how to fly!~

Kurt began the second verse, and alternated his gaze between Keiran and Elliott, on either of his side of him, as always.  

~Baby hold me tight  
’Cause you can make it right  
You can shoot me straight to the top  
Give me love and take all I’ve got to give!~
Elliott continued,

~*Baby I'll return,*
*Too much is not enough,*
*I can ride your heart `til it breaks~

And Keiran cut in,

~*Ooh, I've got what it takes.*
*Remember my name!~

Five Star Constellation sang the chorus again with as much passion as they had sung it the first time, and Reece then got her moment to shine in the rap, which she delivered with joy like thunder while she beat out the rhythm on her drums, like always, while the others echoed her lines with ‘remember’s, and Kurt called out ‘Remember my name’.

~*Been through hardships*
*I've lived and I've grown*
*And those lessons worth*
*More than silver and gold~

Kurt could really feel the lyrics, and could tell that everyone in the room did.

~*I'm on my grind*
*And it's not a game*
*I'ma make sure you remember my name!~

As they sang the final chorus, an aura of ecstasy and love flooded the room. Minnow closed the song,

~*Remember my name…~

Whoops and cheers filled the apartment, but Minnow suddenly had a look Kurt was now accustomed to. They were puzzled about something.

“What is it, Minnow?” Kurt asked.

“‘Live forever’ is a metaphor, correct?” was the question, fingertip pressed to their chin. “It means that people will remember the singer, long after the singer is dead?”
“Yeah, that’s it, Minnow,” Reece confirmed, as she put her drumsticks away.

After a beat, Minnow concluded, “How silly. Nothing is forever. All is transient—” they cut themselves off, and aimed a curious look in their brother’s direction. “Ryota? Did you wish to say something?”

While he set aside his violin, he responded, “I really enjoy being around you, Minori.” Violin now rested in its open case, he stood straight, and said, “I missed you.”

“I missed you, too,” Minnow replied, and added, in a firm tone, “We should see each other more often. You have time.”

Ryota looked at them, and said nothing.

“You have time,” Minnow repeated.

Ryota laughed, and shook his head. He spoke softly, “You’re right. I do have time. I have time for you.” He gestured at his violin. “I have time for the violin. I know this. I have known this.” He took in a deep breath. “That is why,” he told Minnow, “part of my gift to you is that, from now on, I will only work forty hours a week.”

Minnow’s eyes went quite wide. “Ryota!” They smiled. “That is wonderful! Thank you!” Minnow then seemed to remember something. “Oh! I must also thank you for that book you gifted me this Christmas, ‘The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time.’”

Ryota blinked. “But you did thank me, before.”

“That was the meaningless thanks one gives in the sake of politeness at the moment of reception,” Minnow dismissed. “This is a meaningful thanks, now that I have read the book and enjoyed it.” They paused, then went on to say, “Reading it and reviews for it made me aware of certain traits I possess, and what they may mean, so I scheduled an appointment with a doctor. It was very difficult to arrange, but I was at last evaluated and diagnosed Friday.”

Ryota looked very pleased to hear this, but he was alone in that reaction.

Reece was the most distressed. “Wait, what?” she asked, “Minnow? Are you sick? Is there something wrong with you?”

“No,” replied Minnow. “I have autism.”

There was a beat of near silence in the apartment, the only sounds from the traffic outside.

“No, you don’t,” Reece objected.

“Yes, I do,” Minnow insisted.

Reece shook her head. “No, you don’t,” she repeated. “You don’t do that flappy hands thing,” she argued, and flapped her own hands in demonstration.

Kurt had a little jolt of realization. “Yes, they do,” he said.

“They were doing it about ten minutes ago,” added Keiran, and he also sounded like the idea had whacked him upside the head.

After a moment of hesitation, Reece tried, “You don’t go stone silent and unresponsive all day for no reason.”
Elliott blinked rapidly, and said, “But, they do.” After a moment, he added, “They have trouble understanding metaphors.”

“Having an obsession is a thing with autism, isn’t it?” contributed Keiran. “Good luck that it’s the sky and not trains; more employment opportunity in that.”

“And they don’t make eye contact,” Kurt finished.

Reece stared forward. “Hot damn,” she muttered, “you have autism.”

“Yes,” Minnow affirmed, with a smile.

“I had suspected that you had autism,” Ryota explained, “That’s why I gave you that book.”

“Oh.” Minnow tilted their head to the side. “It would have been simpler just to tell me.”

Ryota seemed mildly amused. “You enjoyed the book, didn’t you?”


Ryota bowed in return. “You’re welcome.”

Kurt then noticed that Elliott appeared to be in very deep thought. “Elliott?” he asked, “what’s on your mind?”

“...I think Chozai might be autistic,” he murmured.

Keiran appeared to consider this, then nodded. “Yeah,” he agreed, “that makes sense.”

Kurt had only met Chozai that one time, at the Halloween party, but that did seem to fit.

“...should I give Chozai that book about a dog?” Elliott asked.

“It is not about a dog. An event that concerns a dog is how the story begins,” Minnow corrected, and then inquired, “Does Chozai enjoy mysteries?”

Elliott frowned. “Not really.”

“Then you ought to simply tell him,” was Minnow’s final judgment.

For a short chunk of time, no one had anything to say.

Then Ryota, while he indicated that he addressed Kurt, Keiran, and Elliott, asked, “Has Minori told you their name for the three of you?”

“No, Ryota,” answered Minnow, “I have yet to tell them.”

Kurt squinted in confusion at Minnow. “Name for the three of us?”

Keiran raised an eyebrow. “What are you talking about, Minnow?”

“Your relationship name,” they explained, matter-of-factly, “It is Starred Kurtan.”

They all three stared at Minnow.

“...what?” was all that Elliott could manage.
Minnow pointed to them in turn as they defined, “Starchild, Kurt, Keiran. Starred Kurtan.” After a pause, they added, “You should change your curtains to be starred curtains. That would be funny.”

Elliott slowly said, “I’m not really going by that name anymore…”

“You called me Kurt,” was Kurt’s surprised response, as his brain selected that to react to.

“No, Mr. Hummel,” Minnow rejected, “I said your first name.”

Yet another awkward pause, until Elliott cried out, “How about we watch Cosmos?”

Minnow lit up. “Yes!” they cheered, and walked right to the sofa, and sat down.

Reece and Ryota followed, but Elliott, Kurt, and Keiran all hesitated, and looked at each other.

The moment broke almost immediately. Elliott and Keiran took their seats, and left Kurt to the task to set things up so that Cosmos on Netflix would play on the TV.

‘We’ll talk about it later,’ Kurt assured himself.

Chapter End Notes

I didn’t plan it out this way, I swear, but I found out after I made their birthday be on March 1st that that makes Minnow a Pisces.

Incidentally, in the early stages of writing this fic, out of vague curiosity, I looked up Kurt’s zodiacs, to find out that he’s a Gemini born in the year of the Rooster. So I had an idea for Keiran making a twin cock joke, but I couldn’t find anywhere to work it in. …no pun intended.

Song in this chapter-

Remember My Name from the musical and movies ‘Fame’
Rachel was walking down the hallways of NYADA.

The school wasn’t empty, exactly, but, it was emptier than was typical on a weekday.

You would expect quite a few students (and a teacher or two) to be absent on Friday the thirteenth, after all.

But Cassandra July had no patience for superstition, and promised failing grades to anyone who skipped class that day.

Not that Rachel would have skipped, regardless, of course.

There’s a limit to how many ‘second chances’ a person can get, after all. She would not waste Madam Tibideaux’s goodwill.

Which was most of the reason why she then walked the halls when there was more than half an hour before Ms. July’s class would begin. Take in the academy and appreciate that she was here. The rest of the reason was that it worked as a light warm-up.

She heard the strum of an acoustic guitar as she paced past the open door of one of the many rehearsal rooms in the building. She stopped, stepped back, and poked her head into the room, curiously. It wasn't weird to discover someone in the middle of guitar play at NYADA, not exactly, but it was rare enough to be noteworthy. NYADA may be an arts college, but it was one with a razor sharp focus on the theater, filled with people with a razor sharp focus on the theater. Not as many guitar players as you might find at other arts schools.

And whom other did she see, but one Kurt Hummel.

She had avoided him since that, that break-up/coming out concert. It had not been difficult to do so; she attended freshman year courses, he was in junior year, and they didn't even live in the same neighborhood, never mind no longer in the same apartment.

And she knew that that was wrong, just as it had been wrong before.

She missed him. She missed Elliott, and Minnow, and Reece. She even missed Keiran. She had not spent much time with Kurt’s new friends, but they had already begun to feel like her friends, too.

If she wanted to preserve that, she couldn't put this off any longer.

“Hey,” she said, quietly, as she entered the room carefully, almost as like she was afraid she might scare Kurt off if she made any sudden movements.

His fingers stilled on the guitar, and he lifted his gaze to look at her. “Oh,” he said, with a surprise that was soft in mood, “hi, Rachel.”

She took in a deep breath. “I'll just cut right to it,” she began. She paused to look at the floor, then back at Kurt. “I've been avoiding you.”
He raised his eyebrows. “Have you?”

She flinched a little at the sarcasm. She grabbed a chair nearby to the one Kurt sat on, and rotated it before she sat down, so that they would be face-to-face. She took her seat, and started her apology. “Kurt,” she said, “I’m sorry. I shouldn't have called you immoral. I've given it some thought, and, maybe I don't understand, but...love isn't immoral. That was wrong for me to say. Judging you was what was immoral.”

He was silent for what was only a few seconds, but felt like ages, before he responded, “We grew up in a conservative part of the country. That much of what was said that night I can understand.”

“It still wasn't right, though.” She clasped her hands and stared at them. “I can't speak for Santana, she needs to apologize for her own actions...if she ever does.” She looked up at Kurt. “But, I just stood there while she said those things. I didn't say anything. That was awful of me, and I'm sorry.”

All he did was make a little hum of acknowledgement.

She paused. She then finished, “But worst of all, was me even being there in the first place, like I supported Blaine over you. I don't. I didn't.” She bit her lip. “You know that, right?”

He shrugged, and replied, “That’s what I had thought.”

She stared at her hands again. “I'm sorry,” she repeated.

“Well,” he sighed, “what happened happened. No taking back what was done. Just have to move on. I've already let it go.”

Her eyes returned to his face. “Really?” she asked.

“Really.” He shrugged again. “It's in the past.”

She smiled, then. It was a small, shy smile, but it was a smile.

They were both quiet, again, for awhile, until Rachel pointed at the instrument Kurt held in his hands, and inquired, “You're learning the guitar?”

He nodded and looked at the guitar, adjusted his grip. “I had started to learn about two years ago, but it was mostly a front because I was insecure about Elliott and all his talent, so I dropped it almost immediately after Elliott and I smoothed things over, and became real friends.”

“I remember you being insecure,” said Rachel, her smile a little broader. ‘This feels so natural.’ She tilted her head. “Did you think Santana and I couldn't hear you being paranoid about Elliott to Blaine over the phone?”

Kurt winced. “I never considered it at all, actually.”

She shook her head, and moved on to ask, “So, what made you want to try learning to play again?”

She finally saw him smile. He eyed his guitar. “Keiran found the two guitars I had bought basically for show, acoustic and electric, heard the story, and made a fuss.” Kurt let out a small laugh. “‘We could be a two guitar band!’” Kurt quoted in what Rachel assumed was meant to be an Irish accent, “‘You don't have to be good to play second guitar, just not terrible!’” Kurt grinned and shifted in his seat. “And then I said that if he cared that much, why hadn't he suggested it before? And then Elliott cut us both off, and said that it was a good idea for me to get back to learning the guitar, whether I decide to play onstage or not, because I would understand the music more, and then
make better music.” Kurt again laughed. “Elliott is so good at that, he’s so reasonable, he knows exactly how to calm everyone down.” He shrugged. “But Keiran is right; we could make even better music with a second guitar.” He rolled his eyes. “‘He’s always right,’” he muttered. And in that unconvincing Irish accent again, for some reason.

Rachel’s smile turned warm. She felt so silly that she had not noticed, before. ‘It’s so obvious, now that I’m looking for it.’ She inclined forward, towards Kurt. “Could you play me something?” is what she asked, rather than bring up her blindness.

He blinked rapidly and stared at her for a moment. Like he had forgotten she was there. He returned his focus to his guitar, and appeared to think. “Sure,” he murmured.

And he began to play.

Rachel immediately recognized the tune, before Kurt even began to sing the words, and actually gave a little grin as she leaned back, closed her eyes, and enjoyed Kurt’s rendition of Green Day’s ‘Time Of Your Life’.

~Another turning point,
A fork stuck in the road...~

As Kurt continued to sing, Rachel gradually started to notice how...melancholy his tone was.

~Tattoos of memories
And dead skin on trial...~

It was then that Rachel remembered that ‘Time Of Your Life’ was in brackets, and the proper title of the song was...‘Good Riddance’.

She opened her eyes to look at Kurt, and when she saw his expression, could see that she was right about what she now knew Kurt meant to convey with the song.

‘Let it go’ does not mean ‘forgive’.

~I hope you had the time of your life...~

When the song ended, there was a long beat of silence.

Until Kurt said, “I need to go. Elliott and Keiran and I are grabbing lunch together.” He stood up, efficiently put his guitar in its fabric carrying case, and slung it over his shoulder. “Goodbye, Rachel.”
“Goodbye, Kurt,” she murmured.

She saw him pause, and just look at her. He then turned towards the door, and walked. She watched him leave.

For a little while, she simply sat there in the room, alone.

Then she stood. It was around a ten minute walk from here to the dance studio. She'd be around five minutes early.

As she walked, only one thought was on her mind.

There's a limit to how many second chances a person can get.

Chapter End Notes

Song in this chapter-

Good Riddance (Time Of Your Life) by Green Day
Elliott watched as Kurt sat and stared at his laptop, just sat and stared, until he finally, slowly, shut it down, closed it, and carefully placed it upon the coffee table.

Elliott was sat on the other end of the sofa, notebook on his lap, in the middle of an attempt to write a song. In the course of about an hour, this is what was on the page so far-

[a song about joy freedom for Kurt all of us really

the ocean?

fish

dolphins

whales

fish

waves

sand

ships

sailing]

Yeah, he was a little blocked.

A friend that needed his help was a very good excuse for a break.

“Is something wrong?” asked Elliott, as he slotted his pen into the notebook spiral and set it down on the coffee table, next to Kurt’s laptop.

Kurt put the fingers of his right hand to his temple, looked at the floor, and said nothing for a few seconds, until he finally uttered, “Elliott, Keiran...we need to talk.”

Keiran looked up from his sketchpad. He was sat, cross-legged, on the floor opposite to the sofa. “...talk about what?” he asked. When he clearly knew, as Elliott did, exactly what Kurt spoke of.

In way of answer, Kurt replied, “I just received an email from this polyamory magazine, Loving More. They want an interview.” He paused. No one said anything for nearly a minute, or it at least felt that way.

“Well, fuck,” commented Keiran.
Elliott thought that was a slight understatement. ‘Beware the Ides of March, definitely.’

Kurt's hand dropped from the side of his head to his knee, where he drummed his fingers. “We really need to do something about this.” He looked up at the two of them, first Elliott, then Keiran. “But what?” he asked, in a voice that was not distressed, but was not not distressed.

Elliott put a hand to his forehead, and sighed deeply. ‘For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.’ He then leaned back, stared at the ceiling, and pushed his fingers through his hair. “I'm sorry,” Elliott apologized, “it's my fault for 'outing' us in front of hundreds of people, just to shut up Rachel and Santana.”

“Nah,” Keiran disagreed, while he idly rapped his pencil at the edge of his sketchbook, “it’s my fault for getting the fib started in the first place, just to rile up The Cunt.”

Kurt shook his head. “No, I think it needed to happen. Otherwise Blaine might still be stalking me. And, I don't know,” he shrugged, “a lot of people had already assumed we were a trio before then. So this was probably going to happen, eventually, anyway.”

“Even Reece thought we were, and she practically lives with us,” agreed Kieran. He raised an eyebrow. “Why the fuck is that, you reckon?”

Kurt adopted an ironic smile. “Well, we are three attractive men that live together. People make assumptions based on less.”

“Sometimes a lot less,” added Elliott, as he crossed his arms.

Keiran let out a short laugh, suddenly. Kurt and Elliott looked at him in confusion.

“What's so funny?” Kurt inquired.

“Nothing,” Keiran claimed.

It was then that Elliott recalled what happened that particular evening, when they had had the confrontation between themselves and Rachel and Santana. What Keiran had said about himself. “I forgot,” Elliott murmured. “I remember now.”

“Remember what, mam?”

Elliott put his gaze on Keiran. “You think you're ugly.”

Kurt blinked. “Now I remember, too...Santana said I looked like a turtle, and you defended me by calling yourself ugly.”

Keiran frowned, and responded, “I also said you were gorgeous, ya cunt.”

Kurt actually rolled his eyes. “Right,” he said, “you need a mirror and glasses.”

There was a beat of time before Elliott and Keiran nearly shouted, in unison, “What?”

Kurt wore a sardonic expression as he informed, “I do look like a turtle; I described myself as such long before Santana did.”

“Kurt,” Elliott said, softly.

“Fucking hell,” were the words Keiran used, “Bean Town really did a number on you.”
Elliott let out a huff, and then pointed at Kurt and stated, “We'll be tackling your issue next, Kurt, but, Keiran,” he then pointed at the redhead, “what did Malahide do to you that you think you're ugly?”

Keiran made a ‘pfft’ noise, before he answered, “What Malahide did was give me a wonk eye and busted teeth,” he gestured at what he viewed as his problem features as he listed them, “But beyond that is me being a ginger with a face fucked with freckles.”

Elliott and Kurt turned their heads to look at each other. They immediately, without the use of verbal communication with each other, knew what they would do.

“I wouldn’t call David Bowie ugly,” Elliott said, casually, “and he has the eye thing.”

“Paul McCartney has chipped teeth,” Kurt contributed.

“He’s not bad,” agreed Elliott with a nod, and then continued, “I’ve had a couple of fantasies about Seth Green, in the past, actually.”

“And he is very much a redhead,” stated Kurt, before he finished, “I can’t come up with a freckled celebrity, but, you know what? I don’t need to, I’ll just say that I like Keiran’s freckles.”

Elliott thought for a moment, and offered, “I heard that every freckle you have comes from a kiss from an angel.”

Keiran snorted with laughter. “Aw,” he groaned, “fuck off, Elliott!”

Kurt wore an incredulous look with a raised eyebrow. “Yeah, Elliott, really?”

“What?” Elliott defensively asked.

Keiran continued to laugh. “You got that one from one of your New Age friends, didn’t you?” He snapped his fingers and pointed at Elliott, a grin on his face. “It’s Chelsea, innit?”

Kurt smiled broadly. “It’s definitely Chelsea.”

Elliott looked at the two of them with narrowed eyes. “You leave her alone, both of you.” (He had gotten it from Chelsea.)

Kurt and Keiran each laughed some more.

“Anyway,” Kurt said, once he had gotten a hold of himself, “the point is, none of the things you said are minuses, Keiran.”

“Right,” Elliott agreed, glad to move on, “they just make you unique.” He smiled, and declared, “I, for one, find you very attractive.”

“And I, for two, also find you very attractive. And, hold on,” Kurt squinted, “if you believe yourself to be so ugly, how do you rationalize the fact that you find it so easy to...get around?”

“Yeah…” Elliott said. He asked Keiran, “how are you explaining that to yourself?”

Keiran immediately supplied, “My charming personality.”

Kurt and Elliott looked at each other. And burst out with laughter.

“The fuck?” Keiran glared at Elliott. “Judas!”
Which only made them laugh harder.

“Fuck off!”

“Sorry, Keiran,” wheezed Elliott. ‘That was mean, to laugh,’ he thought, ‘Shame on us.’ He took

in a breath, regained his composure. He smiled. “There is a sort of charm about you, that’s true,”

he said, genuinely.

“Sure there is,” Kurt drawled.

Elliott gave him a sidelong glance. “Kurt,” he admonished.

“You’re such a cunt,” said Keiran.

“Let’s not get derailed, here,” Elliott stated, as he spread out his hands. He gave Keiran a very

serious look. “You just have to trust us, Keiran.” He grinned. “You’re really cute.”

“Fuck off,” Keiran grumbled, while his cheeks turned red, “I’m not cute. I’m manly as hell.”

“No, Elliott’s right,” Kurt cheerfully egged on, “you’re adorable.”

“Fuck off!” Keiran barked, and his blush now reached his ears, and turned it around, “you’re the
cute one!”

Kurt looked like he’d been insulted. “I am not.”

“Alright,” Keiran replied, unabated, “you’re still not a turtle. You’re a perfect ten.”

“I am definitely not a ‘perfect ten’,” Kurt refused. “I am, at best, a solid six.”

“No, I’m the six,” Keiran argued.

Elliott pinched the bridge of his nose. ‘Good grief.’ He sighed. “Both of you,” said Elliott, “you
are not ‘sixes’, okay? I would rate both of you a ‘ten’.”

“No way,” Kurt disagreed, and shook his head, “I’ll accept a ‘seven’, on a good day, if you push

me on it, but I am not a ‘ten’.” He pointed at Elliott. “Now, you, you’re a ten.”

Elliott blinked. “Me?” He laughed, in a manner that self-deprecated. With a mildly sad smile,

Elliott said, “You haven’t seen me with my shirt off.”

“Oh, fuck sake!” cried Keiran, “you’ve got body issues? You’re not even a ten, you’re like a
twelve, where is your damage from?”

Elliott glanced from side to side, suddenly very self-conscious, indeed. “I used to be really fat,” he

confessed, shyly. “...I have stretch marks. And I still have a bit of a tummy.”

The two stared at him for what felt like years.

“I don’t believe you,” Kurt said, finally.

“I’ve got stretch marks,” commented Keiran. “From growing about thirty centimeters in a year and

a half.”

Elliott frowned. “But, that’s different.”
Keiran raised an eyebrow. “Is it? And who’s gonna know better, then, unless you tell them? Also, I don’t exactly have a six pack myself, either.” He then went on to say, “And it makes no difference, anyway. I don’t care how fat you were, you were still a twelve.”

It was then Elliott’s turn to blush. “Keiran, you’re ridiculous.”

“He’s right, though,” Kurt said. He shook his head. “What is ridiculous, is that the three of us all think so badly of ourselves, but we all think of each other as being incredibly handsome.”

Keiran suddenly began to laugh, and loudly.

“What’s so funny, now?” Elliott asked him.

Through his laughter, Keiran managed to get out, “We’ve really spent the last ten minutes calling each other sexy, didn’t we? No wonder everyone thinks we’re fucking!”

“Well.” Kurt simply blinked a few times. “That might be right.”

Elliott sighed, suddenly somber. “Doesn’t answer what we can do about it.”

That was when Kurt began to giggle.

Keiran crossed his arms. “Now what’s funny to you, Broadway Boy?”

With a smile so wide the corners of his eyes crinkled, Kurt replied, “The fact that we do act in a way that people can so wildly misinterpret, because when I first met you, Keiran, I hated you!” He giggled even more, and added, “And I didn’t like you much, either, Elliott; not for awhile.”

‘Trash talking my outfit at my audition, being the worst spy ever when you tried to wring some sort of ‘confession’ out of me…’ Elliott grinned at what he now remembered rather fondly. “You didn’t, then you did, then you didn’t, then you did. I remember.”

Keiran chuckled. “Well, you are a cunt,” he remarked, “That’s one of many examples.”

Kurt’s smile did not lose any luster. “You are such an ass!” he cried, in what looked like delight, “Why do I like you?”

“It’s all mam’s fault,” Keiran quipped.

Elliott stared at him. “My fault?”

“He’s right,” Kurt agreed, “it’s totally your fault.”

“I’m always right,” said Keiran, reliably.

Elliott rolled his eyes, but his smile returned. “Shut up, Keiran.”

They all laughed together, then.

As Elliott looked at his friends, he thought, as he often did, how handsome they both looked when they were happy.

And that’s when it happened.

Not one of the three of them would ever be able to tell you why it was that moment, that very moment, one so like so many other moments before, that it clicked.
They all ceased their laughter, and looked at each other.

They all knew, and they all knew that they all knew.

“Oh…” Elliott murmured.

Another beat of no words, not a noise, from anyone.

“Wow,” Kurt said, softly, “we're dumb.”

Suddenly, Keiran tossed his sketchbook and pencil off of his lap, and jumped up onto his feet like he’d received an electric shock. “I'm fucking starved!” he declared, and essentially bolted out of the apartment, before another word could be said by anyone.

“Keiran!” Kurt cried out, when the door had already slid shut with a ‘bang!’ He turned his head towards Elliott, wide-eyed. “We should go after him, shouldn't we?”

Elliott paused. ‘I've never seen him look so...terrified.’ He shook his head. “I don't think he would listen to a thing we could say right now. I have no idea what we could say, either.”

Kurt looked down. “I think you're right.” With an odd smile, he muttered, “I can't run out of the room in a panic, too, can I?”

“Don't leave me,” Elliott answered, quietly.

Kurt looked back up at Elliott. He smiled. “Dramatic, Elliott.”

Elliott let out a silent laugh. He nodded.

“...what do you want to do until he calms down and comes back?” Kurt inquired.

Elliott smiled, and shifted over on the sofa, to be right next to Kurt, and he looked into his eyes.

“What do you wanna do?”

-----

Keiran poked at his now empty plate.

He intensely doubted that he'd ever cleared any plate of food that fast before, much less one of khao kha mu.

‘Why was it always Thai food?’

His waitress then came by. “How did you like your meal?” she asked, “Would you like to order anything else?”

Keiran sighed. “Nah, Hathai,” he answered, “that'll be all for me. I'll go ahead and make this seat available before the lunch rush gets started, yeah?”

As he stood, Hathai lifted her hand, and this time asked, “Is everything alright, Keiran?”

He laughed. “I’ll be fine, Hathai,” he lied.
When Keiran paid his bill, which was under ten dollars, he had no patience to figure out a tip or receive change. He just handed over a twenty dollar bill, told the cashier to keep the change, and walked out.

Outside, he paused in front of the window of an SUV, and stared at his reflection. The Mika song that had begun to play in his head in the restaurant was now at full volume.

~Isn't it enough

Isn't it enough

Just to be...wild and free?

Caught up in the rough

Caught up in the rush of life

Staring at me~

He turned away, and began to walk along the sidewalk, and occasionally glared at his reflection in the shop windows he passed, well aware it made him look a bit mad. But who the fuck’s gonna notice in New York?

~You think you're in love, boy,

But you don’t even know what love is

You think you're in love, girl,

But, honey, let me show you where your heart is!~

As he then passed a flower shop, he saw a man and a woman, about his age, exit the shop with a single rose each. To judge by their big ol’ moon eyes, how they pressed their bodies side by side, they'd bought them for each other.

Keiran did his best to hold tight to his cynicism.

~Lover boy!

It's just illusion to me!

You could take any boy,

I’ll tell you what you would feel!

Pretty boy, with the nasty traits!
Funny boy, with an ugly face!

Love is just a cautionary, momentary, reactionary lie!

Love is just a cautionary, momentary, reactionary lie!~

He got on the subway. Again, he stared at his reflection.

~Isn't it enough

Isn't it enough

Just to be...sunny and dumb?

Aren't you tired of hooking up

Sick of breaking up

Oh, you fool

You did it for fun~

He got off the subway at Columbus Circle, went up the steps. The rest of the way was on foot.

~You think you're in love, boy~

As he walked into Central Park, he saw a middle aged woman get on one knee, and hold up an open ring case that contained a ring. The woman she proposed to burst into tears, and said yes.

He soldiered on past their lover’s embrace.

~It's just illusion to me!~

As he walked around the park, he couldn't shake the sensation that the universe conspired against him; everywhere he looked, it seemed, he saw love. He even saw what appeared to be a bisexual mix of four.

But still, he did his best to shrug it off.

‘All is temporary, this too shall pass, all of that shite, what's the point?’

And then, he saw two men, old men. They looked to be in their eighties, or about there, anyway. They held hands, walked close.
Everything about them expressed the mood of a couple that had been together for decades, and were still deeply in love.

Slowly, Keiran dropped onto a bench.

Did his best to hold on to his denial.

~Love is just a cautionary, momentary, reactionary lie...~

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Back at the apartment, Kurt and Elliott shared what was not their first kiss, sure.

But it was their first completely honest one.

Chapter End Notes

Song in this chapter-

Lover Boy by Mika
Elliott and Kurt both knew Keiran wasn't dead, because he'd reliably texted back ‘fuck off’ in reply to their texts of concern.

Elliott was still worried, but Kurt had shifted into ‘a bit pissed off’.

“He's skipped a whole week of classes, Kurt. He's risking flunking just to avoid us, he's really freaked out,” argued Elliott.

“I don't care,” Kurt grumbled, “if he doesn't show up to band practice today, I’m going to-”

He cut himself off, because Reece just then entered the apartment.

There was a long moment in which she stared the two down.

“Okay,” she said, hand on hip, “I'm asking before practice starts; what in Hell is going on?”

Kurt and Elliott glanced at each other, then back at her. “What do you mean?” they asked, innocently.

“If you think I haven't noticed the distinct lack of an Irishman when I've dropped by for the past few days, you'd be mistaken,” she returned.

After a beat of no word from either of them, Kurt answered, “We're in the middle of a communication problem with him.”

“Oh, really? What kind of ‘communication problem’?” She raised an eyebrow. “Need me to do some translation for you?”

“No, no, Reece,” rejected Elliott, before Kurt could agree, “We're going to handle this ourselves.”

“You better,” she drawled.

Minnow then walked in, went straight to their keyboards, and began to read through the sheet music there.

Five Star Constellation would learn to perform a cover that they had not yet done before today.

One with a Message.

...if Keiran would show up.

And then he did.

The door slid open, he stepped inside, slid it shut behind him, walked straight to his bass, slung the strap over his shoulder, peered at the sheet music, and began to silently finger the chords he would need to play.
Reece looked away from what was, for Keiran, very bizarre behavior, to walk in without so much as a loud ‘hello’, and stared again at Elliott and Kurt. When Elliott shook his head again, she shrugged and took her place behind her drums.

Kurt and Elliott quietly lifted their guitars and hung the straps around their shoulders.

“Alright,” asked Kurt, in an effort to pretend everything was normal, “everyone ready to start?”

There was a noise of dissent from Minnow. “I have read the lyrics to this song, Mr. Hummel,” they said, “and I do not like it.”

Kurt turned to look at them, and blinked in mild surprise. “You haven't had a problem with swear words before—”

“That is not the issue,” Minnow interrupted. They tapped at the sheet music with their index finger several times, and pointed out, “the chorus begins, ‘I promise not to try not to fuck with your mind’. Does not the double negative mean that you will fuck with their mind?”

Kurt shook his head in disagreement. “No,” he answered, “taken in the context of the song, I believe that the singer is saying that they won’t be trying to not fuck with your mind. They won't, period.” After a moment, Kurt added, almost without thought, “Do, or do not. There is no try.”

Elliott squinted at Kurt. “That sounds familiar…”

“It is a line of dialogue, said by Yoda, from Star Wars: Episode V, The Empire Strikes Back,” Minnow cheerfully informed.

Even Keiran raised his eyes, along with Elliott and Reece, to stare at Kurt.

Kurt blushed slightly. “Blaine made me watch the movies,” he explained. He then frowned. “With Sam. ...it was weird.”

After a brief, somewhat awkward silence, Minnow said, “I accept your reasoning, Mr. Hummel!” They poised their fingers over the keyboard keys. “We may now begin.”

“Hang on a second,” Reece interjected, “how did you know a quote from Star Wars, Elliott?”

“I remember now,” Elliott answered, “Chozai said it to me, once.”

“We may now begin,” Minnow repeated, a touch more firmly.

None sought to ignore the clear command, and the song began.

Kurt was the first to sing.

~Sleeping through the evening singing dreams inside my head
I'm heading out, I've got some ins who say they care and they just might~

Kurt’s part of the verse was a bit general, clearly meant for the whole group.

What Elliott sang next made it a bit more obvious who the song was meant for.
~I’ll run away with you if things don’t as planned~

Keiran was either ignorant, or he pretended to be ignorant, as he jovially sang-

~Planning big could be a gamble!~

-but when Kurt and Elliott together looked at Keiran and sang,

~We’ve already rolled the dice.~

Keiran wasn’t ignorant anymore. He flicked his eyes over to them, then back to the sheet music, and stared more intently at the page than he had ever had for any song before, as he then sang,

~I spit and stutter stuff and clutter worries in my worried corner
Maladjusted just untrusted rusted sometimes brilliant busted thoughts~

It was Elliott that sung

~Think I’ll stay for awhile…~

and Kurt that intoned

~I’m intrigued, and I’m…~

It was all three that finished the verse, and all three that sang the chorus.

~Promise not to try not to fuck with your mind~

Keiran gradually, very gradually, appeared more and more panicked. Kurt was impressed that
Keiran’s voice remained clear and steady.

~Promise not to mind if you go your way and I go mine~

The delivery of the lyrics was very different from Keiran than it was from Elliott and Kurt. The very short second verse was divided amongst the three of them. Kurt had the first line, appropriate with its mention of a man bites dog town with a Spanish name, Elliott with the first half of the second line, Keiran with the second half. The three of them sang the chorus, and then Elliott sung the first line of the bridge as a very pointed question.

~Why you gotta keep the fan on high when it's cold outside?~

And Keiran had the pun answer, which sounded in this context like the hollow excuse he would give.

Elliott and Kurt sang together

~Everybody wants charm and a smile, and a promise~

...and Keiran replied, almost aggressively,

~Well, I promise not to try! 
Ee-ii! 
Ee-ii! 
Oh!~

Kurt and Elliott looked at each other as the three sang the final verse. They knew what would happen the second the song finished.

And they were right; as the final note faded, Keiran practically ripped his bass off of his shoulders, nearly damaged it with the hurried way he laid upon the floor rather than set it in its stand, and ran for it. Ironic, since he had just sung that he wouldn’t leave.

Elliott and Kurt had their guitars off just as quickly, and were after him.

Since none of the three had taken the time to slide the door shut behind them, they heard Reece
shout, “What the Hell ?!”

-----

Elliott and Kurt ran into where it was that Keiran had apparently hid for a week.

Keiran had done his best to shake the two off, but, while he was well capable to avoid people, he did not possess the talent to evade them.

As the two shortly arrived and entered through the door into the hotel room, as he had had to pause to gasp for breath before he attempted to close the door behind him, Keiran grumbled, “The security at this hotel is shite.”

“Yeah, well, you’re pretty crap at dealing with your emotions,” Kurt said, as he shut and locked the door behind him.

“Fuck off,” shot Keiran.

“No,” Elliott rejected, “we’re going to talk.” He was quiet for a moment. “Why did you run away, Keiran?” he softly asked.

“Because I’m not right for the two of you! I’m a mess, I’m not the sort of person people fall in love with! Least of all the two of you!”

Elliott shook his head. “What are you talking about?”

Keiran waved his hands a bit, then said, “Look here, mam, Broadway Boy, just...the two of you sit down, and I'll explain this in a way you'll understand.”

Kurt and Elliott looked at each other in confusion, but they walked to the bed, and sat down.

Keiran stood straight, breathed in, seemed to compose himself.

And then, he began to sing, 'I Won't Send Roses'.

~I won't send roses
Or hold the door~

‘He actually learned this song,’ Kurt thought.

~My heart is too much in control
The lack of romance in my soul...~
Kurt tilted his head back, slightly.

~Forget my shoulder
When you're in need~

‘What a song for him to sing.’

~My pace is frantic
My temper’s cross!
At words romantic
I'm at a loss!
I'd be the first one to agree
That I'm preoccupied with me~

Kurt and Elliott looked at each other, again, then back at their performer.

~In me you'll find things
Like guts and nerve
But not the kind things
That you deserve!
So, while there's a fighting chance,
Just turn, and go!
I won't send roses
And roses suit
You
So...~

Elliott and Kurt glanced at each other yet again. They both nodded, and stood up and walked to Keiran.
Kurt got to him first, cupped his cheek, said,

“I don't care,”

and kissed him.

Keiran was still for a second, just stood there, before he shoved Kurt away, and took a step back, which pressed him against Elliott’s chest, who had snuck around behind him. He spun away and to the side.

“The fuck do you mean, you ‘don't care’?” he said as he looked at Kurt with wide, bewildered eyes, and then at Elliott, “I can't be what you want!” back to Kurt, “I can't be what you need!”

“If you really wanted us to believe that,” Elliott murmured, as he walked forward, and put a hand on Keiran’s shoulder, “you shouldn't have sung us a Broadway classic from a somewhat obscure musical.”

Keiran blinked at him. “What?”

“It’s true that you don't send roses,” said Kurt, with an amused smile. He then grinned. “You bring grande low fat mochas.”

Keiran looked even more bewildered. “What?”

Elliott slid a hand around Keiran’s waist as he said, “And I can handle the sending roses thing for all three of us, Keiran.”

“What?” Keiran repeated, helplessly.

Kurt went to the couple, curled his arms around them. The three of them formed a tight triangle. “The things you sang about that were actually bad things were lies,” Kurt chided, “we can depend on your shoulder when we're in need-”

“-you remember birthdays-” Elliott added,

“-you show us you love us everyday.” After a punctuative pause, Kurt continued, “I can open my own doors, I don't care much if you don't remember which suit I wore, because Elliott will-”

“-your fast pace is good for us, and sometimes your blunt nature is needed, because I'm too nice sometimes-”

“-and neither of us need love poems, or anything. You're nice and romantic in your own way, complimenting my weird smile, making us eggs, teaching us to dance, even with Elliott crushing your toes every third step for a month-”

“-don't remind me,” Elliott interrupted. He then rested his forehead on the top of Keiran’s. He finished the list, “and, like I said, I'm bringing home flowers all the time.”

Keiran appeared to consider their words for a second, but then shook his head fiercely, and attempted to break out of the three-way hug, but Elliott and Kurt would not let him go. “Relationships are rare to last,” Keiran argued as he gave up on his struggle, “and one that includes me has got no chance.”

“We've been together for a year already,” Elliott pointed out.

Keiran went quite still again.
As did Kurt.

“It has been a year since Keiran and I met. To this day,” Kurt nearly whispered.

“Guess it must be fate, then,” Keiran griped.

Elliott let out a breath of laughter. “Shut up, Keiran.”

And Keiran smiled.

“Fuck off,” he said.

Elliott grinned, tilted up Keiran’s head, and bent slightly to kiss him. This time, Keiran kissed back properly, and did not push his kisser away. When their kiss broke, Kurt dived in and quickly stole a kiss from Keiran, then Elliott, and then went back to Keiran to linger awhile. When their kiss broke, Elliott went ahead and pressed his lips against Kurt's.

All of this was a little awkward to do as three; heads brushed, luckily never bumped, but they didn't really notice that it was awkward. It didn't really feel awkward.

It felt right.

Suddenly, Elliott giggled.

Kurt, smile not dropped, asked, “What is it, Elliott?”

In lieu of answer, Elliott sang,

~When the little blue bird
That has never said a word
Starts to sing~

Kurt grinned wide and bright. The day before the three of them had had their little epiphany, they had watched the simply-awful-but-had-a-great-soundtrack movie, Tank Girl. The mentioned soundtrack had a rock cover of ‘Let’s Do It (Let's Fall In Love)’, which featured Joan Jett, one of many songs on repeat in Kurt’s head. He cheerfully sang,

~Spring!
When the little blue bell
At the bottom of the dell
Starts to ring~

Elliott backed out of their embrace, arms spread out as he bobbed his head side-to-side and sang,
~Ding dong, ding dong!~

Keiran shook his head at the two of them, but he nonetheless took his own turn for the verse as he stepped to the side and danced in place.

~When the little blue clerk
In the middle of his work
Starts a tune to the moon up above...~

All three then sang in unison,

~It is nature, that is all
Simply telling us to fall in love~

Keiran had already tired of the idea to the dance alone, and he grabbed Elliott and lead him into a jive. Elliott was only too glad to oblige him.

A few seconds to dance with Elliott, and then Keiran spun around to dance with Kurt instead.

Keiran traded back and forth between the two with energy, until Elliott and Kurt grabbed him by his arms and stopped him. They all looked at each other, smiles a bit manic, and they then all three danced together, weaved in and out of each other's arms, turned and twisted.

~I'm sure sometimes on the sly you do it
Maybe even you and I might do it!
Let's do it…
Let's fall in love!~

They then, all three, collapsed backwards onto the bed, full of laughter, all smiles.
Wanna see three people dancing a jive?

Songs in this chapter-

Promise by Eve 6
I Won’t Send Roses from the musical ‘Mack And Mable’
Let’s Do It (Let’s Fall In Love) originally from Cole Porter’s musical ‘Paris’. This version is from the Tank Girl soundtrack, as sung by Joan Jett and Paul Westerberg
“If it makes you feel any better, Burt,” said Elliott, “the three of us were together the second-to-last to know.”

It may have been only a laptop screen rather than in person, but the weight of Burt’s disbelief still landed quite solidly regardless. “What are you talking about?”

Kurt sighed. “In that moment, it was just a lie we made up to make Blaine give up on me, not realizing basically everyone already thought we had...an arrangement. And we couldn't figure out why.-”

“-until a week ago, when it suddenly slapped us at the same moment out of nowhere,” Keiran said.

“And then you panicked and hid,” Elliott directed at Keiran, “until we cornered you yesterday.”

Burt’s eyebrows shot up. “Yesterday?” he asked. “I find out this morning about this video that's been viral for a couple weeks, of you three singing that Joan Jett song, and then Carole tells me that you'd been a ‘trio’ for months when I show it to her, but in reality you've only been in this relationship for less than twenty-four hours?”

“Yes,” affirmed the three.

Elliott squinted. “Did Carole say why she never said anything to you about it in three months?”

Burt sighed in a manner that matched his son’s. “She told me that she'd been trying to but it was ‘never the right time’, and she didn't want me to be distracted from my important work in Washington.”

Keiran raised an eyebrow. “When would the right time have been for that bombshell?”

“That's exactly what I said.”

“Anyway,” Kurt moved along, “the point is, I wasn't keeping that massive of a secret from you, dad. In fact,” he asserted, “I was going to call you tonight.”

“Sure you were,” said Keiran and Burt in unison.

Kurt glared back and forth at the two of them, and protested loudly, “I was!” He then spotted Elliott’s little smile, and glared at him, too. “I was!”
The three disbelievers said nothing, only smiled.

Kurt pouted.

“Learned a couple other things, yesterday,” Keiran added, with a stretch. “Did you know your son has a tattoo?”

Burt’s eyes widened. “What?”

“Bye dad, love you,” flurried Kurt as he ended the Skype call and slapped his laptop shut.

“Keiran!” Elliott scolded.

“What? You're no fun.” Keiran crossed his arms and smirked. “While we’re on the topic of stuff recently learned, I'm still a bit disappointed that you didn't turn out to be diphallic, Kurt.”

Elliott closed his eyes and groaned, and Kurt gave Keiran a dead stare. “That joke wasn't funny the first time you told it last night, Keiran.”

Keiran wore a look of innocence. “What joke? You're a Gemini born in the year of the Rooster. It's natural to expect you'd have twin cocks.”

Kurt pressed the palm of his hand across his eyes. “Oh my god.”

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April 19th, 2015

“Let me just say again, congratulations to being signed to a label, babies!” toasted Mahsuri, cup of sake raised high. “Cheers!”

“Cheers!” all at the large table toasted, and all drank sake but Minnow, who had a sip of their tea.

While she drank, Mahsuri held a finger in the air to signal she had more to say. She swallowed, “So,” and set the cup down, “now that you're rich-”

Kurt cut her off, “Rich? We're not rich, let's not start counting chickens, the eggs were only just laid about a minute ago.”

“Don't be ridiculous,” Mahsuri dismissed, “you’re going to smash the scene, babies, you'll be rolling in it. As such,” she paused dramatically, with a grin. She stated, “I would like to let you know that I'm totally willing to show you some properties more appropriate for your new income tax bracket, and I'll cut you a good deal.”

Xander and Brody glanced at each other in what appeared to be some slight uneasiness, whilst everyone else at the table looked confused.

“...so you've got connections in real estate?” inquired Reece, eyebrow raised.

Mahsuri, Brody, and Xander all blinked.

“Connections?” asked Brody.
Mahsuri frowned, head tilted. “Do none of you know that my parents are real estate moguls?”

Five Star Constellation shook their heads. “No,” they all said.

“She never mentioned it?” questioned Xander.

From Brody, came, “You never asked?”

And Mahsuri said, “I would have sworn that I told you.”

Five Star Constellation shook their heads again. “No,” they all repeated.

“Where did you think her money came from?” asked Brody.

Minnow provided the answer. “Shortly after I met you,” they said, “I Googled your name to answer that question. The results pointed to the Malaysian royal family, before Phra Ong Mahawangsa converted to Islam and became Mudzaffer Shah I.”

Mahsuri, Xander, and Brody’s eyes all went very wide. “Oh, goodness,” Mahsuri exclaimed. After a pause, she said, “It’s impossible to be sure, with so many generations and hundreds of years, so we might be related, but not directly. If we were direct descendants, we wouldn’t be ‘Mahawangsa’, would we?”

Minnow nodded slowly. “That is true. That did not occur to me.”

“So,” asked Xander, “you all thought she was royalty?”

Five Star Constellation all nodded, with murmurs of ‘yes’ and ‘yeah’.

“Due to my error,” said Minnow, clearly embarrassed, “I apologize.”

Mahsuri grinned. “It’s alright, Minnow,” she assured, “it’s funny, even.”

“So you have a job, then?” asked Reece, “You actually work?”


Brody explained, “Her parents have grown a bit tired of her...fun-loving nature.”

“And they don't even know about our whole arrangement,” murmured Xander.

“I think mom could accept it,” Mahsuri quietly said, “because I know all she really wants is for me to be safe and happy. But daddy…” She winced. “…daddy has Expectations of me.”

“Ah,” was the general sound from Five Star Constellation, who all had their own version of uncomfortable looks on their faces. Keiran and Minnow both seemed to understand what Mahsuri meant about Expectations more than the rest.

“Anyway,” Mahsuri moved along, “what do you say? Will you be my first clients?”

Kurt, Elliott, and Keiran all frowned.

“I dunno,” said Keiran, “I really like our flat.”

“It’s really inexpensive for its size,” agreed Elliott, “the plumbing and heating and cooling all work great, we have a nice kitchen, it’s an awesome rehearsal space—”
“-and the only problems I've had in the place were directly tied to knowing the wrong people. The
guy that robbed the place was my date that I invited into my home, and the break-in was the
psychotic Sue Sylvester. Those events are the only robberies or break-ins our apartment building
has ever even had in more than a decade, according to one of my neighbors.”

Xander shook his head. “I still can't believe you actually knew that woman. She poisoned children!
How are you alive?”

Kurt shrugged. “I have no idea.”

“All right,” said Reece, “fantastic for you three, but our apartment is a roach infested horror show,
hate our landlord, so we've been planning on leaving, anyway.”

Minnow nodded. “It's horrifying.”

“But nothing crazy,” Reece added, “just a place we can afford with what we're getting right now.
Can always get better later.”

“Give me your price range, and that's what I'll be showing you!” Mahsuri jovially stated. She
squealed a little. “I have clients!” She turned a touch somber, smile didn't quite fit, as she
continued, “And take as long as you like deciding.” She lifted her cup and said, “Delay my
inevitable failure as long as possible!” She took a drink.

Everyone else at the table looked at each other in some discomfort.

And then Mahsuri began to sing.

No one was familiar with the song, but they would later learn that it was ‘Bright Future In Sales’
by Fountains of Wayne.

~I gotta get my shit together
'Cause I can't live like this forever
You know I've come too far
And I don't want to fail
I got a new computer
And a bright future in sales
Yeah, yeah
A bright future in sales
Yeah, yeah~

No one in Five Star Constellation had ever heard Mahsuri sound so sarcastic. In fact, they had
never heard Mahsuri be sarcastic at all, ever.

When she finished the song and had another drink of sake, Elliott attempted to encourage when he
said, “Come on, Mahsuri, I'm sure you will do great.”

“I don't.”

All members of Five Star Constellation stared at Brody, and saw Xander nod in agreement.

“Suri,” counseled Xander, “Brody and I have been talking, and we both think that, while it is a
good idea for you to get a job, find something to do other than go clubbing, you shouldn't do something you hate."

“Right.” Brody gave her a very serious look. “You're in a position to literally do any kind of job or project you want. You should find something you care about, not just do what your dad wants you to do.”

Mahsuri sighed. “The only thing I've liked doing as much as going to parties, going to gay and lesbian bars, is spending time with you two. And not just the sex; just...going to a cafe, getting coffee.”

“Huh,” said Kurt, and a thought took him, distracted him. “I've always preferred going to a cafe with you guys over the bar, myself. Is there a gay cafe we could all start going to?”

Brody and Elliott gave Kurt annoyed looks. How could he have lost focus on Mahsuri’s situation so quickly?

But everyone else, which included Mahsuri, seemed speculative.

“If there is one,” Keiran said, “I haven't heard about it.”

“That would be pretty cool,” murmured Reece. “A spot where Aimee and I can cuddle with a fancy coffee.”

“A cafe, just for us queers,” said Mahsuri softly. She slapped the table, and surprised everyone. “I'll do it! I'll make it real!”

“Managing a small business is a big deal, Mahsuri.” Kurt cautioned, “you really think you can handle something like that?”

She lost zero sparkle. “I'll just have to find out, won't I?” She made a happy noise that was more genuine than the one earlier. “Instead of finding homes for socialites I can't stand, it's giving back to my community, it's great!”

Brody and Xander finally smiled, like this was the first time they'd seen her in her usual enthusiasm all week.

“Suri,” said Brody, “I'm happy to help you in anyway I can.”

“Excellent! You're equal co-owner!”

Brody’s smile faltered. “Wait, what?”

Mahsuri waved down a waitress, and ordered more sake for everyone; further toasts and celebration were in order.

Reece leaned towards the jubilant woman and asked, “You're still going to help Minnow and me find a new place, right?”

Mahsuri, radiant, answered, “Of, course, baby.” She winked. “And you're going to help me design the girlfriend cuddle nook, too!”

Reece grinned back. She raised her cup, and Mahsuri raised hers. “You've got it,” Reece promised, and they tapped their cups together, and drank.
It was just another morning rehearsal for the band. As they debated over whether their new song, Shipwreck, should be in the minor or major key, there was a knock at the door.

Elliott went to answer it, and there was a deliveryman with a box comparable in size to one that might contain a large toaster.

“Package for Kurt Hummel?” said the deliveryman.

Kurt paused for moment, tense, before he walked to the door, signed for his package, and took the box from the man’s hands. He thanked the man before he turned and moved towards the kitchen table, and placed it there.

Elliott told the deliveryman to have a nice day, shut the door, and then walked to the table along with everyone else, curious.

Kurt wasn't sure what it was that he felt when he saw the return address. “It's from Blaine.”

“Throw it out,” Keiran not quite commanded.

Elliott tilted his head to the side. “Think it's more kinda creepy puppets?” he asked, and made a ‘talking hand’ gesture to accompany the follow-up question, “This time hand puppets?”

Reece frowned, eyes squinted. “Puppets?”

Minnow smiled, eyes wide. “Puppets?”

“Fuck,” Keiran sighed, pointed with his chin at Minnow, “look at them.” He went over to the drawer where the scissors were kept, opened it, got them out, shut the drawer, and returned to the box. Cut the tape at the sides, then down the middle of the flaps. He opened the box. They all crowded around to see inside.

“Animals?” Kurt reached in, grabbed, and lifted out of the box a creature of yarn; a red panda.

“And stars,” murmured Reece, as her own hand plucked out a red star. She turned it over in her hands, and asked, almost to herself, “What are these, they look knitted, or something…”

“They are amigurumi!” Minnow cried. They stared into the box, hands flapping near their shoulders. “Amigurumi is a Japanese craft that uses crochet to make all sort of plush figures, like these! Some patterns are very difficult to do! Oh!” they bounced a bit, “there are five animals, five stars! That is one animal and one star for each of us!”

Reece shook her head. “Damn,” she said, “These things are really cute.” She looked around at the group. “Who's supposed to get what, do you think?”

“That is clear,” Minnow stated confidently, calmed down if still very obviously delighted by these gifts, “Reece is to have the red star and the cat. The orange star and the penguin are mine. Keiran is the yellow and green star and the squirrel. Elliott is the blue star and the dog. Mr. Hummel is the purple star and the red panda.”

Keiran almost grimaced. “Why am I the squirrel?”

“You’re definitely the squirrel,” said Elliott.
“Fuck off.”

Kurt spotted a folded piece of paper at the bottom of the box. “There's a letter,” he said as he reached inside and picked up the message with his left hand. He unfolded it, and read aloud,

[Kurt,

A few days after I arrived back in Ohio, I went back to my therapist and scheduled some serious therapy, because what I did wasn't just wrong, it was straight up crazy.

At my third session with Dr. Ching, she diagnosed me with borderline personality disorder.]

Kurt paused to process this revelation.

“‘Borderline personality disorder’?” questioned Reece.

“The fuck is that?” asked Keiran.

Kurt wasn't sure. So he just resumed his read.

[It's no excuse for all the things I did to you, the cheating, the lying, not respecting boundaries, worshipping you one day and making looney accusations of betrayal the next, but... it explains it. Now I know why all those terrible things seemed perfectly rational at the time.

So, maybe, now that I know what's wrong with me, and I'm getting treatment for it, I can be a better person for whoever will have me in the future.

I'm sorry you had to go through all the mood swings, all the, all the everything. I'm sorry.

One of the things Dr. Ching recommended for me was to invest in a hobby. So I'm doing a few things, one of them crochet, and then I found out about this Japanese thing called amigurumi, and Dr. Ching said I shouldn't contact you, so please don't reply, but I just ended up making these things for you and your band. I don't know why I made them, but I couldn't just keep them.

You can throw them away if you want, it's not like I'll know the difference.

This is not an attempt to win you back. I'm not sure what it is, but it's not that. I still haven't found where my head is, I guess.]

“He should check up his arse,” muttered Keiran.

“Keiran,” Elliott scolded.

“What?” Keiran asked.

Kurt ignored them, and finished the letter.
[Sam told me that Mercedes told him that you were just signed to a recording company, so, congratulations. I know that's just the start of really great things for you. You're crazy talented, and I think you've surrounded yourself with the right people.

That's all I had to say, I think.

Sincerely,

Blaine]

“I won't throw mine away,” Minnow stated.

“You can keep yours, Minnow,” Kurt assured, “it's fine.” He looked again at the letter in left hand, then back at the little red panda in his right. He really wasn't sure how to feel about it. He didn't think he could stand to keep it, but it felt wrong to throw it away. ‘These are all so well made. ...maybe I'll give mine to a thrift shop,’ he thought, as he carefully set it and the letter back inside the box.

Elliott returned the dog to the box as well, which he had apparently picked up in curiosity. Reece put back the star.

Keiran didn't need to put back anything.

After what felt like a very long silence, Minnow said, “If you will not keep your stars, I will have them. Please.”

“Sure, Minnow,” said Kurt, and the others made their own noises of agreement.

Kurt's phone buzzed with a notification. Everyone stared at his pocket.

“You have forgotten to shut it off again, Mr. Hummel,” Minnow stated. “You really must gain the habit of doing so.”

“Yeah, sorry,” Kurt apologized, somewhat insincerely, as any distraction was welcome at that moment. He retrieved his phone to see what the notification was for.

Someone had tweeted @kurthummel. He squinted at the name. Something about it seemed familiar. @behrouzahmadi, where had he-

When Kurt read the tweet, he remembered.

[@kurthummel Hey, I'm the guy you met at Hamilton. Would you want to make a musical based around 5SC? I've got a plot, wanna work with you.]

“What is it?” asked Elliott.

Kurt paused. ‘It could be a waste of time,’ he thought, ‘so many productions go absolutely nowhere.’
“Hellooo,” called Reece, “Earth to Kingly?”

Kurt shook his head. And smiled. “I think a new opportunity has presented itself that Five Star Constellation ought to investigate.”

March 2017

Reece stretched and grinned widely. Sure, this Mercedes had been about as unreliable a friend as the rest of the crew from Ohio, but she was a girl with a talent, and she and Reece had just clicked the moment they’d met at the Grammys.

Mercedes had won Best Pop Solo Performance with ‘Deal With It’, a song Reece had had on repeat since it had come out, and Five Star Constellation had won fucking Album Of The Year with ‘Galaxy’.

The moment they saw each other when Mercedes had walked over to their table to give Kurt congratulations, they had begun to practically fall over with praise for each other.

In fact, Mercedes never even congratulated Kurt beyond her greeting of “Oh my god, Kurt, congrats-”, and Kurt never had a chance to get a word in edgewise to congratulate her. They just showered love on each other for about five minutes, decided that they had to do a collab, exchanged numbers, and then Mercedes had to get back to her seat because commercial break was over.

And just a month later, they sat across from each other in Mercedes' LA apartment, ready to start work on some music.

“So,” began Mercedes, with a smile, “I guess we just get right to it? Start throwing ideas at each other?”

“Mmm,” considered Reece, before she countered, “how ‘bout we sing something as a sort of warm-up, get our heads in the space?”

Mercedes’ smile got a bit bigger as she nodded and offered, “Janelle Monáe?”

Reece nodded back and answered, “Q.U.E.E.N.”

It flowed between them as easy as the Nile as they traded verses.

~Will you be electric sheep?

Electric Ladies, will you sleep?

Or will you preach?~

September 2017
“Oh my god,” squealed Brittany in her seat on the hotel bed as she held the trophy, “I still can’t believe it. I mean, I believe it, I just mean that this is really amazing, right Minnow?”

Minnow took a moment as they sat beside her to gaze at the award they had just won with Brittany for their YouTube channel, Songs About The Universe. The Streamy’s award for Best Original Music In A Web Series. They smiled.

“Correct,” they agreed as they nodded, “It is not difficult to believe that we would qualify for such an award, of course-”

“-exactly, we’re amazing .”

Minnow grinned and nodded again before they continued, “but considering the large budgets of some of our competitors, with the better access to various resources that provides, it is surprising we were able to defeat them.”

“No, not really,” she said as she shook her head, “that only makes their music sound better. Doesn’t help them write the music or sing the songs better. Not better than us, anyway, and this award is the proof! I meant how we didn’t even know this award existed.”

“Ah,” Minnow comprehended, “yes.” After a pause, they added, “I am glad that it does.”

“Me, too.” Brittany finally looked at Minnow when she said, “I’m also really glad that you hate trophies, so I can put this on my shelf at home.”

“I do not hate them,” Minnow corrected, “I am indifferent to them.”

“Same thing in the end; it means I get to keep it. Hey,” she asked, “before I leave for my room so you can go to sleep, I want to sing The Galaxy Song from Monty Python, can we?”

Minnow’s eyes sparkled. “Of course! As long as we then immediately go over all the things the song gets wrong afterward.”

“Well, duh.” Brittany grinned. “Great! I’ll go grab my ukulele, be right back!” Brittany got up and left Minnow’s hotel room, trophy in hand.

Which left Minnow in the room with Santana, who been sat in an armchair since shortly after she and Brittany had followed Minnow in here, and had hardly spoken at all. Minnow assessed her stare. In Minnow’s mind there were images of pointing fingers, scenes from the movie that was based on the book The Crucible, memories of when Santana first accused Minnow of having lascivious thoughts towards Brittany, of Santana looking at them with narrowed eyes for all this time.

Minnow adopted the technique Brittany had taught them shortly after they had met to create the illusion of eye contact (since she also had trouble maintaining eye contact with people; it turned out that Brittany was also autistic)- focus on the eyelashes, the eyebrows, the eye makeup. This conversation called for eye contact. “Why do you still carry suspicions towards my intentions with your wife? We have now known each other for two years. I do not know how I could better convey my lack of interest-”

“Wha-at?” Santana sputtered, “I’m not thinking about that, I know you’re a harmless droid, you’re crazy.”

Image of the robot from the movie Metropolis, the word ‘METAPHOR’ appearing below the image, image is crossed out, memory of when Brittany was made to understand that Minnow was a
flesh and blood human and apologized, a repeat of the memories of Santana’s glares. Minnow frowned, then. “I am aware that I have little skill in knowing what people are feeling,” they said, “but I am not oblivious.” Before Santana could respond, they pressed forward and inquired, “Why do you not trust your wife?”


“You are in an exclusive, monogamous relationship with a woman who adores you,” Minnow explained, “my own behavior is irrelevant; she would soundly reject me and likely end our friendship if I were to attempt any sort of sexual or romantic action.” Minnow tilted their head slightly to the side. “If you absolutely refuse to believe that I have no interest, you can put your faith in Brit-ta-ny.”

Santana went a bit still. She breathed. Looked off to the side. Softly smiled. “I can always put my faith in Brittany.”

Minnow brightened. They solved it!

“I am very glad we finally had this conversation,” they enthused, “it should have happened much earlier, but this has been the first time we have been alone in a room together. Are we friends, now?”

Santana returned her vision to Minnow, and blinked. “You are very weird.”

“Yes.” Minnow tilted their head again. “Do you require time to decide on whether we shall become friends?”

She blinked again. “Sure.”

Minnow smiled. “Alright.”

They then quickly set to get out their keyboard, the tripod, and the camera.

“I’m back, bitches!” called out Brittany as she again entered the hotel room. She slightly waved the ukulele in her hand, then walked to the bed, and sat back down where she had just been earlier. She waited for Minnow to finish their arrangement, turn on the camera, press record, and finally retake their seat next to Brittany and pull their keyboard onto their lap, ready to play. She then smiled brilliantly for the camera as she said, “Hi, everyone! I’m Brittany—”

And Minnow said, “-and I am Minnow-”

“-and we won the Streamy’s award for Best Original Music In A Web Series! We're still working on a song to celebrate and thank you guys for making this awesome thing possible, because you really did—”

“-we may have great talent and work very hard, but such things are meaningless without popular support. Such is life. If we did not have you as fans, we would not possess this award—”

“-that's just the truth! So we’re gonna write a song about that truth, because showing gratitude is important—”

“-as always, apologies if you are fatigued by the many times we say thank you—”

“-no, Minnow, no apologies! We’ve been over this!” scolded Brittany, as she looked at Minnow.
Minnow ducked their head for a second, then looked again at Brittany. “Should I apologize for apologizing?”

“No, I already forgive you,” was Brittany’s answer.

Minnow beamed.

Santana made a quiet noise, a sort of grunt. Brittany grinned. “Santana, join us on camera! You should be in our award reaction video!”

“Yes,” Minnow agreed, “Brittana fans always leave happy comments when you appear; they like you very much.”

Santana paused briefly, but she did get up and walk over to where they sat at the end of the bed, and took a seat next to Brittany. “Some of the Britinnow shippers don't like me, though.”

“That is true,” Minnow nodded, “but you are her wife that she loves sexually and romantically, while I am her asexual and aromantic friend. Fantasies may be fun-”

“-but you are my reality, Santana,” Brittany said, adoringly, “Sometimes I doubt this world is real, but I never doubt that you are.”

Minnow blinked. “You occasionally think I am a figment of your imagination?”

“Yeah,” Brittany answered, “but never when I'm talking to you, don't worry.”

Minnow grinned at her. “May we sing, now? I am very eager to do so.”

“Yeah, let's do it,” agreed Brittany, and she looked at Santana and requested, “sing with us, babe!”

“I don't really know the words-” Santana protested.

“-don't be silly, you've heard me sing this one to myself in the shower or while I'm doing equations a bunch of times, you must know some of it by now.”

“...I'll sing what I know.”

“Great!” Minnow and Brittany cheered.

Brittany began to strum her instrument and sing.

~Just

Remember that you're standing on a planet that's evolving

And revolving at 900 miles an hour!~

Minnow took their turn at the verse,

~That's orbiting at nineteen minutes a second
So it's reckoned
A sun that is the source of all our power~

Brittany and Minnow sang together,

~The sun, and you and me,
And all the stars that we can see
Are moving at a million miles a day!~

And then, to Minnow and Brittany’s mutual delight and surprise, Santana sang.

~In an outer-spiral arm at forty-thousand miles per hour
Of the galaxy we call the Milky Way~

Minnow knew that all things in life were temporary, transient, subject to entropy. So good things had to be enjoyed while they lasted.

Minnow’s hands energetically played their keyboard with happy excitement as they sang.

~And our galaxy is only one of millions of billions
In this amazing and expanding universe!~

June 2020

“Oh, hi, Rachel. Congratulations.”

“Thank you, Kurt! But, I came over to your table to congratulate you. Two Tonys! Best Scenic Design and Best Costume Design, and well deserved, it’s so difficult for scifi to not come off as tacky, but everything about Lightyears Away seemed so, majestic, despite your small budget, I almost feel as if huge productions from Disney and the like shouldn’t be allowed to be in the same competition as people like us when they have so much more money, but then this happens, we beat The Princess And The Frog!”

“We’?”

“Um. You and I.”
"I didn't know you saw Lightyears Away."

"Well, you do have her number and her Twitter blocked, Broadway Boy, and set her emails as spam."

"Ah, yes."

"Guys, come on…"

"...you’re right, Elliott. Congratulations, Rachel, and congratulations to you too, Jesse."

"...

"...we should get back to our table, Rachel. Rachel? Rachel!"

Rachel was startled out of her flashback, and found herself sat in a chair at her kitchen table, a cup of tea in front of her that Jesse must have just placed there.

"Are you okay?" he asked. He pulled up a chair next to her, and sat down, took her hand in his. "You're not still thinking about what happened at the Tonys, are you?"

She shook her head. "No," she lied.

He didn't buy it. "Rachel," he said, "you can't let the opinions of a couple of bitter jerks-"

"Kurt isn't bitter. Bitter implies envy, and I'm sure he's not envious of me. And calling him a jerk suggests that I don't…"

"Deserve it?" Jesse finished.

Rachel nodded.

"Rachel," Jesse sighed, "that's ridiculous. You don't deserve five years of cold shoulder for taking his ex's side in an argument."

Rachel bit her lip, shook her head again. "We've talked about this, Jesse," she reminded, "it wasn't just that. I had not been a very good friend to him before then."

"You were young," he excused, "we were all crappy people then." After a pause, he added, "I even threw eggs at someone who trusted me."

"Once," she said, "you threw eggs once. You didn't throw them over and over, promising each time it wouldn't happen again."

"Rachel-"

"-I'm a better person now than I was then," Rachel conceded, "but it doesn't matter that I am. Five years ago, I broke his trust. And...you know…" She breathed slowly. "Until that night at the Tonys, a part of me had held onto this hope that he would someday give me just one more chance to be his friend. One last chance."

"And now that hope is gone," Jesse finished.

Rachel sniffed, nodded. "Everyone, my whole life, forgave me, every single time. No matter how much I had hurt them, they always forgave me." She finally looked up at Jesse. "It's not like I didn't mean it when I apologized, I did. I was sincere when I said I was sorry." Rachel looked back
down. “But I’d hurt them again. And maybe that was because everyone always forgave me. It meant I didn't need to think before I acted. So I didn't think.”

Jesse said nothing. He just squeezed her hand.

“It hurts,” Rachel continued, “but...I think it had to happen. Because I'm more thoughtful, now. More careful with how I treat people.” She blinked. “In fact,” she mused, “maybe if he did finally let me back in, I'd revert to how I was.”

Jesse shook his head. “Rachel-”

“Maybe not, I don't know,” she allowed, “maybe I'm just rationalizing. Trying to make this a good thing.” She sighed. “But it still hurts.”

Jesse squeezed her hand again, gave a quick nod, let go of her hand, and stood up. “I know what to do to give you some catharsis. Come here, Rachel.” He took her hand again, coaxed her to stand, and led her to their piano. He let her go, took a seat at the bench, lifted the key cover, placed his fingers on the keys, and began to play.

Rachel took in a deep breath. Jesse was right. This would help.

~Hello from the outside!
At least I can say that I've tried
To tell you
I'm sorry, for breaking your heart
But it don't matter
It clearly
Doesn't tear you apart anymore...~

As the song faded away, Rachel’s heart still ached.
But it was an ache she could live with.
One she would have to live with.

January 1st, 2021

“Whataya thinking about, Kurt?” asked Keiran as he filled Kurt’s, Elliott’s, and his own plate with freshly made hangover eggs.

“Yeah, you’ve got quite a look there,” mumbled a drowsy Elliott before he took another big swig of Keiran’s hangover cure beverage.
Kurt, like a responsible adult, had made sure to drink a lot of water the night before, so he was not hungover, but he had yet to pick on either of them for that. He didn't have much in the way of interest to do so, anyway, with the introspective thoughts that currently floated through his mind.

“It being a new year,” Kurt revealed, “I’m thinking about the past few years, and how crazy they’ve been.”

“How d’ya mean?” Keiran asked as he took his seat at the kitchen table.

“Breaking up with my fiance and beginning a polyamorous relationship but not realizing it for months and publicly coming out about said relationship before any of us had realized,” Kurt began to list, “two of my friends creating and owning a successful queer coffee shop, another friend officially becoming a heart surgeon, me starting a band that won a Grammy for its first album and currently has a nomination for its second, personally knowing someone else who has also won a Grammy and is currently nominated for a song she recorded with a friend of mine, winning two Tonys for a musical I co-authored, personally knew someone else who has also won a Tony and whose husband has won a Tony, someone got a job with NASA and then later won an award with a friend of mine for their YouTube channel, another discovered a subspecies and has a New York Times best selling book on birds she self-illustrated, another is a coach to my former glee club that he’s led to Nationals every year since taking the job, winning nearly every time, another was featured at the Sundance Festival, another became a successful lawyer and is considering a run for Senate, and on that note,” Kurt finally paused to take in a deep breath, “my father is going to be inaugurated as Vice President in just a few days after winning in a landslide with Bernie Sanders against Donald Trump.” He turned his head to stare at Keiran. “So, what do you mean, ‘how d’ya mean’? Do you seriously think that all that isn't completely insane to have all happened to a group of people I knew or currently know, in the space of a few years?”

“I think it's completely mad,” Keiran answered, nonchalantly, “I just wanted to listen to you list it all.”

Kurt glared at him. “You're such an ass,” he muttered, but there was no venom behind it.

“And you're a cunt,” was the reliable response.

After a beat, Kurt let out a little laugh. He reached into his large dressing gown pocket as he stated, “And I’m going to make it just a bit madder.”

He placed three boxes on the table.

Elliott and Keiran both swallowed and stared, forks unmoving on their plates.

Kurt opened them to reveal that, yes, they contained gold rings.

Before Kurt could say anything, Keiran practically shouted, “Fucking shite!”

Kurt blinked. “Excuse me?”

Keiran reached into his jeans’ pocket as he quietly grumbled, “...didn't even bother keeping the receipt,” and then dropped three rings of his own onto the table with a clatter. He shrugged.

“Well,” he comforted himself, “they were only five dollars each, I'm only out fifteen.”

“Five dollars?” Kurt asked, incredulously. “You were going to propose a lifelong bond to us with
Defensively, Keiran said, “Like I'm going to spend over a hundred dollars on rings when you'll inevitably go, ‘I'd rather they be rose gold,’ or whichever.”

“If you were sure I'd be like that, why didn't you keep the receipt?” Kurt demanded. “And I wouldn't have,” he protested, “I'd love any ring you'd give me.”

“Your response to my five dollar rings proves that a lie,” Keiran said, flatly.

Kurt would have sputtered, but the sound a flat box made as it was gently set on the table interrupted them both.

They both looked at Elliott, who they had not seen leave the table to retrieve this box, as he lifted its lid to reveal three matching rings, nestled in some sort of potpourri.

Kurt couldn't tell what the various dried flowers were, but years of experience with Elliott and flowers told him that they carried some meaning of love.

“...wazzat?” questioned Keiran.

“I had Chelsea make me some rings,” Elliott explained, and selected the one in the middle to hold up for them both to see.

Silver and gold, with the band being silver, and something Kurt knew to be a type of Celtic symbol made of gold.

Chelsea had gotten very good at the craft of jewelry making.

“That's the triquetra,” murmured Keiran.

“Yeah,” Elliott said. “I told Chelsea I wanted some sort of Celtic symbol, and she told me about the triquetra, and it sounded perfect.”

“Why, what does it mean?” asked Kurt.

“It can mean all sorts of things,” Keiran answered, “some of them not terribly relevant to us.”

“True,” admitted Elliott. “For us, it means, ‘mind, body, and spirit’. Because we love each other completely, mind, body, and spirit, and, if we were to say which one of us were which, Kurt is mind, Keiran is body, and I'm spirit, and we're all connected, intertwined.” He then tilted the ring, and revealed to each of them the inscription on the inside in Hebrew letters. “It says, ‘eternal love’,,” he said, with a smile.

There was a long moment of silence as they all stared at the ring Elliott held, until Keiran broke it.

“No offense, Kurt,” he stated, “but fuck your rings; we're keeping his.”

Kurt slowly nodded. “Yeah.” He then smiled, and held out his hand.

“Oh,” Elliott blushed, “this one is Keiran’s, actually.” He set it back in the middle of the box, and picked up the ring on the left. He then, with a smile and some ceremony, slid it on Kurt’s finger.

“Thanks, but I've got it,” Keiran said when Elliott picked up his again and reached for his hand, but Elliott only laughed and caught his left hand that he could not quite hide from Elliott, since it was his left side that faced him, and slid the ring on.
“You're never too manly for romance, you goof,” he admonished before he leaned over and kissed him on the nose to tease him.

“So, who gets to put your ring on?” Kurt queried.

“Rock, paper, scissors?” suggested Keiran.

Kurt nodded.

One, two, three!

Both played rock.

“Fuck,” muttered Keiran.

One, two, three!

Both played paper.

“Dammit,” cursed Kurt.

One, two, three!

Both played scissors.

“For Christ’s sake!” they both exclaimed.

Elliott rolled his eyes with a smile.

“What if,” Elliott offered, “Keiran puts it on halfway, since he knew me first, and then Kurt puts it on the rest of the way?”

Both mumbled some version of ‘yeah, that works,’ and that was exactly what they did.

For awhile, all three simply gazed at their rings, quietly.

Then, Kurt began to sing.

~A simple band of gold

Wrapped around my soul

Hard forgiving

Hard forget~

The song started in his past with Blaine.

~Faith is in our hands

Castles made of sand
No more guessing

No regrets~

Kurt finished the verse, then looked at Elliott when he began the chorus,

~Then you came my way on a winter's day

Shouted loudly, “Come out and play!”~

Elliott grinned, and sang back,

~Can't you tell I got news for you?

The sun is shining

And so are you!~

Keiran sang on,

~And we're gonna be alright

Dry your tears and hold tight!~

And all three together,

~Can't you tell I got news for you?

The sun is shining

And so are you!~

They sang and sang, back and forth and together.

It was wonderful, as always.

As it would be.

As it should be.
Songs in this chapter-

- **Bright Future In Sales** by Fountains Of Wayne
- **Q.U.E.E.N** by Janelle Monáe featuring Erykah Badu
- **Galaxy Song** from Monty Python
- **Hello** by Adele
- **Sun Is Shining** by Axwell /

Leaving The Liars In Lima (And Finding Truth In New York) Soundtrack

I managed to work in the twin cock joke! XD
The petals in the potpourri-
Heliotrope- eternal love
Honeysuckle- bonds of love
Myrtle- marriage, true love
Red rose- love and desire
Yarrow- everlasting love

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