Callaway Place
by sunshineoptimismmandangles

Summary

Callaway Place is an old coastal mansion filled with magic, history and secrets. To eleven year old Blaine Anderson it is the place he is forced to spend his summer vacation when he’d rather be anywhere else in the world. But a magic mirror and a spine-tingling enchantment soon have Blaine glad he came.

Kurt Hummel is a young boy growing up in a quiet little town hoping for a bigger future. He is holding onto secrets few know about, while learning about an ancient magic that will transform his life.

Kurt and Blaine’s lives intersect in the most unexpected way and they are both forever changed, but what will they do as they grown into young men and are unable to leave the magic of their childhood behind?

Notes

First off I want to thank Oleanna for being the best beta ever and helping with this story even when she has a heavy school schedule. You are wonderful!

This story has some young Kurt and Blaine to it because *eons* ago I received an anonymous prompt about writing a fic where Kurt and Blaine meet as children. Nonny if you are out there, I’m sorry it has taken me lifetimes to fill this.

This is a WIP but I have half of it written already and my plan is to post once a week either on Fridays or Saturdays.
Thanks and enjoy!
“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.” - T. S. Eliot

September, 2018 – Bluespruce, Maine

Blaine felt numb. He’d been running on adrenaline for so long, and now that energy had snapped in two, leaving him feeling drained and terrified. He slowly looked around the old dusty room, empty frames lining the walls and broken glass littering the floor. He took a step towards one of the vacant frames, leaning down to carefully pick up a piece of glass. It was silent, and Blaine knew deep inside of himself that there was no magic there. The mirrors had shattered—not to spread their enchantment but to break it.

He dropped the piece of mirror as he stood and walked deliberately from the room, shards of glass crunching under the soles of his shoes. He walked down the hall and towards the foyer, every mirror
he passed on the way just as shattered as the last. He didn’t waste any time checking all the mirrors on the ground floor – he knew exactly what he would find. Instead, he walked up the wide stairway and then down the south hall, the mirrors here also nothing more than empty frames and sprinkled glass. He paused only briefly to shoot a glare at the large portrait hanging on the wall by the door to the third floor.

The numb feeling in his chest was morphing into something else, not the steady fear he’d been running on, but something strong, something driving – it was morphing into anger. He walked up the old creaky stairs to the third floor, breath coming a little faster.

Blaine stood in the middle of the large open room, his muscles tense and his body trembling from head to toe. He clenched his jaw and balled his fist staring resolutely at the tall full length mirror in front of him. The twining vines of its frame radiating with a burning light, the glass heaving inward and out like the lung of a living creature. The only mirror in the house not broken.

All Blaine had ever wanted was to be rid of this thing, to run as far away from it as he possibly could. Now, he was staring it down like an enemy he was about to meet on the battlefield. Every instinct he had was telling him to run, to flee, to leave this place behind him for good. Instead, he took a step closer. And another. And another.

There were a myriad of small golden lights floating on the other side of the glass, swirling and swarming around calling to him. It wasn’t necessary; he didn’t need an enchantment to know what he had to do. At this point he’d do anything. He reached out an unsteady hand towards the glass, pressing his fingers and then his whole palm against it. The glass was warm and pulsing, and it had a give to it in a way that glass really shouldn’t. Blaine shuddered and closed his eyes, drawing on all the courage he had. Then, he opened his eyes and pressed his hand harder against the glass; his hand started to sink in, like moving through thick mud.

Blaine wanted to scream, but he stuffed it down, pushing forward until the mirror had engulfed his arm up to the elbow. Blaine cleared his throat trying to sound steady, “I’m coming Kurt,” he promised and then took a step forward, the mirror pulling him through to the other side.
Hello dear readers! I am finally posting my new story and I am very excited to share it with you. After Hearthstone I didn't know if I would be writing anymore klaine fanfic, but it looks like I had at least one more story in me. I will be posting weekly over the weekends until the story is finished. :)

Huge thanks to Oleanna for being my beta and my sounding board.

I always *love* to here from you if you feel like leaving me a comment. <3

Enjoy!

“Houses have memories. They see, they hear, they remember; but they do not speak. They keep our secrets within their walls.” – Anonymous

June 2006 – Bluespruce, Maine

Gray storm clouds gathered heavily in the sky, hiding the sun and muting color. They were the kind of clouds that caused the sky to take on a greenish hue and they made everything feel muffled and somehow suspended in time – as if minutes slowed down, waiting for the rain to burst from the clouds and cover the ground, allowing time to move quickly again. A chill wind from the east, coming off the ocean, intensified the cool feeling of anticipation in the air. Everything waited, the world was in limbo.

On the train platform, a young boy also stood waiting, glancing up at the storm clouds and then back down at his watch. A large black rolling suitcase was set next to him and he readjusted the Skechers backpack on his shoulder as he nervously shifted his weight from one foot to another.

He didn’t want to be here.

He didn’t want to be here when the rain started. He didn’t want to be here as the sky grew darker. He didn’t want to be here alone and worrying if he’d been forgotten. He didn’t want to be here at all.

He was just wondering if there was any possible way he’d been sent to the wrong train station when an older man with gray hair and a mustache rounded the corner. He was tall and excessively thin and his skin was tan and rough looking like he’d spent years outside unaware of the use of sunscreen.

“Blaine Anderson?” he asked, taking off the wool fisherman’s cap he was wearing and smiling at Blaine.

“Yes, yes that’s me.” Blaine grabbed the handle of his suitcase, happy to know he was at least at the right place.
“Sorry about the wait,” the man said, walking towards him and reaching out to take the handle of the suitcase from Blaine, “I’ve got this. I would have been here sooner but there was a… misunderstanding about which train you were coming in on.”

“That’s okay,” Blaine said, “I haven’t been waiting long.” In fact, Blaine felt like he’d been waiting forever, but that would be rude to say.

The man gave him another quick smile as if he knew Blaine had been there a while, then he put his cap back on and started walking, Blaine’s suitcase rumbling behind him. It had one squeaky wheel which seemed extra loud in the stillness of the air as it was pulled over the wooden slats of the platform.

“I’m Andrew by the way. Not just some random person trying to steal you away or something.”

Blaine laughed a little at that, but it was forced. He had been waiting for someone named Andrew, but in all reality he had no idea if this was the right person. He just had to assume that a kidnapper wasn’t going to know what name to give him, much less Blaine’s own name.

“Your aunt would have come out to meet you with me, but like I said… miscommunication.”

Blaine nodded as he trailed behind Andrew, trying hard to keep up with his impressively long strides. “Should have brought the umbrella from the car, it might start raining before we get to the parking lot.”

“I don’t mind a little rain,” Blaine said, glancing up at the dense clouds.

Andrew laughed and looked back at him, “It isn’t going to be just a little rain.”

As if to emphasize Andrew’s point, the air shivered as thunder rolled through the sky causing the iron light features on the side of the train station to rattle. The wind was picking up and Blaine wasn’t sure an umbrella would have helped much anyway.

It turned out that they needn’t have worried, the train station at the parking lot was small and just right out front. Andrew led Blaine to a metallic red Cadillac straight out of the 1960s, he popped the truck, and with a surprising show of strength, because Blaine hadn’t really packed light, swung the suitcase into the back. He closed the trunk and then proceeded to open the back door of the car to Blaine who thanked him and slid inside.

Andrew rounded the car, getting in behind the wheel; he took a second to adjust the mirror and put on his seatbelt and then glanced back at Blaine to make sure he was fastened in before turning over the engine.

He pulled smoothly out of the gravelled parking lot and onto a small two lane road. “So,” Andrew spoke up after a moment, “What is a young boy like you going to do in Maine this summer?”

“Visit my aunt,” Blaine answered simply.

“Mmmhmm.” Andrew glanced at Blaine quickly in the rearview mirror, “A ten year old kid with only a big old house and Ms. Helen to keep him company all summer? Sounds like fun.”

“I’m twelve.”
“I’m sure that will help the excitement.”

Blaine sighed and looked out the window, he knew they were near the Atlantic Ocean, he could smell the salt in the air but he couldn’t see it from here. It didn’t help that the sky was growing darker by the minute.

“It wasn’t really up to me.” Blaine finally conceded. “I wanted to go to Europe with my parents or visit my older brother and… well that didn’t work out. I guess my aunt was the only one who wanted me.” The last words were quiet, said almost to himself.

“Ah,” Andrew answered and Blaine looked up to see him glancing back at him through the rearview mirror again.

“Cooper, my brother, might come and visit me next month.”

“That’d be nice,” Andrew answered and then the silence between them lengthened.

“And how do you know Aunt Helen?” Blaine asked to fill the stillness.

“I work for her. Groundskeeper, handyman, general Mr. Fixit. There used to be more staff, now it’s just me, Millie the cook and a girl from town who comes in once or twice a week to clean the old place. Callaway Place is a huge house, have you seen pictures?”

“No,” Blaine shook his head, he’d never been here, he hadn’t seen pictures, he didn’t even really know his Aunt Helen. Sure he’d met her once or twice when he was a toddler, but he couldn’t remember those times. His mother’s older, unmarried sister wasn’t someone who had been an active part of his life. Until now. He wondered if he was even really welcome in her home or if he’d been pawned off on her against her will.

“Callaway Place used to have a butler and at least two live-in maids, and a footman and several groundskeepers in its prime. It’s an old Gothic Revival Victorian. Beautiful, but a lot of it is shut up now, Ms. Helen says she doesn’t need all that space to herself; she used to host big parties and events and she would keep the place pristine and open for tours… not so much in the past few years.”

“Why not?” Blaine asked, wanting to know anything he could about the woman he was about to spend the next three months with.

“Oh, you know, other things on her mind…” Andrew answered unhelpfully and fell silent again.

No, Blaine didn’t know, but apparently Andrew wasn’t going to tell him.

It was late afternoon, but the sky had grown so dark it looked much later outside. Then came the first *pat, pat* of raindrops on the hood of the car. Andrew flipped on the windshield wipers, and it was as if the swollen clouds took that as a sign and finally let loose the heavy rain they’d been holding back. It pelted down from the sky, Blaine couldn’t make out any of the landscape they were passing, had no idea what kind of place Bluespruce, Maine was because he couldn’t see a lick of it.

Andrew slowed his driving, his headlights cutting a path through the deluge and Blaine just looked out the window at the rain and his reflection in the glass. This was a bad omen for his summer. He just wanted it to be over already.
After maybe forty-five minutes of driving, Andrew took a turn off the main road to a narrow, steep dirt lane. They were winding up a hill when the wheels of the Cadillac started to spin and the car began to roll backwards.

Andrew swore under his breath.

He pushed heavy on the gas pedal, but instead of continuing forward, they slipped down the hill. Blaine could hear the car trying, engine revving, and mud splattered the back window as it was kicked up from under the wheels. They’d managed to stop slipping down the hill, but still weren’t going forward.

Andrew swore again, “Damn hill. It’s so steep and the rain is washing this road right out from under us.”

Blaine gripped his seat a little in worry as he felt the car drifting backwards again.

“It’s no use,” Andrew curved the car to the right off the road and near the tree line that bordered them. He turned off the car and looked back over his shoulder at Blaine. “We’re almost there, but we’re going to have to walk the rest of the way in the rain. Ready to get muddy?”

Blaine smiled a little – that almost sounded fun. “Sure.”

Andrew opened the glove compartment, “I’m not even bothering with the umbrella, the rain is practically sideways anyway.” Instead, he pulled out a large flashlight and passed it back to Blaine. Then he popped the truck and got out of the car.

Blaine followed suit. In the small confines of the vehicle, the rain had seemed bad, but as soon as Blaine stepped out of the car, the wind slammed the door shut and almost knocked him off his feet. The fact that he was standing in about three inches of squelching, slippery mud didn’t help.

“Do you want me to carry my suitcase?” Blaine yelled over the rain.

“Are you kidding? I want to actually make it to the house sometime today and this thing is practically the same size as you!” Andrew walked up to him, not pulling the suitcase behind him through the mud, but having lifted it up to carry on his shoulders. “That was meant to be a jab about the hugeness of the suitcase not your height!” Andrew shouted and smiled.

Blaine rolled his eyes and followed Andrew as he moved forward, letting the flashlight illuminate their way.

The rain was harsh, whipping into them and Baine stumbled a few times, he’d be covered in mud and drenched to the bone by the time they got to shelter. Andrew had been right though, they were almost there, it wasn’t long before Blaine looked up to see the silhouette of a large dark house illuminated only by sudden burst of lightning. It looked like something straight out of an old horror movie, pointed arches over the dark windows, towers pointing to the stormy sky, and a covered porch in front that looked like a huge gaping mouth.

Blaine gulped a little, he was too old to be scared of a house, and he wasn’t scared really… but with the rain and the darkness and the way the building almost looked like it shifted every time it was illuminated by lightning, he couldn’t help it, it was just creepy.

They finally made it up to the door, standing in the relative protection of the covered porch. Andrew
let the suitcase down and was about to open the front door when it swung open so fast Blaine let out an audible gasp.

“Andrew!” A woman’s voice called, but Blaine couldn’t see her from where he was standing. “What on earth are you doing?”

“I’m dropping off the boy Ms. Helen.”

“Boy? Just get in here out of the rain.”

Andrew entered with the suitcase and Blaine followed him, his backpack feeling twice as heavy now that it was drenched; he was glad Andrew had done the heavy lifting.

Inside, the house was a immediate relief from the harsh weather outside. The front hall was wood paneled, the wood gleaming in the golden light of the lamps on the wall. There was a plush ornate rug on the floor, red with patterns of animals and seascapes across it. As Blaine looked down, he realized he was dripping rain on to it and smearing mud all over.

“Oh my god,” he took a step back hitting the closed front door, “I’m so sorry, I’m making a mess.”

Blaine heard a chuckle and looked up to see the third person in the room for the first time. She was an older woman; mid-fifties, short, like his mother, like himself - with dark wavy hair pulled back into a low ponytail, just a hint of gray at the temples. She wore green horn-rimmed glasses and smiled at him with the most welcoming smile he could have asked for.

“Oh you poor thing, what has Andrew done to you? I can’t even tell if that is my nephew or just some kind of mud monster standing in my house.”

“I’m sorry,” Blaine repeated.

“Don’t apologize for the weather!” She said, throwing her hands up, her arms jingling with the sound of the many bracelets she wore, “I wish it were more welcoming. Andrew,” she turned to him. “Why did you decide to roll my nephew around in the mud before you delivered him?”

“The car wouldn’t get up that blasted hill. We had to walk.”

“What an adventure,” she smiled again, and Blaine couldn’t help but smile as well, she looked a lot like his mother. An older, more colorful, version of her at least.

“You just take off your shoes here and your jacket and anything else you can, I’ll get this all cleaned up, no worries.”

Blaine followed her instructions.

“Andrew could you bring his things up to his room for us, then you can meet us in the kitchen.

“What has she made?” Andrew asked eagerly.

“Lemon bars I believe.”

Andrew smiled at that and then lifted the suitcase again, making his way to the wide staircase in the middle of the room, his white socks the only thing not muddied on him. Blaine wasn’t any better,
filthy and wet from head to toe.

His Aunt looked him up and down, “Well Blaine, you’ve changed so much since I last saw you, from what I can see of you at least.” She had a deep voice for a woman and she spoke gently, it was comforting and nothing like his mother. “We’ll follow Andrew up so you can see your room and get washed up. Then, I know Millie has made snacks.”

“Thank you.” Blaine said shivering a little, the house was big and drafty and he was still dripping mud and rainwater on the ground.

The staircase in the hall was wide and wooden, carpeted in a continuation of the red patterned rug in the hall, it was plush and absorbed the sound of their footfalls. Blaine took a look around the old house, it was large and open, the stairway leading to an interior balcony on the second floor. He could still hear the sound of the storm raging outside, but the house had noises too, it creaked against the wind, the windows shook, and the wood paneled walls made a knocking or tapping sound that Blaine didn’t understand, but assumed was just part of being an old house.

His aunt didn’t say anything as they followed Andrew down a long hall lined with old paintings and lamps set in the wall. Several of the paintings were portraits that made Blaine’s spine tingle as the eyes seemed to watch him move down the hallway.

Andrew stopped in front of a thick wooden door that was partially open; he pressed it open the rest of the way with his foot and it creaked inward. Blaine followed his aunt in, the room was a good size—though not as big as his bedroom back home, not as modern either, but that wasn’t a huge surprise. The wall the door was set in was wood paneled like the rest of the house he’d seen so far, but the other three walls were covered in wallpaper, if it was actual vintage paper or a reproduction he couldn’t tell, but it fit the house, a deep blue floral rococo design with bouquets of red and gold roses. It was busy and ornate and Blaine thought it probably made the room seem smaller than it was.

There was a wide window with a window seat on the opposite wall, rain pounding against it, a fireplace to his left with a huge old mirror hanging over it. That was a real antique, he could tell by the way the glass was fogged around the edges. To his right, headboard pressed flat against the wall, was a huge four post canopy bed bookended by nightstands.

The only other furniture in the room was an old wardrobe, and a polished oak secretary’s desk and chair.

The whole place looked as if he’d walked back in time at least a hundred years, but it was clean and cozy and Blaine tried not to be disappointed that this is where he’d be spending his summer months.

“Home sweet home,” his aunt announced.

He turned to look at her, her hands were on her hips and she was smiling kindly at him. “I can’t imagine this is how you wanted to spend your summer.”

“No… it’s… it’s great.”

“Yes, every teenage boys dream,” she said dryly, but her soft smile remained, “You can see the seaside from that window though,” she said nodding, “When it isn’t raining like this at least. And I’m sure you’ll spend plenty of time at the beach. And you have free reign of the house, though most of the rooms here on the second floor are dusty and unused. My bedroom, the kitchen, parlor and dining room are downstairs. There is a third story as well, but I have it shut off, just because there is
too much to clean and keep up with as it is. No one person needs this kind of space.”

Blaine nodded, he was tired from his flight and the subsequent train trip and trek through the rain and mud, and he was still chilled to the bone.

“Your washroom is the room to the right of this one. Feel free to shower or bathe or whatever you want and then meet me downstairs in the kitchen?”

“Yes ma’am.” Blaine said and she nodded briskly and left the room, Andrew had already made his way out, no doubt in the search of lemon bars.

Blaine let his backpack fall to the ground, his shoulders slumping, the hike from the car to the house had been a sudden rush of energy, but that had faded now and all he could think of was the long boring summer in front of him. There was a knock on the door and then his aunt slipped her head in again.

“I forgot to say that I’m glad you’re here Blaine. It is so very nice to see you and I’m excited to have family around.” Her smile was sweet and sincere as she quickly popped out of the room again. Blaine had to smile as well, the first genuine smile since his parents had put him on a plane early that morning. At least someone seemed to want him around.

It rained for days. Aunt Helen said it was unseasonable to have this much rain. June and July were the rainy months, but nothing like this. It meant that Blaine was stuck inside away from the beach, and after only four days, he was already getting bored of Maine.

Aunt Helen was kind, a little flighty, she seemed to forget he was there from time to time, but she wasn’t bad company. He saw Andrew around occasionally and Mille was a wonderful cook, the lemon bars she’d made the first day he was here had all but melted in his mouth.

Still, even though his aunt tried to engage him in conversation during meals and was a very pleasant person, she seemed to be always busy in her room doing who knew what, and Blaine was left to his own devices.

He started exploring the old house. He’d only gotten one good look at it from the outside during a brief lull in the rain; the first two stories were painted red while the top floor was a mossy green. The front of the house was bookended with turrets on each side, it had pointed arches over the third story windows and was covered in ornate trim work. It was a sight to behold, intimidating and regal, but not nearly as spine-chilling as it had been in the rain and the lightning.

As grand as Callaway Place seemed on the outside, it belied how vast it was on the inside. Blaine wasn’t surprised his aunt had the third floor shut off, the first two stories were more than enough as it was. Blaine spent the rainy days systematically going from room to room, the house groaning and creaking always sending a chill up his back. The walls seemed to tap sometimes, but that was just the way with old houses and he told himself he’d get used to it.

The second floor was mostly unused bedrooms, but he found a study with bookshelves of old medical books— in the back of his mind he remembered that some Great Great Uncle or Grandfather or something had been a doctor. He spent a little time flipping through a book so timeworn its pages were yellow and it had that slightly floral scent that old books sometimes exude. He chuckled to himself when he came to a chapter detailing how a person’s personality could be determined by the shape of their head.
He also found a sewing room that his Aunt must actually use sometimes, because though it had an old iron foot-pedal sewing machine, there was a new electric Singer as well. There was a creepy bedroom Blaine didn’t spend much time in that appeared to be decorated for a little girl, a little girl in the 1800s, rosy floral wallpaper and porcelain dolls on a shelf. Each room was like walking into a miniature museum, some more updated than others. He could see why people used to tour Callaway Place.

Still, even with the fascination of the old house, the hours spent reading the books he brought from home, and playing his Nintendo DS, he still longed to go outside, be in the sun, actually remember that it was summer.

If only he could be in France with his parents or in California with Cooper.

He never complained to his aunt, though; it wasn’t her fault that his brother was too busy trying to “make it big” and that his parents had him at such a late age that now they just wanted to travel like a retired couple without the complications of a twelve year old weighing them down.

All in all, at least he enjoyed his aunt; she would shift from vibrant and verbose to quiet and studious on a dime, but he could tell she wanted him to have a good summer here. She asked questions about home and kept telling him how much he would love the beach once it finally stopped raining. She said she’d take him to town too; there was a vintage style candy shop he might like.

One evening, they were in the downstairs parlor—another room in the house that was busily wallpapered, with a gold diamond paper on the walls and matching mint green paper across the ceiling, polished wood trim around the top edges of the ceiling that matched the oak floor. Blaine was playing *Yoshi’s Island* for the millionth time, his aunt across from him in a big plush reading chair.

The wind whistled over the house and rain pelted the windows; Blaine liked these evenings spent with his aunt, just sitting and sharing space with her helped ward of the loneliness that he knew three months of his forced summer isolation was going to bring.

“You must be bored out of your mind,” his aunt said suddenly and Blaine looked up from his game, wondering if she could read minds.

“It has to stop raining eventually,” Blaine offered with a smile.

“There is a family that comes to stay at a beach house nearby every summer, they have a daughter your age, maybe you two can spend some time together. I’m afraid I’m not good company for the young these days, my mind is too consumed with my studies.”

“Studies?” Blaine asked, putting down his game to give his aunt his full concentration.

She waved her hand at him, “Oh I’ve been compiling a history of Bluespruce, and our family’s part in it. You know there have been Callaways here since 1790?”

“I didn’t know that,” Blaine said conversationally.

“Yes, the Reverend William Callaway was the first of us here. His son, Henry, had this house built in 1823, a gift for his new bride. There have been numerous add-ons and improvements since of course. I, for one, am very grateful for the indoor plumbing.” She winked at him, “Have you seen
much of the house?”

“I’ve enjoyed the little bit of exploring I’ve done,” Blaine answered, “that medical library upstairs is interesting.”

“Oh you are too polite, I’m sure an old house like this has little interest for you.” She leaned forward, slipping off her horn-rimmed glasses and letting them hang by the chain around her neck. Her eyes sparkled, “I could tell you some stories. In all the research I’ve done over the years, I’ve become a little obsessed with Saffron Callaway. Your Great Great Great Great Great Grandmother, the woman this house was built for. She was remarkable. There is a portrait of her at the end of the south hallway on the second floor.”

Blaine nodded along, enjoying the obvious excitement in his aunt’s eyes.

“What made her so remarkable?” Blaine was actually interested in the history of the house, despite the fact that his aunt was right, most twelve year old boys wouldn’t care. But Blaine had always been curious and studious, he was like his aunt in that way.

“What made her remarkable?” Aunt Helen grinned at him, her soft brown eyes that normally reminded him so much of his mother took on an almost frenetic gleam, “Saffron Callaway was a witch.” Her mouth curved around the word like she could taste it on her tongue.

The wind howled and thunder crashed outside, adding weight to his aunt’s eager declaration.

Blaine’s heart hammered against his chest, the house seemed colder as soon as the word had been spoken, “A witch?” Blaine repeated slowly, “An actual witch? What does that even mean?”

Helen shrugged her shoulders, “The Callaways were a very pious and respected family back in the day, but Saffron was made of different stock – she was described as wild and worldly, and it was an open secret that she practiced witchcraft, especially towards the end of her short life. The family pretended not to know.”

“Right…” Blaine said, thinking about the portraits he’d seen upstairs and wondering if he’d seen one of Saffron – the family witch.

“Learning about her has made me very interested in the study of magic.” Aunt Helen continued, “Over the years, the women in our family have dabbled you know.”

“Dabble?” Blaine repeated. “In magic?” The only other female Callaway Blaine knew was his mother and he couldn’t picture his prim, high-class mother having anything to do with supposed magic. “Not real magic.” Blaine said, trying to keep up with the sharp curve this conversation had taken.

“Oh yes. I mean, I’m not proficient by any means, I’ve only been studying for a few years, but I can perform some simple magic. I feel that even just the study of it has awoken some of the magic stored in this old house.”

Oh god, his aunt was a crazy person.

Blaine stared at her in disbelief—he was about to spend the next three months with a crazy person.

She laughed and for a moment Blaine felt relieved, he didn’t really know his aunt that well, but
maybe this was just a demonstration of an odd sense of humor.

“You don’t believe me.”

“Well... I…” Blaine closed his mouth, he’d been taught to respect his elders and he was trying very hard not to tell his mother’s older sister that she sounded insane.

“I mean it, I found some old books up on the third floor a few years back that deal with practical magic and I’ve been working on it. I’ll never be as good as Saffron was, I don’t have the natural talent. But believe me Blaine there is magic in this house.”

Lightning struck the air somewhere very close, the house tremored and the lights flickered and then buzzed before coming back on. The timing was obviously just a coincidence, but still it made the hairs on the back of Blaine’s neck rise.

“A witch.” Blaine said yet again, “And the house has magic?”

“Yes,” Helen smiled, picking up her book again, “Haven’t you heard it? The tapping?”

“The…” Blaine swallowed, feeling nervous, he was ready for his aunt to admit she was just pulling his leg, this house was creepy enough on its own.

“Listen,” she whispered.

Blaine listened, mostly he heard the wind outside, but between rumbles of thunder, he did hear something. He’d heard it before, that patter that wasn’t the rain on the windows. A patter from inside the house, that Blaine had just attributed to the creaking and groaning of an old building.

“You do hear it.” Helen said, putting her book down on a nearby side table.

“What... what is that?”

“The mirrors,” she answered and Blaine’s eyes swung to the long gilded mirror that hung on the wall across from him.

“What?”

“It’s a link to the other side.”

“Other side?”

“The land of the dead.”

Blaine felt his spine tingle. He didn’t believe in that kind of thing. Still, he stared at the mirror for a while; it did seem to make noise. He got up from his seat, leaving his Nintendo DS behind; he walked to the old mirror, knowing his aunt’s eyes were watching his every move. The tapping stopped as he got nearer, and really it probably was just the old house creaking. He stood silent for a moment, looking at his own hazy reflection in the mirror’s blackened glass.

“Tap, tap, tap,” his aunt said cheerfully, not noticing Blaine jump as she picked up her book once again.
The mirror remained silent.
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Blaine lay in bed that night, bedspread up to his chin, and the rain was still strong outside even though Andrew had mentioned that it looked like they were going to start getting some sunshine the next day. Blaine felt gloomy, in his mind it would just keep raining all summer, and even if Cooper found the time to visit, they would just have to sit inside doing puzzles or something and then Cooper would get bored and go back to California.

Blaine turned over on his side, trying to push away those dreary thoughts; he attempted to fall asleep thinking about how nice the beach would be once the sun finally did come out, but his attention was continually drawn across the room to the large old mirror that hung over his fireplace.

*The mirrors are a link to the other side, the land of the dead.* His aunt had said. Not even thoughts of Cooper or the beach could get that horrifying thought out of his head.

Blaine looked at the mirror and he stared hard at it across the room, his apprehension growing, not able to even close his eyes – until he heard it.

*Tap, tap, tap.*

He squeezed his eyes shut tight and quickly pulled the covers over his head.

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Andrew had been right about the weather, the next afternoon found the sun finally peeking its head out from behind clouds and Blaine ran down the wide front staircase, almost tripping over his feet in his haste. “Aunt Helen! Aunt Helen!” He called as he reached for the front door, “I’m going to go down to the beach!”

His aunt had emerged from the parlor, a thick leather-bound book in her hands, “Wait a minute!” Blaine’s heart sunk; now that it was finally sunny was she really going to make him stay inside?

“Millie packed you some snacks,” she smiled and nodded back to the kitchen, “And there’s a pail on the counter if you want to bring it along and go beach combing, the water is still probably too cold to really swim, but there are still lots of things to do.

Blaine smiled and ran past her towards the kitchen before quickly turning around and surprising his aunt with a tight hug, “Thank you!” and then he was off again, hearing Helen laughing behind him.

Millie had made him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and put it along with an orange, a water bottle and two gingersnap cookies in a brown paper bag for him. He thanked her, grabbed the pail his aunt had mentioned, and headed off to the beach. Blaine hurried over a hill behind the house and stood on top, getting his first, clear-skied view of the Atlantic Ocean. He smiled and let the salty air waft though his curls.

The beach here wasn’t like the beach he knew from California visiting Cooper. It was rockier, and had rolling dunes speckled with beach grass. It was gorgeous and Blaine’s pent up anxiety flowed out of him, washed away with the rolling waves. Blaine felt a warm tug in his chest, realizing that he was actually going to have some fun this summer after all.

He left his lunch bag and pail on the ground and ran down the hill, laughing and kicking of his shoes
so that he could splash ankle-deep into the water. His aunt had been right, it was cold, but after the time spent cooped up in that creepy old house he didn’t even care.

He spent hours combing the beach collecting seashells and sea glass. He found a tidal pool filled with a crab and a few starfish, and he spent a moment tossing the starfish back into the ocean, afraid they’d dry out and die without his help. He gave the crab a wide berth, though, it’s one big yellow claw looking menacing.

The sun grew high in the sky as Blaine ran along the beach, his skin soaking up the rays. Once the sun started dipping, Blaine sat down with sand between his toes and took out the sandwich, orange, and cookies. He thought he could probably spend all summer doing exactly what he’d done today and he’d never grow tired of it… it would only be better if he had someone who could pass the time with him. There had to be other kids his age in Bluespruce. Maybe he’d meet some and strike up a friendship.

When it started getting dark and a little chilly, Blaine made his way back to Callaway Place, pail full of treasures, and his nose freckled by the sun. He was tired and a little sunburned and ravenously hungry, but he was happy. Maybe Maine wasn’t so bad after all.

His Aunt greeted him at the door as if she’d been waiting for him; he followed her into the kitchen, they never ate in the formal dining room, and let out an audible “mmmm” when he smelled an amazing scent in the air.

“Millie made clam chowder and we have sourdough bread.” Aunt Helen said, “That is if you’re hungry.”

“I’m always hungry,” Blaine answered without thinking and Aunt Helen laughed.

“Growing boys.”

He ate dinner with his aunt, it was delicious, and there was key-lime pie for dessert. Afterwards, they both retired to the living room, his aunt reading some old book again, taking notes as she went along on a separate pad of paper, and Blaine curled up in his favorite chair to re-read Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix for the fourth time.

“You know, I wondered if you’d like to see that portrait,” his aunt spoke up out of the blue.

“Portrait?”

“Of Saffron Callaway. Upstairs?”

“Oh,” Blaine looked down to remember what page he was on, “Sure.” Blaine had thankfully forgotten all about his witchy great great great something grandmother while enjoying the beach today. He unconsciously glanced up at the mirror on the wall listening for tapping. He didn’t hear anything from it.

He got up and followed his aunt out of the room and up the carpeted stairs; she pointed out several portraits on the way down the hall, most of the names not really meaning anything to him. They reached the end of the south hallway where they came up to a door Blaine had only ever seen closed.

“Where does that go?”
Aunt Helen glanced at it quickly, “Oh to the third floor, but this is what we came for.” She motioned to the wall where a very large painting hung.

Blaine let out a small gasp, surprised he’d never noticed it before. It was a portrait of a young, beautiful blonde woman. She was sitting straight-backed in a winged chair, her hands folded in her lap. There was a soft smile on her ruby red lips and her glinting curls were piled on her head, some of them loose and framing her lovely face.

Her eyes were a golden brown and as Blaine looked at them, they seemed to pierce straight through him as if she knew he was there. The painting was large enough that she was almost life sized and it was in good condition – besides the fairly colonial style of it, it almost looked brand new, and was painted in such detail Blaine had to lean forward to see the brush strokes and convince himself it wasn’t actually a photograph.

After a moment’s inspection, Blaine finally spoke, “She doesn’t look like a witch.”

His aunt laughed, “What did you expect? Warts and a pointed hat?”

“I don’t know, just something that made her look… different. I guess.” He looked from his aunt back to the painting. Saffron Callaway was uncommonly beautiful, but otherwise didn’t seem magical in any way.

“I think there is something there, if you really look at the eyes.” Helen answered.

Blaine leaned forward, again staring at the golden eyes in the picture, the more he looked at them, the more unnerved he became. The artist had uncannily painted the singular shade of brown and gold that Blaine’s own eyes were. He didn’t see eyes that color very often. No one in his family had that same shade of russet eyes, but apparently he had genes that could be dated back to the 1800s. He looked at Safron Callaway’s eyes and then–

Blaine let out a little shout of fear and quickly leaped back from the portrait, his heart pounding against his chest. What had he just seen?

“What’s wrong?” His aunt asked, concerned.

“She blinked.”

Aunt Helen looked from Blaine to the picture and back again. “Blinked?”

Blaine could feel his cheeks heating up, “I mean it seemed… It must have been a trick of the light.”

His aunt gave him a long contemplative look. Blaine jumped again, but didn’t shout this time as he heard that same familiar tapping sound he so closely associated with Callaway Place coming from behind him.

He spun around to see a mirror hanging on the opposite wall. Why were there so many mirrors in this weird old house? As he looked at the mirror, he noticed Saffron Callaway’s portrait was reflected from behind him out of the old filmy glass. The glass continued to tap almost like it was crackling… or like something was behind it trying to get out.

Blaine gulped.
“Tap, tap, tap,” Aunt Helen said, lifting her hand and placing her palm on the glass until the noise stopped. Then, she curved a finger and tapped against the glass deliberately three times with her nail.

Blaine held his breath as he heard a returning *tap, tap, tap* seemingly coming from the mirror itself.

“I… I think I want to go back to my book,” Blaine said, his throat dry.

Helen looked down at him as if she’d forgotten he was there. “Oh okay, I’ll see you tomorrow then.” She turned back to the mirror, her hand still spread on the glass and Saffron Callaway gazing eerily over her shoulder.

Blaine didn’t wait a moment longer, he turned on his heel and rushed down the stairs, wanting to put as much distance between him and Saffron Callaway as possible.

Later that night, Blaine was lying in bed unable to sleep. The mirror in his room looking bigger and darker than ever.

He couldn’t take it anymore, the mirror was silent, but glaring at him.

Blaine got up out of bed, walked directly to the desk and pulled the chair out, legs scraping against the floor until he was able to arrange it in front of the fireplace. Then, he went back to the bed, grabbed an extra blanket and brought it with him as he stood on the chair, leaned over the mantel and tucked the blanket around the top of the mirror covering it up. Only then, could he crawl back beneath his sheets and slowly fall asleep.

A soft breeze rumbled through the house, starting in the third floor and making its way down the south hallway and sweeping its way to where Blaine slept. It circled his room, lifting papers from the desk and ruffling the sleeping boy’s dark curls. A sigh emitted from the mirror in the room, muffled under the blanket that covered it, while Blaine slept on.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

AN: Hello to all of you my beautiful readers. Thank you so much for joining me on this journey. I have been working on the sorry for months and I hope you all enjoy it! Thanks to Oleanna for being my long-suffering Beta. Remember friends, comments make my heart warm on these long winter nights. :)

"There's a bit of magic in everything, and some loss to even things out."— Lou Reed

July 2006 – Lima, Ohio

Kurt lay on his back, lids gently closed and hands folded on his chest. Sun lit his face as he lay in the square of light from the window enjoying its warmth like a cat. He felt relaxed and satisfied, focusing on the sounds around him; his breathing steady and deep, the rotating fan further back in the room with its repetitive whirl and crank noise circulating air in the small confined space, the faint sound of nearby conversation from the front room, but he tried to tune that all out. He focused back on his breathing, fading anything unnecessary out of his mind and just listening…

His lips tipped up in a smile as he started to hear something, just a hushed trill at first, but as he shut everything else out and allowed his mind to dwell on the sound, it grew in strength and clarity—a rhythmic rush, like the sound of the ocean maybe? The noise started to fade. He squeezed his eyes tight, there it was, a faint whispering sound now. He got up to his knees, keeping his eyes closed, and turned his body in a slow circle, like a radio tower adjusting to get the best frequency.

He smiled fully as the whispering became louder, not enough to pick out any words, but just enough to know where the noise was coming from.

Kurt opened his eyes and they immediately fell on a box a few feet in front of him; it was the top box of a stack that had come in recently; neither he nor Connie or his father had taken the time to look through it yet.

He stood and walked to the stack of boxes, lifting himself up on his toes to reach the top one and bring it down to the floor where he sat cross legged next to it. He used a key from his pocket to slit the tape on top and opened it with eager anticipation.

This was his favorite part.

The box was full of trinkets—a timeworn oil lamp, a glass perfume bottle with a pump, a decorative handheld mirror, an old rusty adding machine and other items ranging from interesting to useless. He sifted through the box trying to find the source of the noise, but it was fading already. Kurt bit his lip and closed his eyes, trying to focus again.

Let everything fade away, sight, sound, all but that dim whisper…

"Kurt!"

Kurt let out a surprised breath and his eyes snapped open, the whisper vanishing like a candle blown
out. Kurt groaned to himself, he had been so close.

"Kurt," his father called again, opening the door that led from the shop out front to the storeroom, "I need your help, we're really busy, could you please hop on the register?"

Kurt's brow furrowed, "Dad, I'm in the middle of something right now, I heard a sound from this box."

Burt looked down at the box and then to the frustrated face of his son, "Sorry kid, I need you. Put the box to the side and I'll let you bring it home okay?"

Kurt nodded, and did as he was told. He'd been slacking on his job as it was and his father was paying him to help out in the shop this summer. The least he could do was actually ring up customers if his dad needed a hand.

Kurt dusted himself off from lying on the floor, grabbed his oxford weave suit jacket from the hook by the door and slipped it on. His father, Burt, had said Kurt didn't need to dress up so much just to work in the shop, but Kurt enjoyed it. Besides, he thought the customers probably liked it too, walking into an antique store and finding a well-dressed young man behind the counter.

Kurt enjoyed working in the family store, he'd helped out here ever since he could remember – some of his very first memories had been of him and his mom sitting in the back and sorting through items they received from recent estate sales, deciding what to sell, what to toss, what to give to Goodwill. Kurt loved those times.

Kurt had never realized how lucky he was that his parents owned their own shop and he was allowed to be there with them until his time with his mother had been cut short. Now even five years later, walking into the store meant he was surrounded by memories of his mother, but the pain of those recollections were softened by the fact that the shop helped him feel close to her. The only good he could think of that came from losing her so young was that it probably made him more grateful for his father than the typical teenage boy.

Kurt smiled at his dad, busy answering a customer's question about some item or another, Burt nodded up front to where a small line had formed. They were always busiest during the summer when tourists came through town. Lima, Ohio wasn't a hot vacation destination, but it was one of those little charming towns that bed & breakfast lovers and elderly couples flocked to. This summer sales at "Elizabeth's" had been the best they'd seen in years, a good thing too, since last summer they'd come close to having to shut the antique store down, money had been tight.

Kurt weaved through rows of furniture and shelves of knick-knacks, the store was crammed with merchandise, and on first glance, looked like a maze of antiques, but there was a method to the madness if you took the time to look. Burt was great at keeping stock of inventory and Kurt had implemented an organization plan last year where items were placed around the store by type and then within those groups by decade.

He finally made it up to the register, the big glass windows in the front of the shop streaming in the summer sunshine. He smiled at the first woman in line, "Oh these are lovely lamps," Kurt remarked as he rung her up, "From the 1950s you know."

"I've been looking for something just like these for a guest room back home. Such a treat to find them here."

Kurt beamed at her, always pleased when people found what they'd been looking for.
He enjoyed the customers and he knew they liked the "polite young man" that helped them with their purchases. At only thirteen years old, Kurt knew he wasn't spending his summer the way most boys his age were: working in his father's store, going to auctions and estate sales, helping repair old typewriters, and chairs and electronics. It was alright though, because he'd never been much like other boys in town anyway.

Of course he still made time to do some typical summer things; he rode his bike a lot, and sometimes went swimming at the community pool with his friend Mercedes. He loved the sunshine, and would often lay in the hammock in the backyard (his fair skin lathered in plenty of sunblock) and enjoy a good book and a glass of lemonade.

To Kurt though, the best thing about summer was time at the antique shop, which meant more time with his dad, and that was always a good thing. As he'd gotten older, he found it harder and harder to really connect with his father. Burt was a man's man through and through – the get your hands dirty, football watching, beer loving kind of guy. Kurt… wasn't. He enjoyed fashion and music and art, Burt always told him how much he took after his mother, something that Kurt loved to hear, but still he wished he was a little more like his dad.

Summer time in the antique store also meant more time with the abundance of old items that came through the doors of the shop. Kurt loved the history of it all, but more than that, he was obsessed with finding those items that had that special bit of magic to them.

Kurt turned to the next guest in line. A young couple who was buying a china set that he knew contained some magic in it. He could hear the faint sound of rain patting against windows coming off the china. He didn't tell them that, he just smiled as he rung them up, "You should put these somewhere prominent in your home, I bet it will bring you good luck."

The young woman giggled and thanked him as Burt shot him a glance from across the room, Kurt just shrugged. He hadn't really said anything.

It was something both Burt and Elizabeth had instilled him from a young age. Never talk about magic with anyone outside of the family.

Not even with Connie, the middle aged woman who'd worked part time at Elizabeth's for as long as Kurt could remember, knew about Kurt's ability.

"Most people don't believe in magic, they won't understand," Elizabeth had explained, "The fact that you can sense it means you're exceptional."

His mother had taught him about magic – that sometimes certain objects would "speak to you." The first time his mother explained this phenomenon, Kurt was young, no older than five. He was at the shop with his parents and Elizabeth had placed a small colorful glass paper weight in his hands and told him to close his eyes and listen. Kurt still remembered the cool heaviness of the glass in his hand, how he'd closed his eyes like his mother instructed him and focused. He remembered the feeling of excitement and awe that rushed through his chest when he actually heard something from the paperweight, a soft murmur of sound like wind howling through a cavern.

"What is it?" Kurt had asked his mother in wonder.

Elizabeth had just smiled, her soft green eyes sparkling and her cheeks rosy. "Magic," she'd answered leaning in to kiss his cheek.

Kurt learned that his mother came from a long line of Diviners, people who could sense magic in the world around them. Diviners were rare, especially these days as magic had started to fade, but it
seemed like Kurt had the family gift himself.

Burt had never been able to hear anything from any of the items in the store or anywhere else for that matter; he believed in magic because of Elizabeth, but it didn't really have much of an impact on him. Though Kurt would often catch Burt watching Elizabeth teach him how to listen for magic and would notice the warm smile on his father's face.

Kurt glanced at his father now, baseball cap and plaid flannel shirt, a pair of jeans Kurt was pretty sure his father had owned for Kurt's whole life. Burt could be gruff and direct, he'd probably never imagined himself owning an antique shop, but it was what Elizabeth had wanted; besides Burt had always been good at history. He was also good with his customers; people who bought things here always knew they were getting a fair deal. Kurt smiled at his father as he helped a little old lady get an antique suitcase off a high self. He didn't always understand his dad, but he loved him.

He kept ringing people up until the line started to grow shorter and shorter; when there was a lull, he took a moment to tidy up the front counter, smiling as his fingers brushed over the paper weight that still whistled with cavern winds.

Elizabeth died when Kurt was only eight and Kurt had spent days taking each of his mother's old belongings and holding them in his hands and listening to any sound that might still connect him to his mom. They were all silent, his mother was gone and so was her magic.

It wasn't until a year later that Kurt first started hearing things on his own in the antique shop. He heard music from an old phonograph that didn't actually work anymore, an antique chandelier would pulse with the sounds of laughter and clinking of champagne glasses, a wooden 1940s roldex held the sound of nearby traffic.

At first Kurt didn't like Burt to sell the items that had magic in them, and Burt would let Kurt keep a few of the more powerful objects unless it was something big and expensive like the dining room set Kurt swore emitted the faint sound of what he was sure was a Claude Debussy sonata.

"Kurt we can't keep everything that you hear magic from, your mother never did." Burt would protest, "If this keeps up we'll need a separate storeroom just for the things you won't let me sell!"

"Mom knew how to tell when something was really extraordinary though. I don't know how to read that yet." Kurt argued, "What if we are giving up something important by selling it!"

"Then someone else will get a little magic in their lives," Burt had answered pragmatically.

Elizabeth had been the dreamer, living half in another world no one could see but herself. Burt was a man of action, concerned with what you could see and hold and touch.

And while through the years Kurt could tell his father tried to foster the same creativity and sense of awe in Kurt that Elizabeth always had, it didn't necessarily come naturally to him. Kurt had to learn to live in the real world while attempting to develop the magic his mother had loved.

It was busy all afternoon and they even kept the store open a little later than normal just to accommodate the tourist enjoying the day out. Once Burt was finally flipping the open sign to closed and locking up the front door, Kurt could hardly wait to get back to the storeroom and find the box he'd been searching through earlier.

"You have plans for the evening?" Burt asked as he wandered to the backroom, shutting off lights on his way.

"Not really." Kurt was taking off his jacket and looking around.
"Nothing with Mercedes?"

"Not tonight." Kurt bunched up his eyebrows, "Didn't I leave that box right there?" Kurt asked pointing to an empty spot next to the back door.

"You know you should spend more time with your friends. I appreciate your help in the store, but I want you to enjoy your summer too. You're only thirteen and already act like you're going on twentyf-

"Dad." Kurt interrupted spinning to face his father, "The box from earlier, the one you said I could take home, where did it go?"

Burt sighed at finally paid attention, "Isn't it by the door?"

Kurt crossed his arms over his chest and arched one eyebrow; it was obviously not by the door.

"Well, Connie was cleaning up back here, maybe she moved it by accident?"

"Dad! It had something magic in it and now we don't know what it was or where it went."

"I'm sure it will be fine, it will turn up."

Kurt pinched the bridge of his nose and took a deep breath, his father didn't understand, try as he might he never did. "Dad what if it was something special? What if she put it out in the store and we already sold it." What if it was dangerous? But Kurt didn't voice that concern out loud, finding something with that kind of magic in it was extremely rare.

"Do you want me to call Connie and ask?" Burt offered. Connie had gone home a couple of hours ago to start dinner for her family.

Kurt shook his head minutely and then closed his eyes, "Give me a sec." He focused on his breathing, he could hear cars on the street behind the shop, he shut those out. He could hear his father's breath, he ignored it. Since Kurt had caught the sound of the magic earlier that day it should be easier to find it this time, hopefully whatever it was was still here.

Kurt's heart was sinking as the silence grew, until he finally heard a soft whisper to his right. He opened his eyes and followed the sound, his father watching him carefully.

Burt had a healthy respect for magic, but he mostly let Kurt do what he needed when it came to enchanted items. Kurt didn't completely understand everything about magic himself, his mom had died before he'd received much training, but he felt responsible not to let anything too powerful or anything with dark magic out into the world.

"There," Kurt pointed at a small box on one of the back shelves, he rushed to it and started rummaging through; Connie must have sorted out the items from the bigger box. Finally with a triumphant smile, Kurt reached for an item and held it up, light from the overhead lamp glinting off of it and casting rainbow reflections on the wall.

"That's it?" Burt asked.

Kurt nodded as the whispering became slightly clearer. What was the sound exactly? Were the words even in English? Were they even words?

"A mirror?" Burt said, holding out his hand and waiting for Kurt to give it to him. Kurt handed it to his father.
"The glass is foggy," Burt said inspecting it, "One of those old silver backed mirrors. I think the rest is made out of silver too," he let out a low whistle, "Where'd we get this? It's expensive."

Kurt shrugged, "How old do you think it is?"

Burt shook his head, "I've never seen anything quite like it, maybe the 1800s?"

"Wow." That was much older than what they usually had in the store. "We have to keep it."

"We'll take it home, let you do your…" He made an indecipherable motion with his free hand, "… magic stuff with it."

"Magic stuff?" Kurt repeated with a smirk. His dad talked about magic the same way he talked about fashion or Broadway musicals. He had a vague understanding, and knew they were important to Kurt but that was the limit to his appreciation.

"I might get it appraised as well," Burt continued tapping the glass surface with his finger. Tap, tap. Tap, tap. Tap, tap. The mirror itself had tapped back, sounding like someone, or something tapping from the inside.

Kurt gasped and Burt was so taken back he almost dropped it, "What in the hell."

"Let me have it!" Kurt demanded, taking the mirror from his father's hand, "Did you – did you hear that?"

"Did that mirror just tap at me?"

"Dad! You heard it? You never hear these things!"

Burt just blinked at him, looking as surprised as Kurt felt.

Kurt swallowed deeply and then lifted a finger hovering over the foggy glass for a moment before gently tapping out a rhythm. Tap, tap. Tap, tap. Tap, tap. The mirror echoed back.

"Yeah, I heard that." Burt said.

"Whoa." Kurt looked up at his dad and then back down at his warped reflection in the glass, "What is going on with this thing?"

Kurt heard magic, sure, but he'd never had the magic answer back before.

Kurt and his dad had dinner together that evening, Burt insisting they eat together before Kurt went off to study the mirror. They cooked steak and potatoes because Burt got to choose dinner this evening, Kurt tried to get his father to eat healthier, but it was a losing battle. After they ate together and cleared up the kitchen, Kurt had raced to down to his room, mirror held safely against his chest, and plopped down on his bed.

His father had hinted several times about calling up Mercedes or some other friend, but Kurt was too enthralled by the magic of this mirror, there was something different about it. He knew his dad was concerned about him, spending so much time alone without many friends, but Kurt was used to it.
He had trouble fitting in with other kids his age, and while he enjoyed Mercedes's company she had a bunch of friends from church she hung out with and he didn't really fit in with them. He didn't fit in with a lot of people, with his high voice and progressive sense of fashion and what his father affectionately called a "maturity beyond his years."

He was fine on his own, really, besides he had something the rest of them didn't have. Magic. Well, not that Kurt knew how to do any magic of his own, other than the ability to detect it, but still there was a whole world of wonders Kurt knew about and no one else understood. And this evening he'd found something new. Something he didn't understand and it excited him.

He'd moved to the basement when he turned thirteen informing his father he "needed his own space". As a birthday gift his dad had even let him re-decorate.

He went with white walls and minimalistic wall décor. He had a beaded curtain to block of the stairs, a large table for sewing and "creativity", a brightly lit vanity, and a big bed with a pale blue, very soft down comforter. The room was modern and striking and when he'd revealed it to his father with a "ta da" Burt had smiled and whistled and told Kurt he'd out done himself.

This evening he spread a few of his mother's books out on his bed and held the antique mirror in his lap.

Kurt thought he remembered a section in one of his mother's old books about mirrors – that magic associated with them was different somehow – but as he'd flipped through all the books he had, he couldn't find anything specific about mirrors.

Kurt was frustrated, and the mirror itself had gone silent. No more tapping and not even the faintest of whispers. Kurt softly tapped his finger against the glass again, hoping for a response, but he didn't get one. He sighed and tossed himself down on his back, bouncing on his mattress. He was so sure he'd found something special here, for the magic to respond like that was a trait he'd never seen before, but now even the normal magic was hushed. Almost as if Kurt had scared it off.

He rubbed his eyes tiredly and brushed his annoyingly thick hair off his brow. He'd go to the library tomorrow, see if he could find anything about mirrors there. Maybe ask his dad if there were any other books of his mother's that he didn't already have. He glanced at the clock by his bed, surprised to see it was nearly midnight; he'd been working on this for hours with absolutely no results.

He got up, stacking his books back neatly on their shelf, washing his face and completing his nightly moisturizing routine, and then slipping into comfy pajamas before returning to bed. He lay there with the little side lamp on, holding the mirror in the air above him and looking at it, turning it this way and that in his hand. It was in amazing condition, the silver wasn't tarnished at all, someone must have taken care of it. He'd ask Connie if she knew what estate sale it'd come from.

The glass itself was aged though, but that was to be expected of something this old. He stared at his reflection, pale skin and blue eyes, hair that never did what he wanted it to, round rosy baby cheeks he couldn't wait to grow out of. He could see a little of his mom in him, but barely.

He laid the mirror glass down on his chest and closed his eyes, tuning out the sound of his father watching TV upstairs, the AC flowing through the house, his own breathing — he listened and listened, but the sounds of magic were gone; if he hadn't heard it that afternoon, he would think the mirror had no magic at all.

"Come on," Kurt whispered as he turned to his side, putting the mirror down on his vintage 1940's nightstand and turning off the light, "Talk to me again."
He curled up under his covers in the dark and didn't hear anything besides the usual sounds of his home at night.

A few days went by before Kurt had time to look further into the mirror; things were busy at the antique store and Mercedes had called wanting to know if Kurt wanted to go see *Monster House* with her at the movies.

So it wasn't until Saturday that Kurt found himself in the attic; his dad said that there might be an old trunk up there with more of his mother's things. It was dusty, and cramped, stiflingly hot and smelled stale. Kurt was on his hands and knees, not enough room to stand up straight, and he could feel sweat trickling down the back of his neck and kept worrying about spiders as he brushed dust off his face.

He'd found the old trunk and was rummaging through it. It had some old clothes, a yearbook from his mother's high school – Kurt looked up his mother's picture, she was so young he didn't know this girl, but she had the same smile he recognized as his mom's and it made his chest ache. He closed the yearbook and kept rummaging; finally, underneath a patchwork quilt, he found a couple of books.

Kurt let out a victory shout before placing everything else neatly back in the trunk. He held the books to his side and one handedly made his way back down the ladder, shaking himself of dust and cobwebs once he reached the floor. Good thing he was just in casual clothes today, sweat pants and a t-shirt, because that had been gross.

He looked down at the books in his hands: one small blue book titled, "Folklore and Ballads" that he hadn't thought about in years, but remembered his mother reading to him. The other book was much older and leather-bound, a faded black book with gold writing on the cover that was hard to make out anymore – something about witchcraft?

Kurt bit his lip as he flipped the book open, he'd never really thought about what he and his mother did as *witchcraft*. To him, witches were something from cartoons or fairytales; they wore pointy hats and rode broomsticks. For Kurt, magic was natural, something that had always been around like seasons and rainy weather and sunshine, but when he thought about the few charms and spells his mother had taught him, he supposed some people could possibly see that as witchcraft.

He excitedly set off to his bedroom to start reading when his father stopped him on the way.

"Hey Kurt, heading out?"

"No, I'm going to read," Kurt answered holding up the books.

Burt nodded looking solemn, "It's a beautiful day out."

"I know, but I really want to read up and see what I can find on that mirror."

Burt readjusted the cap on his head and looked like he wanted to say something he was holding back, "I asked Connie about it today." I asked Connie about it today.

Kurt smiled and bounced a little on his feet, but tried not to show more interest than he normally would.

"We tried to trace back where that mirror had come from, what estate sale or auction we bought it at. And you know Connie is meticulous about the book-keeping. Strange thing is, she has no record of when we got that particular item."

"Oh," Kurt's shoulders slumped in disappointment, "That's too bad, I think it is something special. I'd
Burt pulled of his cap rolling it in his hand, "Have you done that test thing you do? To make sure it isn't dangerous?"

"I haven't, but it doesn't feel dark," Kurt hurried to assure him, "I can do the test today though."

"And if it isn't dangerous I guess that means you're not going to let me sell it?" Burt said with a huff of breath.

"Please dad, please let me keep it."

Burt chuckled, "You act as if I have a choice in the matter. Of course you can keep it, as long as it is safe. I still might get it appraised though."

Kurt beamed, he knew he was a bit spoiled by his father, but in this case it was for the best. He still had a lot to learn about this particular magical item.

"What if you went outside and read? At least you'd get some fresh air," Burt suggested.

"I can do that," Kurt agreed with a simile, he moved passed his father, squeezing his shoulder, "Thanks dad."

Burt smiled but tried to hide it, "Yeah, yeah."

Kurt grabbed some sunscreen from his bathroom and then brought the books outside with him, going out to the back yard to lie in the hammock and enjoy the summer sun. He started with the small bright blue book he'd found in the attic and started flipping through it. He smiled, remembering many of the stories from when he was young, *The Ballad of Tam Lin*, *The Old Man and the Fairies* and *The Mermaid of Galloway*. Looking over them now, he was surprised he'd read this as a child. Some of the tales ended happily but a lot of them were scary and had unhappy endings. Still he found them fascinating. As the afternoon went on his eyelids grew heavy and his book drooped in his hands.

He knew his father was worried that he wasn't enjoying himself enough this summer, but he was, in his own way. He didn't have a lot of friends, and while he did feel lonely at times, he was grateful for his father, for the antique shop, for Mercedes, for magic. And afternoons like this spent thinking of magic and reading folklore. It suited him.

He fell asleep on the hammock, the book slipping from his fingers and the bright summer sun warming his skin. Kurt woke as the sun was going down, he laid there for a moment watching the red and purple hues of the evening sky, before he finally made himself get up. He groaned, knowing that despite the sunscreen he used, his pale skin was probably going to be burnt and as red as a lobster after napping in the sun. The one thing about summer he really hated was that his complexion just didn't seem to be made for it.

He had dinner with his dad telling him about plans he and Mercedes had coming up and then went downstairs to his room, settling down on his bed ready to try some magic. He grabbed the mirror, which had been silent for days, and held it in his hands for a moment, closing his eyes, concentrating. Nothing.

Kurt opened his eyes with a sigh and set the mirror next to him on the bed. He turned to the thick leather book he'd found in the attic earlier that day. He flipped through, his stomach fluttering in excitement as he read some of the chapter headings.
Kurt was enthralled, there was so much about magic in this book that he knew nothing about, could it all be real? Ghost and fairies? That didn't fit with the kind of magic he knew.

Kurt continued to flip through the aging pages: there was a chapter on summoning that gave Kurt chills, old-fashioned ink drawings of black candles and gold bowls of swirling water. Kurt flipped past that quickly – he wasn't sure that there was anything from this book that he cared to summon.

He stopped and stared, though, when he came to a chapter near the back of the book titled, "Mirrors & Mediary".

He remembered seeing this before! He didn't know when, he had no clear memory of his mother showing him this book. In fact, he wondered if it had been in the attic instead of with her other books because she didn't want Kurt to see it. Kurt shook off that thought; the book of folklore and ballads had been up there too and that was something he'd read out of as a child.

His fingers ran down the old yellowed pages as he skimmed the chapter on mirrors. According to the book, mirrors were often viewed as portals to other worlds, most commonly believed to be a bridge from the living to the dead. Kurt's throat felt dry glancing at the hand mirror lying on the bed by his knee. That tapping sound coming from the mirror did seem to have some kind of awareness; it tapped the same rhythms it heard…

Kurt unconsciously scooted away from it a bit.

The book said that a smaller group of magicians and witches believed mirrors led to faerie worlds or could be used to step from one physical place to another like walking through a door. There was even an account of a sailor who used an enchanted mirror to speak with his wife back home while he was out at sea.

Kurt remembered thinking he heard the ocean the first time he heard the mirror's magic. But that sound had quickly turned to whispering. Kurt let out a long breath, an intoxicating feeling of eagerness and fear tingling down his spine. Who would be whispering through this mirror? Kurt had assumed the mirror had trapped the sound of some memory in it, like all the magical items Kurt had known before, he'd never considered he was listening to an existing conversation through the glass.

He glanced back down at the mirror, swallowing deeply; he couldn't help but feel excited. Everything in this book sounded like the kind of magic Kurt might actually be able to use, not just detect.

At the very end of the chapter was a few paragraphs on divining if a mirror had been used for worthy or dark magik in the past. This was actually a practice Kurt was familiar with, not for mirrors in particular, but his mother had taught him to read if an object had light or dark energy. Rarely did they find anything with dark magic, and the few times they had, Elizabeth had taught him how to destroy the object.

The description in the book about divining if something was a dark magic object seemed very similar to what his mother had taught him. That added credence to what the book had to say, it seemed to at least have some truth in its aged pages.

Kurt lifted the book from his lap, laying it in front of himself, and grabbed the mirror, spreading his hand, palm down on the glass and closing his eyes. His mother had taught him to listen to the magic of the item while holding it and then to hum a little tune – he didn't know the origin of the tune – but
he remembered how it went. After that, you just had to wait until the object reacted.

Either the sound from the object would get stronger as you hummed or the object would start to shake and rattle. If it rattled, there was something wrong about it and you should get rid of it right away. Kurt could only remember three times in his life, twice with his mother and once after he lost her, that anything started rattling.

Kurt hummed the melody he knew by heart and waited. When nothing happened, he tried again.

Kurt opened one eye and peeked at the mirror; the problem was he couldn't hear the mirror's magic at all anymore so this wasn't really working.

Kurt lowered the mirror and looked back at the book, it had additional instructions. Its process was similar to what his mother had taught him – find a quiet place, press your palm against the mirror, close your eyes… but instead of humming there was a charm you were to recite.

Kurt was a little nervous, he'd never tried anything like this before and hoped he wasn't out of his depths. He wasn't sure it would even work – this book talked about magic in a way Kurt had never heard before and it all sounded a little make-believe to him.

Despite that, he wasn't sure what else to do, so after reading the charm a few times, he closed his eyes, palm still on the smooth glass, and started to recite.

"Golden light shine forth from here
Dark of night attend near
Nature come and nature called
Nature young and nature auld."

Kurt squinted his eyes, not opening them all the way, glancing at the mirror. Nothing happened and Kurt felt ridiculous.

He didn't even know what that charm was supposed to do; it said that when performed correctly, you'd know if the mirror was worthy or evil – but nothing was happening.

He shook his shoulders out and closed his eyes again. He steadied his breath the way his mother had taught him, tuned out all sound, listened and tried the charm once more, even though he still felt incredibly silly and hoped his father didn't choose this time to poke his head downstairs.

"Golden light shine forth from here
Dark of night attend near
Nature come and nature called
Nature young and nature auld."

There was a rushing sound so loud it filled the room; Kurt was so startled he dropped the mirror to the bed. The sound quickly faded to just the soft sound of waves. Kurt sighed in relief and smiled broadly, reaching for the mirror as he heard the call of a seagull, yes definitely the ocean then. Soon the ocean waves faded and that same indistinguishable whispering sound resurfaced louder that before. This was a good sign. The book's charm seemed to have worked when the melody his mother taught him had not, was this magic more powerful than what his mother had taught him?

As he held the mirror, it tremored slightly – it worried Kurt at first, but it didn't start to rattle and the
tremor faded quickly. In its place, slowly, a soft luminosity spread outward from the mirror, a pale yellow shimmer that made Kurt suck in an awed breath. The silver of the mirror looked like gold when it was bathed in this light, he’d never seen anything like this before.

He glanced down at the book *Golden light shine forth from here*. From what he'd skimmed over in the book, gold was associated with worthy magic. Okay, good, that was good. Kurt smiled, the mirror wasn't dark or dangerous then; his shoulders relaxed in relief, this mirror was obviously special and he would have hated to destroy it. The trouble now was that the golden glow wasn't fading; instead, it was growing stronger and brighter, the mirror becoming hot in his hands.

He dropped it in surprise as the light filled the entire room, so bright Kurt shut his eyes and covered them with an arm.

Then suddenly the light blinked out. Kurt uncovered his eyes and looked down at the mirror, no longer glowing and back to its silver color, just a faint whisper resounding from it.

Kurt's breath was coming quickly, he had no idea what had just happened. Was it because of the charm? Or because the mirror had particularly strong magic? It scared him a little and he thought about telling his father, but…. Burt didn't know about magic. He wouldn't have any answers and what if he told Kurt to get rid of the mirror?

No, Kurt wouldn't say anything yet. He'd proven the mirror didn't have dangerous magic. That was enough for now. The sound of whispering was softer now but still present. He glanced back at the book feeling somewhat overwhelmed; he’d assumed everything in this book was fiction, but if the charm had worked… he thought about the chapter on summoning and the chapter about specters and daemons – he quickly snapped the book closed.

He didn't like to think about the other things within these pages being real. There was more magic in this book than he'd ever imagined and it frightened him.

He picked the book up, almost putting it on his bookshelf with his mother's other books, but decided against it. Instead, he knelt down on the plush carpet of his bedroom floor and slid the book under his bed, out of sight, out of mind. Maybe one day he’d be ready to take a look through its pages again, but for now, he decided it was more than a thirteen year old needed to worry about.

He lay on his bed holding the mirror and listening to the hushed undistinguishable whispers. He tapped the mirror with his finger, but there was no answering tap. He had more questions now than ever.

Kurt placed the hand mirror on his bedside table as he got up to do his normal facial routine, adding the extra step of smearing on aloe vera gel on his sunburnt and freckled cheeks.

Then he crawled under his soft sheets and lay in bed for a long time, unable to sleep; he had taken a long nap that afternoon. Besides, he couldn't get the mirror – or the book under his bed – out of his mind. There was magic there that was completely new to him and he had no idea where to go to learn more about it. No one to ask questions to or teach him. His mother and grandmother had been Diviners, but they were both gone now and there was no one else.

Well, that couldn't be true, there had to be other Diviners out there, he just didn't know where to find them. He also couldn't help but think about the title of the book and the word 'witchcraft'. Were witches real? If so, they were probably nothing like how movies and books depicted them; in fact, he supposed his mother could have considered a witch, it just wasn't a term he'd ever heard her use. What if all fairytales and folklore had some truth to them? The book had mentioned fairies, and specters and all kinds of things Kurt had once believed were just make believe.
This train of thought wasn't helping him sleep. He resolutely closed his eyes, curled up tight under the covers and eventually let sleep overtake him.

The moon was bright and shining through the small high placed window in Kurt's basement bedroom when he shifted in bed, eyes blinking open, something disturbing his sleep.

He turned to his side and hugged one of his extra pillows to his chest, letting out a small yawn. He was almost back to sleep when he heard a sound. He blinked open his bleary eyes and glanced at the mirror on his night stand. It was illuminated by the glowing moon outside his window. Was it whispering again? Or maybe there were more ocean sounds?

Kurt lay still and listened, no it wasn't the ocean or seagulls, or even faint whispering it was…

Kurt sat up in bed, confused. The mirror was making a new noise. He reached for it, crossing his legs on his bed and holding it in his lap as his breath hitched — its new sound was heart-wrenching and miserable.

From the other side of the glass, it sounded like someone was crying.
AN: Sorry about the wait for this chapter - I didn't post last weekend because it was Christmas, but I should be back on track now. I hope you all had a very happy New Year and that this coming year is happy and bright for you.

A gigantic thank you and all my love to freakingpotter who did the cover art for me. She is amazingly talented and you should go find her on Tumblr and tell her how incredible she is. (you find the art on my tumblr)

Also thanks again and again to my beta Oleanna who just recently had a Birthday. Happy Birthday friend!

And thank you so much for reading.
July 2006 – Bluespruce, Maine

Blaine was starting to enjoy Maine. The summer he thought was going to be miserable was turning out to be not so bad after all. Hours spent in the warm summer sun and the crisp salty ocean did wonders for a young boy's mood. Blaine didn't let his parents in on that secret when they called to check in on him. He'd been at his aunt's house for a month before they actually called to talk to him. They'd sent emails back and forth, but this was the first phone call so he thought he was justified in letting them know he wasn't completely happy. Because as wonderful as Aunt Helen was and as much as he'd fallen in love with the beach, he was still a little sad that his family had just left him this summer.

It hit him hardest at night when in bed trying to fall asleep, his mind wandered. He missed his parents and they said they missed him when they called, but the problem was they didn't have to miss him, they could be together right now if his parents had brought him along.

Still Cooper had promised to visit by the end of the month and Blaine was excited to take him exploring along the beach and show him all his favorite spots.

Aunt Helen had done that for him; showing him a cove with an outcropping of craggy rocks where they found big reddish brown sea turtles that his aunt called loggerheads. She took him down the coast a little way to a tall sun-bleached lighthouse that was over a hundred years old and still in use warning ships of the dangerous rocky waves. And Aunt Helen had taken him to a candy shop in town where he'd tasted what he thought must be the best salt-water taffy in the entire world.

They enjoyed their evenings reading together in the parlor, and even his aunt's random mentions of magic, witches, and Saffron Callaway had started seeming commonplace. Blaine had even almost convinced himself the tapping in the house wasn't actually coming from the mirrors like his eccentric aunt believed, but from the walls and foundation, just an old house settling and making ordinary noises. Nothing scary or fantastical about it.

Still Blaine slept with the large gilded mirror above the ornate fireplace in his room covered with an old patchwork quilt – just as a precaution.

Blaine had made friends with the girl who came with her family to their vacation home down the beach- just as his aunt had predicted. Her name was Lucy, and she had bright cornsilk hair, round plump cheeks and she tried to act older than her twelve years of age.

They collected treasures, seashells and sand dollars and sometimes tiny smooth iridescent mussels that still had their two halves intact. He and Lucy had picnics on the sand (with the food Millie would pack for them) and they went to town sometimes to sightsee or to go to the movies on cloudy days. They went swimming as the weather got warmer; the ocean was still much cooler than what Blaine was used to from visiting his brother in California, but the days were sunny enough to make it enjoyable-splashing in the waves, feet sinking into the sand as sun beat down on their shoulders.

The month had flown past them in the speedy way time races by for the young and today was Blaine's last afternoon with Lucy. He was dreading her going back home; he'd be all alone after that. He tried to cheer himself with the thought that at least he had Cooper's upcoming visit to look forward to.
They sat on the beach that day, Lucy lying on her stomach building a detailed sand castle and Blaine using a bunch of the blue, green and golden-brown sea glass he'd collected over the weeks to make a big swirl on the warm sand like a sun-glistening mosaic.

"I don't know who I'm going to hang out with once you leave." Blaine said idly, trying to keep the worry from his voice.

"What about the kids in town?"

Blaine shook his head, "They all seem…" Blaine glanced up at her, not knowing how to say that none of them seemed very nice. "Do you think there might be a reason the kids in town don't want to be friends with me?"

Lucy looked down at her sandcastle and bit her lip, "Maybe."

"Because I'm not from around here?"

She was quiet for a moment until she finally sighed and sat up, "No, that's not it."

"Then why?" Blaine didn't understand it, he had lots of friends back home, making friends had never been this hard for him.

"The same reason I almost didn't want to be friends with you." Lucy answered, pushing a strand of damp yellow hair behind her ear.

Blaine's jaw dropped, he didn't know Lucy had once not wanted to be friends with him. "What? Why?" Blaine asked, trying not to sound hurt.

"Because you live at Callaway Place." She looked back down at her castle; she was trimming the bottom with tiny spiraled seashells.

Blaine shook his head, sand falling from his curls, "I don't understand. My Aunt has lived there her whole life. Everyone knows Helen Callaway. What's the problem with Callaway Place?"

Lucy's plump cheeks blushed and she looked out at the waves, "Um… your aunt…" She started slowly, "My mom says she is just a lonely old woman."

"She's not that old." Blaine said, feeling offended, 'lonely old woman' wasn't a very flattering description.

Lucy ignored him and continued, "Most people think she is very nice. It's just… she is a bit weird."

Blaine clenched his jaw, his heart hammering. People talked about his aunt? They thought she was weird? Yes, he'd thought that about her himself from time to time, but he was allowed because they were family and he loved her. He didn't like the idea of others talking that way.

"Aunt Helen is wonderful. She is kind to everyone!" He said defensively.

"I know." Lucy sighed, "I know. And people know that. It's just kids talk … they probably wouldn't care about her at all if she wasn't a Callaway and didn't live in Callaway Place. Don't you know what people say about that house?"

"No," Blaine answered sullenly, still a little angry on his aunt's behalf.

"It's haunted, everyone knows that," Lucy said as she stuck a twig in the top of a castle tower, "I only come here in the summers, and I know that. All the kids talk about it. Callaway Place is
Blaine stared at her for a moment, her words sinking in before he smiled disbelievingly. "That's ridiculous! Ghosts aren't even real." Blaine announced, but then he had to push back the thoughts of Saffron Callaway's spooky portrait and the strange noises the house made, but it couldn't really be haunted.

"I think it is ridiculous too. That's why we're friends." Lucy said, but she seemed a little unsure. Before Blaine could question her any further, she stood up, brushing sand off her legs. "I'm getting in the water, one last swim before I leave. Want to come?"

Blaine took that as the change of conversation Lucy obviously intended and nodded, joining her as she ran towards the shoreline. He didn't want to fight with the one and only friend he'd made all summer, especially on her last day there. He had enjoyed their friendship. Aunt Helen teased him about Lucy being his "little girlfriend" but really Blaine was just grateful to have someone his age to hang out with. Besides, Blaine didn't think about girls like that.

They splashed in the water, laughing and falling over, and catching the waves. It was a good afternoon and for a while Blaine forgot all about what Lucy had said about his aunt and Callaway Place.

He hugged Lucy goodbye that afternoon and she pecked him on the cheek with a giggle. "My girlfriends back home aren't going to believe I met such a good looking boy this summer."

Blaine lifted his eyebrows in surprise; he had sun-kissed tan skin and thick dark curls, both of which came from his father's Filipino side of the family, but his curls were growing wild this summer – frizzy with the salt in the air – and he was small and scrawny for his age. He never thought of himself as good looking. That was a term he usually reserved for his tall, blue-eyed, raven-haired older brother Cooper.

Cooper was an actor, or at least he wanted to be. He lived out in California and worked as a mailroom clerk, or as Cooper described it, he "managed an interoffice document delivery system" while constantly going on auditions as well.

He and Blaine weren't close, Cooper being ten years older than him, but still he was family. Blaine couldn't wait for him to visit Bluespruce; he had visions of showing Cooper all of his favorite places up and down the shoreline. He would show him the seashell collection he'd started and his beautiful sea glass and they'd get taffy in town.

As he walked back to the house, pail in his hand heavy with glass and seashells, he couldn't help but get more excited by the prospect. Being away from his family was hard. He was only twelve and this was the longest he'd ever been away from his parents.

He started jogging in his excitement, his pail slapping against his leg and sand flying beneath his heels. Blaine entered the house through the back door, which had become his habit because the back door led straight to the kitchen and Millie always had an afternoon snack ready for him. Today it was a plate of apple slices, and little ramekins of honey and peanut butter for dipping.

"Your aunt wanted to talk to you," Millie told him as he sat at the old wooden kitchen table to eat his apple slices. Millie was a reserved elderly woman, wispy gray hair pulled back from her face, and a deeply lined expression that made Blaine think she was probably the oldest person he knew. She made the best food he'd ever eaten and doled out her words sparingly as if she were running out of them.
He nodded and swallowed, licking his lips of honey, "I'll go find her when I'm finished here."

He thought back to what Lucy had said about the house being haunted. He should have asked more questions because, while Blaine enjoyed a good ghost story as much as any twelve year old boy (he loved reading Cooper's old Goosebumps books), he didn't actually believe in that kind of thing. The house was old and looked intimidating; it was no wonder kids made up stories about it. Except... except that Callaway Place was really strange, with its mirrors and noises and creepy portraits. The house still freaked him out sometimes, as much as he tried to pretend it didn't.

He watched as Millie worked on the dinner preparations — her old, soft, sun spotted hands kneading dough for a chicken potpie crust. As far as Blaine could tell, Millie had worked at Callaway Place for ages; she had to know something about the house.

"My friend Lucy said something funny today," Blaine started, scraping dip out with an apple slice. Millie kept kneading but looked his way to let him know she was listening. "She said that people around here think Callaway Place is haunted."

Blaine waited, expecting Millie to laugh or roll her eyes, or give some indication that his statement was as absurd as it had to be; instead, she just hummed, looking down at her dough.

"Have you ever heard someone say that?" Blaine found direct questions were the best way to get the cook to talk.

"I've heard that since I was young."

"Oh," Blaine said, "So it's an old rumor?"

Millie smiled as she glanced at him, "It is a rumor even older than me."

Blaine squirmed in his chair at the kitchen table, he knew better than to remark on a woman's age, and was embarrassed about the slipup. "The rumor isn't true though," he pressed; he really needed to know. He needed a reasonable adult to tell him that it was a silly rumor that should be ignored. He'd ask Aunt Helen, but she wasn't always a reasonable adult.

Millie just shrugged.

Direct questions, Blaine reminded himself. "Is the house haunted?" Blaine asked timidly, a little worried about the answer.

Millie stopped kneading, wiping her hands on her apron and turning to face him. "There have always been stories about this house and the Callaways." She crossed her thin arms over her chest and looked past Blaine with a serious expression, "If life has taught me anything it's that some things can't be explained." She was lost in thought for a moment before turning her gaze back to Blaine, "Is this house haunted? I don't know about that. Is there something special about this place? Yes, I've always thought so." She turned back to her dough, reaching for a rolling pin to thin it out for the pie pan.

Blaine watched her, waiting to see if she'd continue, but she'd already said more than she usually did and that seemed to be all he was going to get.

"Oh. Okay," Blaine nodded as he got up from the table and brought his dishes to the sink, wordlessly washing them and placing them in the drying rack on the counter when he was done. His mind was a tumble of thoughts. Millie was a no-nonsense kind of woman and she hadn't given him the answer he'd expected or wanted. He wasn't sure she'd given him an answer at all.
He went to find his aunt since she'd asked for him, roaming down the long wood paneled hallway to poke his head in the parlor where she often read. She wasn't there so he made his way to the back of the house and her bedroom; he knew sometimes she'd spend whole days there studying. He knocked on the door and his aunt quickly opened it. Her face looked older than normal for a moment, lined with worry, but the expression was quickly replaced with a kind smile. "Blaine, we need to talk."

"Yes ma'am." Blaine said as his aunt shut the heavy oak door to her room behind her and headed down the hall towards the parlor. "I was thinking we should go on another trip down the shore, there is a great place for whale watching about an hour from here."

Blaine smiled excitedly, "We should wait until Cooper gets here! He'd love that."

His aunt led him to the parlor and then sat down, Blaine taking a chair across from her.

"Well..." Aunt Helen started, her face serious again, as she pushed her emerald green glasses up her nose, "I spoke to Cooper today."

Blaine almost bounced out of his chair with excitement, "You did? Did he say when he is coming? Has he booked his flight?"

Helen pursed her lips for a moment, her hands folded in her lap. Blaine knew the signs of bad news when he saw them; he slumped back in his chair, "What did Cooper say?"

"He is very busy you know, and it seems he has some important auditions coming up and-"

"He isn't coming." Blaine finished for her and saw his aunt wince at the bitterness in his words. "Blaine... I know you were excited to see him."

"No. It's fine. Of course it's fine. He doesn't have to come. I don't want him to come." His words were spoken more harshly than he meant them to be and his voice shook, giving away how he really felt. He hated that about himself, his mother always said he was like an open book. Right now he wanted to slam that book closed and not let anyone—especially his kindhearted aunt—know that Cooper had hurt him.

"We can still go see the whales?" Blaine asked quietly.

"Oh Blaine! Of course." Aunt Helen smiled and stood from her chair, "I know this isn't the summer vacation you wanted, but I hope it isn't all bad."

Blaine stood too and let his aunt wrap him up in a hug and he hid his face in her shoulder for a moment.

"No, it isn't what I wanted at first, but I really do like it here." Just because he was sad, he didn't want to upset his aunt, and he mostly meant it anyway.

Helen ran her hand gently through his thick hair as Blaine calmed himself down, and then he backed away, putting on a smile, "We have fun together don't we?"
Helen smiled back, "We do. You have no idea how much you have brightened up my life these past weeks."

Blaine was happy about that, he wondered if his aunt ever got lonely living here on her own. "Tell me more about these whales—what kind do you think we'll see?" Blaine asked, not wanting to talk about his stupid brother or the fact that his parents had abandoned him this summer — because the truth was he was happy to have the chance to get to know his aunt better. It was Cooper who was missing out by not taking the time to come.

Blaine was able to hold his disappointment in for the rest of the evening. Dinner had been delicious as normal. He and Aunt Helen talked and made plans for their trip down the coast to go whale watching; she had given him a book on blue whales and they spent a couple pleasant hours in the parlor reading together.

It wasn't until Blaine went upstairs for bed that his mind wouldn't stop harassing him about Cooper's abandoned visit. Why did he even care? It wasn't like he and Cooper had ever been great friends.

He climbed into bed and turned to his side, burying his head in his pillow; he knew why this hurt so much. As much fun as he was having here, he was homesick. He missed his parents, and Cooper was his brother; he loved him and wanted to see him. To top it off, Lucy was gone and Blaine was going to be alone for the next month and a half. He'd still have Aunt Helen, who he'd come to love dearly, but he just felt so deserted.

He was an Anderson, but he didn't always feel like one; even before this summer he'd always felt a little out of step with his family. He'd always attributed that to his brother being so much older than him and the fact their parents had had Blaine when his mother was past the age most women had children. But now, he wondered if it was more than that; Aunt Helen was older, but they got along fine. And for a moment, Blaine wished that he wasn't an Anderson, he wished he could be a Callaway. Give up the Anderson name and come live with his aunt permanently. In her weird maybe haunted house while she studied witchcraft and told old stories about crazy ancestors.

Blaine chuckled at the thought, but then the tears came. The homesickness and his anger towards Cooper flooding over him. He cried into his pillow until his shoulders shook, until his throat hurt, until his little heart ached.

He probably would have cried himself to sleep, but from behind him, a gentle and unfamiliar voice softly called out.

"Hello? Can you hear me? Are you okay?"

Blaine's breath felt like it was punched out of his chest; he sat up in bed so quickly his head swam. He looked around the dark bedroom trying to find the source the voice he heard, but the room was empty.

Blaine swallowed, attempting to wet his suddenly dry throat, "Hello? Is someone there?"

There was a moment of silence where Blaine thought he must have woken up from a very vivid dream, but then same soft voice called out.

"I'm here. I… I think I heard you crying? Are you alright?"

Blaine's heart was pounding hard against his chest like a rabbit's, the voice was a little muffled, but it was nearby and he had no idea where it was coming from.

Blaine cleared his throat again, eyes darting around the moonlit room, "Come out so I can see you!"
He tried not to sound as frightened as he felt.

"I don't know how to do that." The voice said, "I mean… I'm right here."

"Where?"

"In my room?" The voice answered tentatively, as if they knew that answer wasn't helpful. They sounded young and confused and somehow that helped Blaine not be as afraid as he probably should have been at hearing a disembodied voice floating through his dark and empty room.

"This is my room." Blaine argued, not liking being made to feel silly and afraid.

"Um… okay. So you're in your room and I'm in mine."

"Come out." Blaine said again, hands gripping the comforter of his bed and his spine tingling. He was scared, but now he was also getting upset, because this seemed like it could be some kind of mean joke.

"I can't." The voice said kindly, "I wouldn't have tried talking to you at all, but you were crying and sounded so sad." The voice sounded unhappy just talking about it and Blaine felt a little embarrassed at being caught crying.

Blaine furrowed his brow trying to figure this out; he pulled his covers up higher as if that would shield him. The voice seemed sincere and caring and he really didn't think this could be a prank, but it was unnerving. He scanned the room again—the old wardrobe was big enough for someone to hide in, but he didn't have the guts to get out of bed and yank the doors open. Then, his eyes fell on the mirror hanging over the fireplace, still covered in a thick quilted blanket.

Oh god.

His curiosity overcame his panic and he shot up from bed and ran to the desk, dragging the heavy wooden chair to the fireplace.

"I think I know where you are," Blaine said, half-hoping he was wrong. He stood on the chair and grabbed a corner of the blanket, hands shaking a little. He counted to three in his head and then ripped the blanket off the mirror, letting it float to the ground with a flourish.

Blaine held his breath almost expecting to see someone staring back at him from the filmy glass. But it was just the same old mirror; the only face in it his own. Thank goodness, he'd been wrong.

"Hello? Are you still there?" The voice called out after a moment and Blaine gasped, almost falling backwards off the chair; he had to grab the mantel to steady himself. He couldn't see anyone, but the voice was definitely coming from the glass, it was much stronger now without the blanket muffling it and the mirror vibrated with the sound of the voice.

"Oh my god," Blaine said, his stomach twisting with nerves, and if he admitted it, a little excitement. "This is crazy."

"Yeah, a little crazy. I mean, I've never had a magical object talk to me before."

Blaine didn't know what in the world that meant so he ignored it for now — it was slowly dawning on him what had to be happening here. "You're a ghost!" Blaine gasped, remembering what his aunt had said about mirrors and what Lucy had said about the house being haunted. He was still standing on the chair and staring at his reflection; he was trembling a little.
"What? I am not." The voice sounded offended, "I'm not the ghost."

"You think I'm a ghost?" Blaine almost laughed, "I'm not the one talking from inside a mirror."

"Actually, you are." The voice said, amused.

Blaine paused for a moment, "Oh."

"You can hear me from your own mirror?"

"Yeah."

"And your first thought was that I must be a ghost?"

Blaine couldn't understand why he was taking this so calmly, maybe he was still asleep and just dreaming. He did have to admit that the voice didn't seem malevolent in any way. "Well, the house may be haunted and my aunt said mirrors are gateways to the land of the dead so… yeah."

"Well, that was the creepiest thing I've ever heard someone say." The voice answered but they still sounded amused.

"Who are you?" Blaine asked as his curiosity grew stronger than his fear.

"My name is Kurt."

Kurt? That was a perfectly normal name. Blaine smiled a little, he liked it. He was confused, though, as the high sweet voice gave its name, "Kurt is a boy's name."

He heard an exasperated sigh come through the glass, "I am a boy. My dad says my voice will finally change someday soon and maybe people will stop mistaking it for a girl's."

"Your dad? Mirror people have dads?"

"I'm not a mirror person! What is a mirror person? I'm just a normal person," The voice laughed, "Just like I'm assuming you probably are."

Blaine grinned at the teasing tone of the words; he was possibly losing his mind—maybe the house made people crazy, or "eccentric" like Andrew said of his aunt—but the fact of the matter was that he was enjoying talking to Kurt the mirror person.

He hopped down from the rickety old chair and crossed the room until he got back to his bed, crawling up on it and sitting with his knees tucked under his chin. His heart was racing, but he didn't know if it was because he was afraid or excited. "I'm just a normal boy too." Blaine said, "So normal you could even say I was boring."

"Except you live in a haunted house and have an aunt who talks to dead people."

"She doesn't talk to dead people... as far as I know."

"And what is your name normal boring kid?"

Blaine laughed despite himself and the strange situation he found himself in. "I'm Blaine." Perhaps part of his acceptance of the situation was relief, the mirrors in this house had worried him up to this point, but if all they did were provide someone to talk to, that wasn't so bad.

"Blaine." Kurt repeated the name as if he was trying it out. "Okay Blaine, since we've concluded
you aren't a ghost or actually in my mirror where are you?"

"I'm visiting my aunt in Maine. A little town called Bluespruce. Where are you?"

"What was that?"

"I'm visiting my aunt in Bluespruce, Maine. Where are you?" Blaine repeated louder, realizing a little late that he should be careful not to alert his aunt.

"Okay that's weird I can hear you say you're visiting your aunt but when you say where you are your voice gets all… wobbly."

"I'm in Bluespruce Maine."

"Nope, doesn't work." Kurt said giggling a little, and there was something very warming about Kurt's laugh, "I can't seem to hear you say where you are."

"Where are you?"

"In my bedroom in uninteresting old-" the end of the sentence cut off by a strange sound like someone warping metal, like the warbling sound a saw blade makes when bent.

"Try one more time." Blaine said, leaning forward on his bed.

Kurt tried again to tell him where he lived but the mirror just made that distorted noise again.

"Why is it doing that?" Blaine asked.

"Honestly, I don't know why it is doing any of this. Talking to someone through a mirror is new to me."

Blaine was quiet a moment, trying to take this all in. If this was really happening, and not just a dream or Blaine losing his mind, then he was magically talking to someone through a mirror.

Cool.

He should tell his aunt, she would be ecstatic… but for some reason he didn't really want to. Not yet at least. His aunt had lived here her whole life, and as far as he knew, no mirror had ever communicated with her. This was special, it was something special that had happened just for him and he wanted to hold on to that.

"I guess the mirror doesn't want us to know where each other are." Blaine finally concluded.

"You say that like mirrors are alive and have a mind of their own." Kurt's vice was light and airy as if none of this was particularly surprising to him.

Blaine shrugged and then realized Kurt couldn't see him, "Well, the mirrors here are unusual."

"The mirrors where I am are completely normal, except this one. The one I'm using to talk to you."

"How old are you Kurt?" Blaine asked, suddenly curious to know everything he could about this boy he'd met so oddly — even if he was perhaps just a dream.

"I'm thirteen."

"That's my age! Well, almost, I'm twelve." Blaine hugged his legs close and smiled, this was fun.
Kurt was quiet a moment and Blaine was worried maybe they'd lost the connection, "Why were you crying Blaine?" Kurt asked softly.

Blaine, who'd been staring at the mirror across the room, looked down to the bed he was sitting on. "I didn't mean for anyone to hear that."

"Sorry, I didn't mean to spy. But the magic let me hear you for some reason and you just sounded heartbroken." Kurt's voice was so soft and sympathetic and Blaine was feeling so alone...

"I guess I was crying because I miss my family," he answered slowly, lowering his legs and sitting crisscross, as he played with the hem of his pajama pants, still not looking up to the mirror. "I'm alone visiting my aunt, and she is great, but… my brother was going to visit and he decided not to and my parents didn't want me to go on vacation with them and my only friend here left today…"

Blaine knew he was sharing more than he would normally but it was just so nice to have someone to talk to—the tight knot that had been in his chest all evening had started to unravel. "I'm probably just feeling sorry for myself and I need to suck it up."

"I don't think you're just feeling sorry for yourself or that you need to suck it up." Kurt said gently, "I think you're lonely."

Blaine laughed and hiccupped back his tears as the word hit home. He was lonely. He bunched the comforter up and hugged it to his chest, squeezing his eyes shut; he didn't want to cry again.

"Blaine?"

Blaine didn't answer right away; he needed to get the tears out of his voice first.

"I'm sorry you feel that way," Kurt continued picking his words out carefully as if it was important for him to get them right, "I'm not somewhere without my family, but I understand how you feel. To think you're all alone. It's okay to feel that way, but I'm sorry you're sad."

Blaine looked up at the glass again, expecting to see someone looking back at him, but he didn't get to see Kurt, just hear his kind words.

"Thank you," Blaine said quietly, feeling a bit better. Just having someone acknowledge how he felt and not tell him it was silly helped a lot. He smiled, not fully understanding what was happening or why it didn't scare him, but glad to talk to someone like Kurt. "I have my aunt at least, she's cool."

"I have my dad." Kurt said, "I don't have a lot of friends but he is always there for me."

Blaine bit his lip, "Maybe we could be friends?" He asked, "Mirror friends."

Kurt laughed and the glass vibrated with it, "This is absolutely the weirdest way I've ever made a friend before."

"Me too."

"But yeah. Mirror friends."

"Mirror friends." Blaine repeated happily, yawning and lying down in bed pulling the covers over him. "Kurt, tell me something about yourself and we'll see what the mirror lets us say and what it tunes out."

Kurt laughed again and Blaine's chest warmed at the sound.
"Um, okay, I work in my family's antique shop and that's where I found this magic mirror."

Blaine chuckled at the way he said "magic mirror" as if that was a normal thing to find.

"If there is such a thing as magic mirrors I think all of the old mirrors in this house might be magic."

"I guess that could be. Magic often finds its way into old things. It would be incredible to be in a house full of magic mirrors!"

"Up until now they've been nothing but creepy." Blaine yawned again, "Do you know a lot about magic?"

"I guess. Some." Kurt answered and Blaine could hear the pride in his voice.

"My aunt is trying to learn magic. Or witchcraft I guess. Are you a witch, Kurt?"

Kurt was quiet for a moment, "Not really," he eventually answered, "I told you I'm just a normal boy."

"Who knows about magic mirrors."

"It isn't just mirrors that can have magic," Kurt said excitedly.

Blaine lay in bed while Kurt told him about all the different kinds of magic items he'd found in his family's shop. The typewriter that would make typing sounds even when no one was using it. The shepherdess figurine that let out bird songs as if you could hear the fields she would have been working in. The old grandfather clock that murmured hushed lullabies. Blaine could hardly believe it was real, it all sounded like something out of a story.

After a while, Blaine started to feel heavy with sleep, he couldn't keep his eyes open. His bed comfortable and his body tired from the sun and his earlier tears.

"I'll let you sleep." Kurt said kindly after Blaine had stifled yet another yawn, "Good night Blaine."

"Good night mirror friend." Blaine said and fell asleep to the sound of Kurt's kind chuckle.

Blaine woke up the next morning feeling rested and happy. He lay in bed for a moment as he remembered the day before. Lucy leaving and finding out that Cooper wasn't going to come see him. Why was he feeling happy again? His eyes landed on the mirror on the other side of the room, no longer covered by the blanket that had hidden it for the past month.

Blaine sat up quickly in bed, his heart in his throat. "Kurt?" He called, "Kurt, are you there?"

There wasn't any answer.

He got out of bed, flinging the covers off him, and ran towards the mirror quickly hopping up on the chair and looking at the glass, "Hey Kurt. Mirror friend? Can you hear me?" Kurt didn't answer, but there was the slight tapping noise that came from the mirrors in the house. Because after last night, Blaine was willing to admit it was the mirrors making noise, not just sounds of the house settling.

He lifted his hand and tapped lightly on the mirror. It was still crackling, but there was no echoing tap. "Kurt?"

Nothing.

Blaine sighed and climbed down from the chair, feeling disappointed. Maybe he really had dreamt it
all. The thought hurt, he really wanted Kurt to be real.

The day passed slowly, his aunt was busy and the beach that he normally enjoyed wasn't as attractive to him today without Lucy. He found himself wandering through the wide long halls of the house, looking at old portraits before ducking back into his room time and time again, hoping to hear a friendly sweet voice drifting from the mirror.

Eventually, he ended up walking down the south corridor until it dead-ended at the door to the third story. The door was a solid wood like the rest of the doors in the house, but carved in an intricate pattern, trees and leaves and a stag with five point antlers. Blaine turned from the door to look into the mirror on the wall next to it—it was like all the mirrors here, elaborate metal frame and filmy glass. He tapped the glass lightly, but the mirrors had gone quiet again. He met Saffron Callaway's eyes through the reflection and then turned to face her portrait.

She looked back at him from the chair where she sat. Hands in her lap, her back straight. Next to the chair was a small round table with a silver handheld mirror on it. He glanced at it, but not for long, there was something about Saffron's face that was hard to look away from.

"Were you really a witch?" He asked the portrait, "Or did you just know about magic the way Kurt does?" Though honestly Blaine didn't know what the difference was.

The portrait didn't answer him, which he was very grateful for. Saffron just stared blankly at him with her golden eyes. He moved away to leave the hall — and heard a scrape behind him.

"What is wrong with this house?"

He took a step forward and then another. Would his aunt mind if he went upstairs? She'd never said not to, just mentioned that the house was too big for her so she'd shut this section off. He walked through the decorative doorway and started up the steep, creaky wooden steps.

The third floor wasn't laid out like the second floor with its long halls and numerous rooms. Instead, he found himself in a large open area with a door to his right and a door at the far end. The room was gorgeous, wood floor and intricate carved woodwork around the ceiling, gold and teal latticework patterned wallpaper on the walls.

The room was mostly empty. The furniture that was here covered with dusty sheets, but from the shapes he guessed there was a sofa, a coffee table and some chairs. He started walking to the door at the end of the room, the wooden floor groaning beneath his feet, but as he passed it, the door to his right scraped gradually open. And okay… this was getting weird.

Blaine licked his lips and looked through the door. The third floor was dark, the only light available coming from the windows, but that filtered through the thin drapes that covered them. Blaine turned from the door and walked to a window in the large room, pulling open the drapes to let in the sun. It helped marginally, the windows were dusty and only let in some light.

He sighed and walked back to the open door, taking a deep breath before going through. The back of his neck pricked. He felt bold and a little scared, it was a kind of fun combination. He wasn't as fearful as he would have been once, not since meeting Kurt the night before. So far the creepiness of the house had brought him something good.

This room was smaller than the one he'd just come from. It only had two windows set in the back wall and was even darker, he walked to the widows, almost tripping over a piece of furniture as he did, and opened the drapes. The light wasn't much but he could at least make his way around the
There were just a few items in the room and he started pulling the sheets off them, beginning with the item he’d bumped into, which turned out to be a desk and chair. He tried opening the desk drawers but they were all locked with no key in sight. Next, he pulled an old yellowing sheet off a very worn and tattered-looking traveling trunk; he knelt down to open it, but it was locked as well. Next, he uncovered a long, plain wooden table and an old velvet chair, but the velvet was worn and holed and the chair looked rickety.

He went to the last object in the room and pulled off the sheet, stirring up more dust. His breath caught in his throat when the sheet fluttered to the ground and he almost panicked — underneath the sheet was a person, wide eyes staring back at him.

In that frozen moment Blaine's blood ran cold. It took only a second to realize he wasn't staring at another person; it was just his own reflection staring wildly back at him. He had pulled the sheet off a large full-length mirror. Blaine sighed in relief and laughed at himself even as his heart was still pounding too fast.

The mirror was framed in ornate metal, its glass wasn't foggy like the other mirrors, but there was a thin jagged crack that ran from top to bottom.

Blaine brought a hand up to the mirror and pressed his palm against the glass. Waiting. Wondering if this was another tapping mirror, but it didn't make any sound. He was starting to think he'd like to go back downstairs because the third floor was kind of giving him the creeps — when a deep bellowing clang came from the mirror; it made the glass shudder and Blaine's heart leapt to his throat. He jumped back from the mirror, pulling his hand away as fast as he could.

He stood there and stared at his reflection, eyes wide and worried, cheeks a little pale. There was a long moment of silence where Blaine could only hear his hurried breaths, then — gong — the mirror rang out again. The glass actually bending, curving outwards as if being pressed from behind. Blaine took several speedy steps away from the mirror, but at almost the same moment there was a loud bang behind him and Blaine spun around to find the door to the room had slammed shut. Blaine let out an involuntary cry of terror and ran for the door, tugging on the old-fashioned glass handle.

"It wouldn't budge."

"No!" Blaine's breaths were shallow. He just wanted to get out of here. Coming up here had been a terrible idea. He glanced behind his shoulder as the mirror let out another loud bellow and the whole thing shook, rattling loudly.

"Help!" Blaine cried, tears in his voice, hand still pulling the door, "Someone help me!"

Finally, the door sprang open so quickly that Blaine lost his footing and toppled to the ground, hissing in pain as he hit the hard wood floor. He recovered quickly, springing back to his feet and fleeing the room, heart in his throat. He ran through the first large open area and down the stairs as fast as his feet would take him. In fact, he didn't stop running; he reached the ground floor and flew out the back door, almost tripping over his feet in his hurry. He finally slowed down when he arrived at the beach; he leaned over hands on his knees and panted.

That was the single most terrifying thing that had ever happened to him. It was as if that mirror had lured him up there and had then come after him! He was never going to the third floor again. He wasn't even going to tell his aunt about it—afraid she'd want to investigate.

The whole house was eerie and the mirrors had always given him chills, but that mirror was
upsetting, there was something about it that just felt wrong. He didn't want to even think about it, he wished he'd never seen it.

Blaine crumpled to the sand and looked out at the water, his hands were shaking, but after a while he stared to breathe more easily, his heart slowly returning to a normal pace. He played with the sand to calm himself, threading his fingers through it and then scooping it up and letting it slide smoothly through his fist. It took a long time, the sun had started to set, but eventually Blaine was mostly composed again. His hands not shaking and his heart rate steady.

He smiled ruefully to himself; maybe the house was haunted after all, there was certainly something not right about it. Though… it couldn't be all bad, the mirror in his room must be good. It brought him Kurt.

Blaine felt better at that thought. He couldn't tell his aunt about the mirror on the third floor, for her own protection, but maybe he could tell Kurt. Kurt knew about magic.

He stood from the beach, brushing his sandy hands off on his pants, feeling only a little shaky, and headed back to the house, his stomach growling for dinner.

Now, he just needed to find a way to talk to Kurt again.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

AN: Hello! First off I have to start this chapter by apologizing again for the wait between chapters. I’ll try to do better!
A HUGE thank you to lilyvandersteen for being my beta for this chapter, she is amazing.

Enjoy!

“Things are never quite as scary when you've got a best friend.” – Bill Watterson

August 2006 – Lima, Ohio

The Lima Public Library was a square one-story structure constructed from pale beige bricks and with large round windows. It was small unassuming building, but inside, it was packed with rows and rows of tightly arranged shelves, as if the librarians had done their best to stock as many books as possible. Kurt was sitting in the one of the wide inset circular windows that made perfect little reading nooks, leaning back with his feet propped up and a pile of books by his side.

Kurt had been here for hours, but the library was proving useless today. He’d browsed the shelves, taken out all the books that looked promising and then thumbed through each of them, but he hadn’t found what he was looking for – any information on enchanted mirrors or magically communicating with someone.

All he’d found was a cheesy book on psychics and a few books about the production and manufacturing of mirrors. So nothing helpful. He sighed as he shut the book he was skimming feeling frustrated and anxious. This research was meant to distract from the one thing he wanted to do the most: talk to Blaine again.

Blaine, his mirror friend, the boy he’d talked to through the glass like it was some kind of magical walkie-talkie. Kurt couldn’t get him out of his head, his warm eager voice and the way he’d laugh at Kurt’s snarkiness instead of getting offended like some did, and how lonely he had sounded. The last thing in the world he wanted was for Blaine to think someone else had abandoned him.

Kurt’s young tender heart constricted at the thought.

Over a week ago, Burt had decided he wanted to get the mirror appraised after all. He sent it to a friend out of town, who said he’d take a look for free as soon as he had a chance. That meant Kurt had no idea when the mirror would be back, and he’d temporarily lost the most magical item he’d ever come across – along with his connection to the sweet, unhappy boy he’d met through the glass.

Kurt was glad he had plans for the afternoon, since research wasn’t proving distracting. Mercedes needed a dress for a family wedding, and she’d invited him to go shopping. He walked from the library down Main Street to reach a little consignment store in the pretty, touristy part of town. Elizabeth’s Antiques was in this area, it had good foot traffic and a scenic location. However, if you headed east a few blocks, the small rural town became a lot older and rundown and poorer-looking,
but tourists didn’t really go in that direction.

Mercedes was waiting outside of the consignment store, an eager smile on her pretty face, her bangs swept to the side and her dark hair shining in the sun. She greeted Kurt with a tight hug and excitedly started telling him what she was looking for.

“Ugh, Kurt, I wish you could come to this wedding with me!” Mercedes called from behind the curtained dressing room, trying on her fifth dress, “It’s going to be a bunch of family and family friends I haven’t seen in years.” She sighed dramatically. “At least I get to sing at the reception.”

“Well, fussy old relatives or not, you are going to look incredible,” Kurt said, sitting on a chair outside the dressing room and watching as Mercedes parted the dressing room curtains and sauntered out in a flowy purple dress. She spun around, causing the skirt to fan out like an upside-down lily.

“What do you think?”

“You look like a dream,” Kurt said, admiring the pale shade of purple organza, beautiful against Mercedes’ dark skin, trying to focus on fashion and not the memory of the sweet voice of a boy named Blaine.

Mercedes agreed with him and made her purchase. They left the boutique with Mercedes’s new dress safely zipped in a garment bag. “Do you have to go help at the shop today?”

“No, my dad gave me the day off. I think he thinks I need to have more fun,” Kurt said, digging his hands into his pockets. “Act like a kid.” He would be having fun talking to his new friend if his father hadn’t taken the mirror away, but Kurt didn’t add that thought out loud.

“Well, you do tend to act like you’re 13 going on 40, Kurt.”

Kurt gave her a side-eye. “I just… Sometimes I feel like my dad needs someone to look after him, you know? After my mom died and it was just us… He barely knew how to cook or do household chores, and I learned along with him.” Kurt shrugged. “I don’t mind. And I have fun, in my own way.”

Mercedes smiled softly at him. “I know you do, and I always have a good time with you.” She reached over and squeezed his arm. “Where to next?”

They were still on Main Street, and Kurt’s feet slowed as they came to a new shop he’d seen before but never had the time to stop at. “Want to go in?” he asked, nodding to the front door.

Mercedes looked up at the sign for Indigo Pyramid, her brow furrowed. “A mystic shop? I don’t know, Kurt, I’m not sure my mom would like it.”

“It’s harmless, Mercedes.”

Mercedes glanced from the store to Kurt and bit the inside of her cheek, thinking, “Oh, okay, fine.”

Kurt bounced on his toes and smiled before they went in. A long string of bells on the door that chimed as they entered. The first thing Kurt noted was the strong scent of incense in the air. Rich and spicy, and just a little overwhelming. There were thick rugs thrown over the floor, many of them crossing over each other, a nook in the back with a few reading chairs and soft music in the air, chimes and a pan flute, probably meant to be calming, but it just came off a little tacky to Kurt.
The store seemed to sell an assortment of books on healing herbs and the magical properties of rocks, as well as a whole section on astrology. They also carried tarot cards, candles and incense and a glass display case of crystals. Nothing extreme, nothing that interesting really. Kurt was a little disappointed.

“Okay, this isn’t bad,” Mercedes said, looking around before lowering her voice, “It’s kind of cheesy, don’t you think?”

Just then, a woman burst from the back room. “Oh, guests!” she said with a wide smile, her long curly hair flowing down her back and her arms jingling with the sound of bracelets. She looked every bit like someone you’d expect to run a mystic shop. Flowy dress, no make-up, a tattoo visible on her collar bone. “Can I help you find something?”

“We’re just looking,” Mercedes said with a smile.

“I have a new candle in stock - smells like rosemary and mint, very calming. Has a good ambiance to it, really speaks to the spirit, you know?”

Mercedes coughed and Kurt could see she was holding back her laughter the best she could.

“Thanks,” Kurt said quickly, “We’ll take a look.”

The woman smiled and nodded, but her eyes lingered on him. “Do I know you?”

“Um… My family owns the antique shop a few shops down.”

“Oh, antiques. I love antiques. I’ll have to stop by see if you have anything… special.” She winked. “I’m Sheila, by the way.”

Mercedes had wandered off, looking at the display of healing crystals and Kurt gave Sheila an appraising look. There was something about the way she said “special”.

“Special how?”

“Oh, you know, some old objects just… carry their history with them. You can feel it, almost hear it.”

“Uh huh.” Kurt couldn’t decide if this woman knew what she was talking about or just happened to stumble upon something that sounded like she knew what she was talking about. Kurt glanced around the stereotypical store. It didn’t really seem like she knew about real magic… and yet how wonderful would it be to find someone who did?

Kurt walked up to the front counter and lowered his voice a little. “Do you… do you know anything about mirrors?” he asked cautiously.

“Mirrors?” She raised one eyebrow. “I don’t sell any here.”

“Right. Right.” Kurt moved to turn away.

“They are very interesting though. Often believed to be used in the magic arts as a form of communication.”
Kurt spun back around, “Really?”

She leaned over the counter, resting her chin on her hands, and Kurt could see the tattoo on her color bone was the silhouette of a crow, flying with wings outstretched, feathers falling off as it soared – some of the cast-off feathers morphing into stars.

“Communication with who?” Kurt said, leaning over the counter as well.

“With what,” Sheila smiled.

“Excuse me?”

“You should ask what mirrors allow us to communicate with.”

Kurt’s shoulders slumped in disappointment. He didn’t need to hear any ghost stories. Blaine wasn’t a ghost. He was a real person out there in the world somewhere.

“Do you mean ghosts?” Kurt asked. “That mirrors allow us to talk to the land of the dead or something?”

“Oh no. No no. That is actually a rather modern idea. It was very popular in the early nineteenth century. But no, that’s not what I mean. Mirrors or reflections, the right ones, can help you speak with.”

“Excuse me,” Mercedes said politely, sliding up to the front counter to join them and holding up a necklace with a purple crystal dangling from a delicate silver chain. “How much are the necklaces?”

“Oh, you have a good eye. The purple quartz is known for its calming meditation powers.”

“It’s also really pretty,” Mercedes smiled.

Sheila laughed. “It’s twenty dollars, but since you are a first-time customer, and have a special event coming up, I’ll let you have it for fifteen.”

“Thank you!” Mercedes beamed as she laid her garment bag down on the counter and grabbed her wallet from her purse.

Kurt studied Sheila’s face. It was hard to tell how old she was. She had lines around her eyelids and lips, but her eyes looked young. “How did you know Mercedes had a special event coming up?”

“Sometimes I just know things.”

Kurt’s eyebrows rose.

“Also…” Sheila winked and nodded towards the garment bag.

“Ah.”

“You know, if you really are interested in speaking to the dead, that is serious stuff, but I might have an Ouija board in the back that could help,” Sheila offered.

“No no. I don’t want to talk to ghosts. I don’t even really believe in ghosts. Thanks, though.”

Sheila shrugged and rang Mercedes up. “Enchanted mirrors are of more interest to you, then?”

“Um…” Kurt cleared his throat and quickly shot a glance at Mercedes, who was watching him with a puzzled expression. Sheila seemed to notice the exchange.

“I’ll definitely check out your antique store sometime,” Sheila added, changing the subject with a breezy smile.

Kurt and Mercedes thanked her before heading to the door, “Oh, wait, Mercedes,” Kurt said turning around, “I forgot something. Meet you outside?”

Mercedes nodded, and Kurt went back up to the counter, “Real quick, mirrors help you communicate with what?” Kurt asked and Sheila smiled.

“With the other worlds, of course.”

Kurt got home late in the afternoon to find a brown paper wrapped package sitting on the front porch. He tucked it under his arm and made his way to the kitchen, setting it on the counter as he found himself a snack. Once he had his peanut butter crackers in hand, he slid out a stool and took a seat at the counter, turning the package to face him. It was addressed to his father, but Kurt couldn’t contain his smile when he saw who it was from.

“Yes!” Kurt hurried off the stool, forgetting his snack, and ran for the kitchen phone, quickly dialing the number for the antique shop.

“Elizabeth’s,” Burt’s gruff voice came down the line.

“It’s here! The mirror is back!”

“Who’s this?”

Kurt rolled his eyes. “Are you kidding? It’s Kurt, I’m calling from home. Your friend sent the mirror back, I have it here. Can I please open it?”

Burt chuckled. “You’re really excited about an old mirror, aren’t you?”

“You know it’s more than just a mirror, dad. Please.”

“Sure, Kurt. You can open it. Steve probably has a note in there for me. I’ll read it when I get home tonight.”

“Thanks, dad,” Kurt said, almost hanging up the phone.

“Oh, and Kurt, will you get the chicken for dinner tonight out of the freezer to thaw?”

“I already did that this morning.” Kurt glanced anxiously back at the package, ready to say goodbye.
to his dad so he could get to it.

“Can you check what veggies we have in the fridge? I’m going to stop by the grocery store on the way home.”

“We just went shopping a couple days ago.”

“Do we have milk?”

“Dad!”

Burt laughed.

“You’re doing this on purpose.”

“Sorry, kid,” Burt chuckled, “I’ll leave you alone. See you this evening.”

Kurt fondly rolled his eyes again as he said goodbye to his father, quickly hanging up as he went back to the counter. He turned the package over and carefully ran his finger between the paper, untying it without tearing it. A habit he had from opening gifts and saving the wrapping. Once he got through the brown paper, Kurt quickly opened the box, dug through the Styrofoam peanuts and pulled out the mirror. It was wrapped in bubble wrap that Kurt made quick work of.

Finally, he had his mirror back, the silver still gleaming and the glass slightly clouded over. It was beautiful. There was a note in the box from Steve, but Kurt didn’t care how much the antique had been appraised at. To him, it was invaluable.

Kurt went down to his bedroom, hands shaking with excitement. He slipped off the black brogue boots he was wearing and sat down on his big comfy bed, mirror held in his lap. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, listening, hoping the mirror’s magic was still audible to him.

He smiled as he heard a rush of wind and the call of seagulls, the rhythm of rolling waves. And then the quiet murmuring that the mirror always settled on. It still worked. Of course it did, it had no reason not to, but Kurt couldn’t help but be relieved.

Kurt spread his hand against the cool glass and kept his eyes closed. “Blaine?” he whispered, hoping his new friend could hear him. “Blaine, are you there?”

Kurt wasn’t sure how communication through the mirror worked. He’d only done it once, and that time, it was Blaine who he heard first, crying and alone. Kurt’s heart twisted. It had been eleven days and Kurt hadn’t had a chance to really say goodbye to Blaine. What if they never got to talk again?

“Blaine?” Kurt tried again; he opened his eyes and looked down at the mirror. He could still hear the gentle whispering. He tapped the glass lightly with his finger; the mirror tapped an echoing rhythm back. Kurt smiled, it was working – but where was Blaine?

August 2006 – Bluespruce, Maine

Blaine lay on his back, knees bent and feet flat on the ground, the sun bright above him and warming his skin. He wiggled his toes, feeling the sand between them. It had been two weeks since Lucy left,
two weeks of having to make his own fun without a friend by his side.

Two weeks without hearing any voices from his mirror.

Blaine had almost completely convinced himself that Kurt had been a dream. Mostly because it was too good to be true, the only friend he’d made this summer left and suddenly a voice was coming from a mirror and saying all the things Blaine needed to hear? Yeah, that couldn’t be real.

He wished it was, part of him was still hanging on to the hope that Kurt was an actual person – even if he never got to talk to him again, he liked the idea of a boy with a gentle voice and a caring heart and a magic antique shop out there somewhere in the world.

Blaine listened to the sound of the ocean, the waves rolling in, the wind breezing gently over him, the seagulls cawing, hoping he had food to share with them. He really missed home and his parents, but he knew when the summer was over, he was going to miss this place, and Aunt Helen too. Now that he knew her better, he was going to insist on visiting her more often. Not waiting another decade to see her again.

Blaine opened his eyes as he heard someone approaching, and turned his head to see Aunt Helen walking towards him. She smiled and sat down in the sand next to him, pushing her glasses up her nose. Helen lifted her face to the sun; eyes closed, and took a deep breath in. “I spend too much time shut up with my old books.”

“You love your old books,” Blaine said, smiling up at her.

She looked down, matching his smile. “Yes, I do.”

They shared a comfortable silence for a moment, both of them soaking up the sun, “You know, you only have a few more weeks and then you finally get to go home.”

“Hmm,” Blaine hummed, his eyes closed again.

“Aren’t you excited?”

He opened his eyes and squinted against the sun. “I didn’t want to come here, you know.”

“I do know that.”

“But I’m really glad now that I did. I’m going to miss it here.”

“Maybe you could come back again next summer? For a little while?”

Blaine sat up next to his aunt, beaming. “I would love that.”

They smiled at each other and looked back out at the blue-green waves, neither of them needing to say anything to enjoy one another’s company.

That evening, Blaine thought about going back home as he got ready for bed. It would be a flurry of activity, getting ready for the approaching school year. He’d be in the 6th grade this year, and he was excited about starting middle school. A new school could be fun, or at least he hoped so. He’d never really considered himself as “in the closet” - his family knew he was gay - but he’d never made a declaration of it either. Maybe middle school would be the time to do that. After all, there would be
school dances and school crushes, and he wanted to just be himself.

He climbed into bed and flipped on the little lamp on the nightstand, grabbing his Nintendo DS for some gaming before sleep. He had been a little bored since Lucy left, but not as lonely as that first night. Still, he glanced up from his game, pausing it, and looked across the room at the mirror. He wished he had someone his age to talk to. Actually, not someone, not just anyone, he wanted to talk to Kurt.

Blaine bit his lip and then cleared his throat. “Um… Kurt?” he called softly. No matter how many times in the bright light of day he convinced himself he just dreamed Kurt up, in the dark of his room at night, it always seemed like maybe it really did happen. Magic seemed possible with moonshine streaming through the window.

“Kurt?” he called again, louder this time as he put his game down and leaned forward. It was no use. Even if Kurt had been real, it seemed to have been a fluke that they were able to speak to each other. All the mirror did now was tap sometimes, like it always had.

He was reaching for his game again when a voice pierced through the stillness, startling Blane.

“Blaine! Blaine, is that you?”

A wide grin spread over Blaine’s face, and he excitedly moved on to his knees, crawling to the end of the bed just to be closer to the mirror. “Kurt! You’re back! And of course it’s me. How many mirror friends do you have?”

He heard Kurt laugh, and it made him smile even wider.

“Only one. Only you. But I’ve been talking to my mirror like a crazy person for days now and you’ve never been there.”

“I’ve been talking to the mirror hanging in my room for nearly two weeks, where have you been? I started to think I had made you up.”

“Oh, Blaine, I’m sorry. My dad sent the mirror away to be appraised, and I didn’t have it, but I do now!” Kurt sounded so excited to talk to him again that it made Blaine’s chest feel warm and fuzzy. “I guess for the past few days we haven’t been at our mirrors at the same time.”

Blaine couldn’t help but let out a happy laugh of his own. “You’re real. I’m glad you’re real.”

“Me too. I mean, I’m glad you are. How are you?”

“Well, no more crying into my pillow, if that’s what you mean.” Blaine could feel his cheeks heating up, remembering the embarrassing way they first met.

“I’m glad.”

“I have so much to tell you, though! I need to talk to someone who knows about magic.”

“I have stuff to tell you too!” Kurt said excitedly, his voice drifting through the glass, “But you go first.”

Blaine reached back for a pillow and hugged it closely to his chest. Kurt was real. Blaine hadn’t
realized how much he’d needed that to be true. “First, you should know that my aunt’s house is special,” Blaine started. “She says there’s magic in it, and she’s obviously right. I mean, we’re talking in a pretty magical way.”

Kurt let out a soft chuckle from the other side of the glass, and Blaine felt so grateful to have someone to talk about this with. When he went home next month, he would have to pretend that he’d had a perfectly normal summer, without any magic in it, and he was not looking forward to that at all.

“Aunt Helen says that my great-great-great-, I don’t remember how many greats, grandmother was a witch, and there’s this really creepy old portrait of her that freaks me out… and you said other objects besides mirrors could have magic.”

“Yeah.”

“What if I found something magical that… it isn’t… that doesn’t… feel right.”

“What do you mean?”

Blaine closed his eyes and tried to picture talking to Kurt in person. He couldn’t do it, he had no idea what Kurt looked like, but his voice sounded concerned.

“I don’t know, is there such a thing as… bad magic?”

“Yes.” Kurt’s voice was hushed, reverent. “Do you think there’s bad magic in the house?”

Blaine sighed before answering out loud, “Yeah. I mean at first *everything* here scared me, but I think that’s because I never really believed in magic before this, and Aunt Helen likes to talk about ghost and witches and…” Blaine trailed off, not knowing what to say.

“It’s creepy?” Kurt supplied.

“Yes. It is.”

Kurt hummed and Blaine imagined him nodding his head, “That’s understandable.”

“But if… if there was some kind of bad magic in the house, I don’t think it’s in everything. Could it be just in one thing?” Blaine felt nervous just thinking about the mirror upstairs, but he had been waiting weeks to talk to Kurt about it.

“Yes. That’s completely possible. My mom taught me how to detect dark magic and since I lost her, I’ve found one object like that all on my own.”

“Lost her?” All thoughts of asking Kurt more about magic were halted at those ominous words.

“Um, yeah…” Kurt was quiet for a long moment, and Blaine almost called out his name just to make sure they could still hear each other, “She died. Five years ago.”

“Oh.” Blaine’s heart strained in his chest. He thought about how much he’d missed his mom and dad this summer and couldn’t bear the thought of losing them. “I’m so sorry.”

“It was hard. It’s still hard. I miss her all the time, you know?”
“I’m sorry,” Blaine repeated, and he wanted to kick himself for not knowing what else to say. He thought back to when his grandmother died a few years back. All his mom had wanted to do was talk about her.

“Tell me about her. Your mom,” Blaine said. The upstairs mirror could wait, Kurt was more important. “What was she like?”

He heard a choked-off laugh through the mirror, “Do you really want to hear about her?”

“Yes.”

“She was wonderful.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. She was the one who taught me how to detect magic and to know if it was dark or light. I think she would have taught me more if she’d had the time, but…” Kurt cleared his throat. “She liked to sing. It was her idea to open an antique shop. My dad was a mechanic when they met, but they wanted a business that was theirs together.”

“I can’t imagine how much you miss her.”

“It’s rough sometimes. But I have my dad. He always says I’m more like my mom than him, but he’s a good dad, and he tries really hard to understand me, even if we don’t have a lot in common. One time, when I was about nine, he set up a tea party for me in the front yard.” Kurt giggled at the memory, “Plastic tea set, stuffed animal guests and all. He realized I hadn’t had one since mom died.”

Blaine smiled, scooting back against his headboard and slipping his legs under his covers, still hugging a pillow to his chest. He kept asking questions, and Kurt told story after story about his mother. How she instilled in him a love of magic and music, how she always had the best arts and crafts for them to do together on rainy days. How she and his dad would work together in the kitchen, Elizabeth cooking and Burt cleaning up after her.

Blaine loved every moment of it. He could hear the joy in Kurt’s voice, and when Kurt admitted he didn’t get to talk about his mom like this very often, Baine was glad he’d asked. He’d just met Kurt, but making him happy was already vitally important to Blaine.

The mirror did that odd warping noise every once in a while, muffling Kurt’s words. They figured out it happened when either of them would share information about where they were or where they lived or even last names. It was like the mirror, or the magic Kurt corrected Blaine, didn’t want them to be able to find each other. Blaine was disappointed about that. He wanted to look Kurt up in the real world, but it seemed their magical mirror conversations were all they were allowed.

Blaine didn’t have a chance to ask Kurt about the third floor mirror that night. They stayed up late, talking about all sorts of things, and Blaine was enjoying himself so much he actually forgot about it. For now, just getting to know Kurt was the most pressing thing on Blaine’s mind.

Talking to Kurt had become the best part of Blaine’s day. They decided to go to their mirrors the same time every day to meet. Blaine would sit in bed and talk and listen and laugh. It got to the point
that Blaine had stayed up late talking to Kurt so many nights in a row he actually took naps in the afternoon to make up for the lost sleep.

They could have tried talking during the day, but neither of them wanted to be caught doing it. It was their secret and they liked it that way. It made their friendship seem top-secret and adventurous. Blaine hadn’t mentioned the third floor mirror. Mostly, he was having so much fun with Kurt he didn’t even think about it, and the few times he could have brought it up, he chose not to. He didn’t want to spoil the magic he shared with Kurt by worrying about less friendly magic. In truth, Blaine had decided not to think about the mirror at all. Out of sight, out of mind was the rule he was following.

Between the beach and the fun activities his aunt kept coming up with and his growing friendship with Kurt, the last few weeks of summer were flying by. Blaine was happy to see his parents soon, but he was also dreading the day he left his aunt’s house and had no way of contacting Kurt. He was going to miss Aunt Helen as well, but she would still be part of his life. His biggest worry was leaving Kurt behind. What if this one month of summer was all the time he ever had with him?

Blaine had friends back home, but no one like Kurt. No one who this easy to talk to about anything the way his unseen mirror friend was. And no one that made his heart do backflips in his chest just with the sound of their laugh.

“Do you think I could find a magic mirror back home?” Blaine asked one evening, only a few days before he was to leave Callaway Place.

“I don’t see how.”

“But apparently, there is magic everywhere. You find magic items at your store all the time.”

“Not all the time.”

“A lot,” Blaine argued. He didn’t want to give up on this idea.

He heard Kurt sigh. “Yeah, okay, it happens maybe once a month or so, but in my whole life, I’ve never found anything like this mirror. I’ve never seen this kind of magic before.”

“What if I took one of my aunt’s mirrors? I mean, I’d ask her first.” Blaine suggested, thinking about how all the mirrors here made that tapping sound.

“That might work!” Kurt answered excitedly, but then his voice trailed off. “But… It’s strange that all the mirrors there seem to be magic. It makes me think it might be the house that is magic, not the mirrors.”

“I still think I should try.” Blaine was feeling desperate. After just three short weeks, Kurt already felt like a best friend, and he didn’t want to lose that.

“Is there a little one you could ask for?”

Blaine bunched up his forehead in thought. “All the mirrors are actually kind of big, now that I think of it, but I could ask my aunt.”

“It’s worth a try,” Kurt said, and he actually sounded hopeful.
“If not, then I plan on coming back, for at least a short trip, next summer.”

Kurt was quiet for a moment before speaking up in a soft voice. “That’s a year away.”

“I know.”

“We wouldn’t be able to talk for a whole year.”

“I know,” Blaine repeated, his heart sinking.

“I’m… I’m going to miss you.” Kurt’s words were so soft that Blaine barely heard them.

“Me too.” They were quiet for a moment, and Blaine felt like he might cry. He heard Kurt sniff.

“People are going to think I’m crazy when I go home and start talking to mirrors to see if you answer,” Blaine said, trying to lift the mood.

Kurt let out a little laugh, and Blaine smiled.

“I’ll be in the bathroom at school, looking at my reflection and going, ‘Hello? Hello, anyone there?’”

Kurt laughed louder.

“I’ll be in the car with my mom, looking in the side mirror and calling your name.”

“Don’t,” Kurt said, laughing hard, “Please don’t, your mom really will think you’ve lost it.”

“What if you talked back, though? She’d probably swerve off the road. Yeah, no talking to mirrors in the car.”

Kurt sighed long and happily, “Good rule. No freaking your mom out and making her run off the road.” After a moment, he added, “Do ask your aunt about bringing a mirror home, though.”

Blaine was lying on his back on his bed, a smile on his face. “I will. I don’t know what excuse I’ll make, but I will.”

“You’re parents are coming!” Aunt Helen announced at breakfast one morning. Millie had made crepes with powdered sugar and fresh fruit – that was another thing Blaine was going to miss, Millie’s cooking.

“What do you mean, my parents are coming? They’re coming here?”

“Yes, I got an email from Pam. Instead of shipping you back home, they’re going to come and stay here for a day or two and then you’ll all go home together!”

Blaine could tell Helen was excited, his mom was her little sister after all, but Blaine had such a hard time picturing Michael and Pamela Anderson in this old peculiar house. They liked new things — new, modern, streamlined. His parents and Callaway Place seemed like different worlds.
“That will be fun,” Blaine smiled. “How long has it been since you saw mom?”

“Oh, too long. Far too long. I don’t travel much anymore, and once Pam left home, she never looked back.”

He wondered what his mother thought of witches as ancestors and town gossip that the house was haunted. It was probably different when she lived here, though; a whole family living in a big old house was different from one solitary and admittedly tiny bit odd woman living here on her own.

“I wonder where the good china is? I haven’t used it in years. I’ll have to send Andrew to the third floor to find it.”

Blaine was about to take a bite of delicious fruit crepe, but he dropped his fork and it clanged against his plate. The third floor?

“Everything all right?” Aunt Helen asked, daintily taking a bite of strawberry.

Blaine nodded, “Yes. Yeah.” For a moment, he felt as though he should tell his aunt about the mirror, but the same arguments that kept him from mentioning it before came back. If she knew there was something different about the mirror upstairs, she wouldn’t hold back trying to figure it out and Blaine knew, he just knew, there was something bad about that mirror. He didn’t want his aunt to have anything to do with it.

“Maybe I could go up with Andrew when he looks for the china?” Blaine asked, hoping to sound casual. Someone had to keep an eye on the mirror.

“Oh, yes! You haven’t seen the third floor yet. I’m sure he’d appreciate the help.”

Blaine nodded and tried to ignore the knot in his stomach.

He went upstairs to his room after breakfast, looking at the mirror over the fireplace and calling Kurt’s name. They always talked in the evening, but there was a chance he could be around now. He checked back again several times that day, but Kurt was never there. He should have told Kurt about that mirror long ago! He just really didn’t like talking about it. He was able to enjoy the magic of the house because he resolutely did not think about the dark magic he knew was upstairs.

“Hey, Blaine.” Andrew knocked on his door.

“Come in.”

Andrew peeked his head around the old wooden door. “I’m heading upstairs to find Ms. Helen’s china. Wanna come with?”

Blaine swallowed deeply, feeling scared. He didn’t want to go up there, but at the same time he felt this urge to see the mirror again, and at least he wouldn’t be alone this time. “Yeah. Sure.”

They walked down the long hallway, stopping in front of Saffron’s portrait as Andrew dug in his pocket for keys.

“What are you doing?” Baine asked.

“The door to the third floor is locked.”
“No, it isn’t.” Blaine reached out for the knob, pulling, but the door didn’t budge. He wiggled the handle, but Andrew was right, it was locked.

“Can I use the key now?” Andrew asked with a smirk.

Blaine nodded and stepped back, allowing Andrew to unlock and open the engraved door, reaching out to flip on a light. And oh, Blaine hadn’t even tried that when he’d been here!

“Huh.” Andrew flipped the switch a few more times, but no lights came on. He didn’t seem bothered as he started up the stairs; Blaine closed his eyes and took a long calming breath before rushing up the stairs behind him.

They got to the big sparse room and Andrew tried another light switch. It didn’t work either. “I’ll have to look at the fuse box,” Andrew mumbled to himself.

The drapes were still open from when Baine had been here, so there was some light. Andrew walked across the room with long strides, and Blaine hurried to keep up, his spine tingling just being up here. They passed the door to the room with the mirror in it. It was slightly ajar, but Andrew seemed to be heading for the door at the far end.

It was another large open room. It seemed like the whole of the third floor was just the three rooms. This room was plain, with white plaster walls and a few small windows. It was packed, though. More sheet-covered furniture and boxes piled on top of each other. If the china was in here, he didn’t know how they were ever going to find it.

Andrew tried the light switch yet again, and when it didn’t work, he opened the curtains over the windows along the walls. Light shined through, illuminating dancing dust particles floating around in the air and the many antiques crammed in this room.

“So, it’s going to be in a trunk,” Andrew said. “I guess we should start pulling sheets off things?”

Blaine just wanted to get out of here as quickly as he could, and he remembered having seen a trunk up here. “There’s a trunk in that other room, the smaller one we passed?”

Andrew lifted an eyebrow. “Is there?”

“Yes, I saw it last time-” Blaine snapped his mouth shut, realizing too late he’d given himself away.

Andrew just smiled. “Listen, kid, I don’t care if you’ve been up here. You’re a twelve-year old boy and it’s been a long summer. No wonder you’ve been exploring.” He passed Blaine, ruffling his curls with a big callused hand, and made his way through the maze of boxes towards the door. “Come on.”

Blaine trailed behind him, but stopped as they got to the entrance of the smaller room. Andrew walked in while Blaine stood in the doorway, eyes focused on the mirror, the sheet Blaine had pulled off of it still lying crumpled on the floor.

“You could at least have put the sheets back when you were done exploring,” Andrew said, and he walked to the trunk. “Here we go.” He knelt down and tried to open it.

“Um. It’s locked,” Blaine said from the door. “Do you have the key?”
“Nope.” Andrew stood. “I bet Ms. Helen does. I’ll go get it.”

“I’ll come with you!”

“Nope. You need to clean up your mess. Put those sheets back on everything, will you? I’ll be right back.”

“I…” Blaine watched Andrew leave, his throat going dry. “Crap.”

He hurried to the mirror, scooping the sheet off the floor and throwing it over, wanting to get the mirror covered up before anything else. He didn’t even want to look at it. Once the mirror was hidden by white cloth, Blaine felt a little better. He hurried to cover the rest of the furniture too, besides the trunk.

He turned from the desk and chair, ready to wait for Andrew in the main room, when his eyes landed on the mirror. He let out a little gasp – the sheet had fallen off of it. It stood there looking intimidating and grand, the metal frame an intricate pattern of twirling and looping vines, the glass clearer than any of the other old mirrors in the house. It made Blaine’s spine tingle as it stood there like one big unblinking eye watching him.

“Oh, god.” Blaine’s hand was at his chest, and he could feel his heart pounding. Slowly, he walked to the mirror, picked up the sheet and very carefully covered it this time. He made sure not to touch the glass or even the frame, and backed away quickly when he was done. He didn’t linger, he just rushed to the main room to wait for Andrew.

Andrew came back up in a few minutes, dangling a key in the air triumphantly, “Got it.”

Blaine waited by the door as Andrew entered, but inhaled when he saw the sheet was on the floor once more. The mirror uncovered again. “Missed one.” Andrew nodded at the mirror as he knelt to unlock the trunk.

“I... I didn’t miss it, I swear. That sheet just won’t stay on.”

“Jackpot,” Andrew said as he lifted the lid of the trunk. “Well, cover it again and then you can help me carry this down.”

Blaine nodded bravely and walked back into the room. He picked up the sheet and threw it over the top of the mirror, ready to get away from here. He turned to Andrew, who put a cardboard box in his arms, and took a larger one for himself and then they, finally, thankfully, made their way downstairs.

Blaine let out a sigh of relief when Andrew locked the door to the third floor. This time, he really was never going up there again.

That afternoon, Blaine helped his aunt wash off all the old china and then spent the rest of the day at the beach, as far away from the third story as he could get.

**August 2006 – Lima, Ohio**

Burt was staying at the shop late, catching up on some bookkeeping. Kurt had offered to stay and help him, but Burt wouldn’t hear of that and had sent him home with enough cash to order pizza for
Kurt sat on the swing on the back porch, chomping on pepperoni pizza and flipping through a new issue of Vogue. His mirror was next to him on the swing as he waited for Blaine.

“Hello?”


“I really needed to talk to you.”

“Okay, shoot. But just know I’m finishing up dinner, so sorry if I’m chewing while talking to you.”

“Um… Well… I’m not sure where to start.”

There was something troubling in Blaine’s voice this evening, he didn’t sound quite right. “Are you thinking about going home and us not talking anymore?” Kurt was, he thought about that all the time. It made his throat itch and his chest heavy.

“Well, actually, there’s something I need to talk to you about, and I should have brought it up weeks ago.”

“I’m listening.” Kurt curled his legs up underneath him and got comfortable as the swing rocked softly back and forth.

“You know how you mentioned once that, um… that your mom taught you how to detect good and bad magic?”

“She called it light and dark magic, but yeah, same thing.” There was a long pause, long enough that Kurt started getting nervous. “Blaine, is everything all right? You aren’t in some kind of danger or something, are you?”

“Danger?” Blaine’s voice came out of the glass high and scared. “What kind of danger?”

“I don’t know! You’re freaking me out here.”

He heard Blaine sigh.

“Is it that portrait you mentioned once?” Kurt looked down at the mirror, wishing for the millionth time he could see Blaine. “Whatever it is, you can tell me. Please. I’ll try to help.”

“There’s this mirror. On the third floor.”

“Okay.”

“And it isn’t like the other mirrors in this house, it’s… It makes me feel weird. I – it’s actually really frightening. And once it, I don’t know… It thudded? All the mirrors here make sound, but this one – it was like something big was knocking into it from the other side and then it just started shaking and I tried to leave the room, but the door wouldn’t open. And can kids have heart attacks? Because I felt like I was going to have one.”
“This happened today?” Kurt asked, his brow creased with concern. “Are you okay?”

“No, it happened a while ago, and I guess I didn’t mention it because I really don’t like talking about it.”

“But you’re all right?”

“Yes. The door finally came open and I ran out of there.”

“Okay… Okay,” Kurt nodded, thinking through what Blaine had said. It sounded intense. “I’ve never heard of anything like that, but there is this test to see if something has dark magic in it, and if it does, the object always rattles. It shakes.”

“Yeah, I don’t need a test to tell me that mirror is dark, Kurt, I can feel it. I was up there again today and—”

“Blaine don’t do that!”

“What?”

“Don’t go up there if there is dark magic!” Kurt’s heart was in his throat. He didn’t know a lot about dark magic, besides that you really shouldn’t mess with it, and he couldn’t stomach the idea of Blaine in danger.

“I went up with Andrew to find something for my aunt. But no one goes up there normally.”

“Did it rattle again?”

“No, but I kept putting this sheet on it and it kept falling off. Which… as I say it out loud now doesn’t sound that sinister… but… I don’t know…”

Kurt chewed nervously on his lip. This was something out of his usual realm of knowledge, but he wanted to help Blaine, especially since he sounded shaken.

“Kurt, what should I do?”

“You… Maybe you shouldn’t do anything? You’re leaving in three days and it won’t matter.”

“But my aunt is still here!”

“Right.” Kurt sighed. That was a problem. It was hard to give Blaine advice when he knew so little about the mirror in question. It had probably been there for years and no harm had come of it. At the same time, could he really advise Blaine to leave his aunt with something dark in her home?

“There are ways to destroy dark objects…” Kurt began slowly, “But the more magic there is in them, the harder it is. Also, the actual physical size makes it more difficult as well. The only object I ever had to destroy was a fountain pen.”

“An evil fountain pen?” Blaine asked, and Kurt was glad to hear a little humor back in his voice. “What did it do, write dirty words?”
“Ha ha,” Kurt said with a smile. “No, it didn’t do much at all, but I performed the test and it had dark magic, and my mom taught me that meant we had to destroy it.”

“But what does dark magic do?”

Kurt’s cheeks flushed. He didn’t want to admit he didn’t actually know. “Well, some objects with light magic bring good luck, or a general feeling of happiness. I guess the dark ones could do the opposite?”

“You don’t really know, do you, Kurt?” Blaine didn’t sound upset, but he did sound disappointed, and Kurt hated that.

“I… I don’t. I’m sorry.”

Blaine was quiet, and Kurt started feeling nervous. “I know I make myself sound like an expert or something, but my mom died when I was young and my dad knows nothing about it… and I… I’m sorry Blaine.”

“No. It’s okay. I’m just thinking. If there is a chance that it could bring my aunt bad luck or make her have a general feeling of unhappiness – I have to get rid of it, don’t I?”

Kurt really wanted to say no, to just leave it alone, but Blaine had a point. “Destroying dark magic is dangerous, Blaine.”

“How?”

“My mom said people get hurt sometimes. The pen I destroyed, it was small and only had a little magic or my dad wouldn’t have even let me try. The shaking and thudding and just the feeling you get from it make me think this mirror is something stronger.”

“All the more reason to do it. I have to keep Aunt Helen safe.”

“Blaine.” Kurt couldn’t help but smile a little as he ran the pad of his finger softly down the glass of his hand mirror. Blaine was brave and loyal and it hurt Kurt’s chest to think of him in danger.

“Listen. I don’t think you should. Really. You wanted my advice? You said yourself no-one goes to the third floor. And it has probably been there for years, right? I honestly think you just… you just have to leave it, Blaine. I’m sorry.”

“You won’t tell me how to destroy it?”

“Blaine.”

“I’m assuming it takes more than just smashing the thing?”

“Breaking a mirror brings bad luck.”

“Really?”

Kurt shrugged. “I don’t actually know if that’s true or not.”

Blaine sighed again.
Kurt rubbed his head, pizza cold and forgotten beside him as a headache started to come on. “If you really want the spell for destroying dark magic, I’ll give it to you,” Kurt whispered, hoping Blaine wouldn’t want it and not knowing if Blaine would be able to work a spell anyway. Not everyone could. “Or, seeing as your aunt knows about magic, maybe you should just tell her.”

“I can’t, she’ll try to mess with it and I don’t want her to get hurt.”

“Can’t you see that’s exactly what I’m saying to you?” Kurt pressed, “Don’t mess with it, Blaine. Please.” Kurt hated that his voice wobbled a little. He just couldn’t stand the idea of Blaine doing something reckless and dangerous, but if he asked, Kurt would tell him how to destroy it. That had to be better than Blaine trying to destroy it blindly, right?

Blaine was quiet for a long time, but Kurt could hear him breathing.

“Okay,” Blaine finally said.

“Okay?”

“Yeah, maybe you don’t know everything about magic, but you know a lot more than I do, and if you say to leave it alone… I will.”

Kurt leaned his head against the back of the swing and let out a breath of relief. “Thank you, Blaine.”

“I leave in three days.”

“I know. I’ve been counting down.”

“Let’s talk about something nice.”

“Like what?” Kurt said with a smile, wanting to change the subject.

“I’ve got to read you part of this e-mail from my brother Cooper,” Blaine said, and Kurt could hear the smile in his voice. “He’s so weird.”

Kurt smiled too, biting his lip as his heart fluttered. This was what he wanted, Blaine happy and safe. If there was a chance Kurt was going to lose contact with him soon, at least he knew Blaine was going to be all right.

Saying goodbye to Blaine three days later had been even harder than Kurt had expected. Yes, they’d only know each other a month and had never seen each other in person, but still, for the first time, Kurt felt like he had a best friend. Someone he enjoyed, someone who got him, someone he cared about and trusted completely.

But Blaine had to go back home to… well, wherever he lived. And Kurt wasn’t really expecting any mirror he brought with him to work away from his aunt’s house. They planned on talking again next summer when Blaine came back to his aunt’s, but a lot could happen in a year.

“You will come back, won’t you?” Kurt asked their last evening together.

“Of course. I mean, I want to visit my Aunt anyway, so I’ll come back. You just have to keep that
mirror you have.”

“I will.”

“And wait for me. I don’t know when I’ll be back. In the summer.”

“I’ll wait.”

“Don’t… Don’t forget about me.” Blaine said softly.

“How could I forget about my first ever mirror friend?” Kurt smiled at his mirror and was pleased to hear a little laugh from Blaine.

“Same here.”

They both lay in bed as they spoke and never actually did say the word ‘goodbye’ as they kept talking until they both drifted to sleep.
"The only thing that gets me through the winter is knowing that summer is going to be there."
– Jack McBrayer

June 2007 – Lima, Ohio

As soon as the last bell on the last day of school rang, excited butterflies stirred in Kurt's stomach. He'd never been one who rushed out of school at the end of the year, but today he was grabbing his backpack and bounding out of West Lima Middle School as fast as his feet would carry him.

Burt was in the parking lot waiting for him. "Hey there bud!" he called, "Slow down, you look like someone set your tail on fire."

"School's out!" Kurt breathed in excitement, his face plastered in a smile. "Summer is here."

"Summer is great," Burt chuckled.

"Really great." Kurt beamed, hitching his backpack on his shoulders. There were a lot of reasons for Kurt to be excited about summer. It meant more time at the antique shop, more time to just hang out with friends, more sunshine and relaxation – but none of these were the reason Kurt was so excited. The most important thing about summer was the possibility of Blaine.

It had been nearly ten months since Kurt had talked to Blaine – since Blaine had left his aunt's house promising to be back again next year – and all Kurt had heard from his mirror was whispering and the occasional tap. And Kurt knew it would be too good to be true that Blaine would show up the first day of summer, but still, after ten months of waiting, he couldn't help but hope.

That night Kurt stayed up late, mirror near at hand, not wanting to miss his friend calling him through the glass. Blaine didn't call. So Kurt fell asleep with his mirror nearby just like he had for the last ten months… and the way he did the next night… and the next…
The smell of incense wafted over Kurt as he walked into \textit{Indigo Pyramid}. Shelia looked up from the counter with a smile, "Kurt! Good to see you."

Kurt smiled back and sent her a little wave.

"The book you ordered is in."

"Great!" Kurt beamed, "I was hoping it would be."

Sheila ducked into the back room and came out with a small purple book in her hands, "Here you go, 'A Historical Index of Magical Objects.' I'm still so happy I found this for you, it was hard to get my hands on."

"Thank you for going to the trouble," Kurt said, holding the book, his finger tracing over the worn edges, "It means a lot."

She tilted her head and gave him an appraising look, "You aren't like other kids your age are you?"

"What makes you say that?" Kurt asked, looking up at her and thinking she wasn't really like other people either.

Sheila lifted an eyebrow, "Well, you order a book from a mystic shop for one thing and you spend a lot of time here."

Kurt laughed, "I just find this stuff interesting."

Sheila nodded, "I would never discourage a young mind open to new ideas, Kurt, but you should still do normal stuff kids your age do. Your aura seems… anxious. You know what you need? A boyfriend, don't you think?"

"A boyfriend?" Kurt cleared his throat, "Why would you assume I'd want a boyfriend?" Kurt nervously toyed with the book in his hand. He knew he gave off a certain vibe – the way he talked, the way he dressed, his attitude – but he wasn't actually out of the closet. He wanted to be, but it was a terrifying prospect. He didn't know anyone gay his age, and Lima wasn't really what you'd call progressive. To have Sheila so blatantly assume he was gay was an odd feeling; he wasn't ashamed of who he was, but he was scared of how people would react.

"Oh…" Sheila's eyes grew round, "Or a girlfriend, or…whatever."

Kurt nodded, okay Shelia knew. He'd add this to the things both he and Shelia knew about but didn't really discuss, like magic. "Yeah, I guess having… someone… would be nice. But, I'm only fourteen; my dad says I still have plenty of time for that."

"And he is right, don't listen to me." Shelia said with a soft smile.

Kurt smiled back and turned to the door. He couldn't help but think of Blaine – if he were to have a boyfriend; Blaine would make such a good one. "Thanks again for finding the book!" Kurt called as he waved and left the store.

Kurt bit his lip and continued thinking about Blaine and his mirror, maybe \textit{tonight} would be the
night.

August 2007 – Lima, Ohio

Kurt snapped his book shut and groaned. The AC in the house was on the fritz and even with a fan pointed directly on him, it was still swelteringly hot. He glanced down at 'A Historical Index of Magical Objects'-he'd been reading it off and on for weeks-but right now, not even magic could distract him.

He'd gotten the book so that he could talk to Blaine about it, but school started again in fourteen days; summer was almost over and he hadn't heard from Blaine. He scooted over and opened the drawer to his nightstand, pulling out the antique mirror. It was still as magical as ever, he often heard it whispering or tapping, but the sound he wanted to hear was not there yet – he hadn't heard Blaine's voice in a full year.

He laid the mirror on his bed next to his book and then slid under the covers, leaving only a thin sheet over him. He flipped off the light and tried to make himself sleep. Eventually, he'd started drifting off and didn't notice the sound of a breeze coming from his mirror, or the crashing waves, he didn't even notice the faint sound of seagulls, until…

"Kurt? Hello?" An eager and familiar voice rang out.

Kurt's eyes snapped open and a smile spread on his face.

Blaine.

He sat up, turning the light back on and grabbing the mirror. "Blaine! Oh my gosh, it's you. Is it really you?"

Blaine's golden laughter fell through the glass and Kurt kicked his feet in excitement.

"Your one and only mirror friend."

"You took long enough! Summer is almost over."

"I know, I'm so sorry. I went on vacation with my parents this year, and the mirror Aunt Helen let me take home last summer didn't work outside of her house."

"I didn't think it would." Kurt lay down again, hugging the covers over him and smiling up at his ceiling. Blaine came back; he came back just like he promised he would. "I'm glad you got to travel with your parents this summer," Kurt said in a quiet voice, knowing how much Blaine had missed them the summer before.

"Me too."

"But god, I'm glad you're back at your aunt's house," Kurt turned to look at the mirror as Blaine's laughter rang through it again.

"Me too." Blaine echoed sweetly.

July 2008 – Bluespruce, Maine

Blaine greeted Aunt Helen with a tight hug and a peck to the cheek before being swept away by his
mother who wanted her own chance to greet her sister. He and his parents had come in from
California and were spending a week in Bluespruce to visit Helen, and then his parents were leaving,
while Blaine had convinced them to let him stay an additional week. It still wasn't as long as his first
summer, but it was longer than last summer, and Blaine was happy to be back at Callaway Place. He
left his parents to catch up and rushed up to his room to deposit his bag.

Blaine stayed in the same room each summer; in fact, his aunt called it "Blaine's room," and as he
went to put his luggage away, his heart instinctively started beating a little faster. He so closely
associated this room to his friendship with Kurt.

They had experimented, Blaine going from mirror to mirror, seeing if he could talk to Kurt in them.
He could. Like they had predicted, it seemed there was something special about this house and the
mirrors in it. Even with that knowledge, it was the large ornate mirror above the fireplace in his
bedroom that always made Blaine think of Kurt's sweet, happy voice.

He looked up and smiled at the mirror, sighing happily, "I'll talk to you tonight."

He turned and left the room, hurrying down the hallway; he didn't hear the mirror's loud crack of
noise or the low laugh that wooshed into the room on a breeze from down the hall and up the stairs.

That evening, Blaine said goodnight to his parents and aunt. It had been a long evening counting
down the minutes until he could slip quietly away to his room.

He knew Aunt Helen loved having her sister here, so he was glad for her sake that his parents were
visiting, but he was really looking forward to the week of having his aunt to himself. She was one of
his favorite people ever, and he knew from experience that when his parents were around, Helen was
more reserved. It wouldn't be until after they left that Helen would pull out the latest book on
witchcraft she was reading and show Blaine all the new things she'd learned since his last visit.

Right now, though, he was focused on a different aspect to his Bluespruce visits. As much as Blaine
loved his aunt and would come to visit her regardless, he had to admit that Callaway Place had
another very strong draw. The chance to finally talk to Kurt again.

Blaine carefully closed the door to his room, quickly got ready for bed and then faced the fireplace
mirror, excitement leaping in his chest.

"Kurt?" He waited, heart in his throat. "Kurt are you-"

"Blaine!" An excited voice came from the mirror, making it quiver.

A wide grin spread over Blaine's face, just hearing his name from Kurt's lips made his chest feel
warm and bubbly.

"I was trying to prepare myself for not hearing from you until next month!"

"I'm here earlier this year." Blaine explained happily while crawling into bed. "And I get to stay two
weeks."

"Two weeks." Kurt's voice held a smile in it, "Twice as long as we had last year."

"Still not long enough."

"No," Kurt's voice grew quieter, "Never long enough." He cleared his throat. "Still though, it is
going to be a great two weeks!"
They fell into easy conversation like they did every summer. Talking about anything from magic to their everyday lives.

"My friend Mercedes bought a magic jewelry box from the shop, and since she's had it, she has started finding all the lost jewelry she's misplaced over the years. She hasn't put the timing together, but I noticed."

"Cooper came home with a girlfriend over Christmas, I've never seen him so happy."

They spent the next two weeks talking every day, and at the end of Blaine's vacation, they didn't say goodbye, they never did. They just promised to talk to each other again next summer. A promise Blaine knew he would always keep.

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**July 2009 – Lima, Ohio**

"No, Blaine, you don't understand. When someone starts talking about sports my mind just powers down. I literally couldn't care less about it."

Blaine's cheerful laugh came through Kurt's mirror; it was warm and rich, deeper than it used to be and made Kurt's stomach flip over.

"But, Kurt, doesn't your dad like football?"

"He does, and I've tried for his sake, I have… mostly tried, but grown men running around and colliding into each other while hundreds of people watch and cheer? I just… I don't get it."

Blaine laughed again and Kurt's cheeks hurt from smiling so hard, "Okay when you put it like that, it does sound absurd. I still enjoy it though, and it's nice to have something to do with my dad that he considers \textit{manly}."

Kurt's smile slipped, "Your dad has trouble with you… being gay, doesn't he?" Kurt was nervous to ask, he still hadn't told his own father and the thought of telling Burt was terrifying to him.

"No, I don't know… he and I are building a car together this summer because he wants me to be more like him and Cooper. I don't think he cares that I'm gay, not really, he just can't seem to wrap his head around it."

"Mmmm." Kurt worried his lip and tried to picture his own father's reaction.

What would a football-loving, flannel-wearing, former mechanic like his dad do? He certainly wouldn't understand either. "You're the only person I'm out to, did you know that?" Kurt said, his voice just above a whisper as he looked at the mirror lying on the bed next to him.

"I wondered," Blaine answered gently, "And thank you."

"For what?"

"For trusting me with that."

Kurt could feel the blush cover his cheeks, "I do trust you Blaine."

"Even though we've never actually met?"

"I still know you pretty well."
"You know me better than most."

Kurt smiled and sighed, "Okay, tell me what it is about football that you like, maybe I could try watching it with my dad again."

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**August 2010 – Bluespruce, Maine**

Blaine glanced at his arm, tracing a finger up it along the bone, like he had done dozens of times before. It was probably all in his head, but he thought he could make out just the tiniest of dips where it had fractured. Eight long weeks of a cast and then weeks after that getting it back in shape.

He closed his eyes and shook his head. No, he wouldn't think about the long weeks of recovery or the horrifying night it all happened.

He was back at Aunt Helen's, the place he loved most in the world and he was waiting to talk to his best friend who he only had a chance to speak with for a few weeks a year; he'd focus on that.

"Blaine!"

Blaine's heart leapt as a grin pulled on his lips. Kurt always greeted him the same way, every summer, by shouting his name with excitement and joy, it made Blaine's heart soar.

"Hi Kurt." Blaine said and hoped that his voice conveyed how happy he felt.

"Oh my god. I have so much to tell you. A lot has happened and it's August. I was scared you weren't going to visit your aunt this summer, and then what would I do? That would have been torture."

Blaine chuckled and leaned back on the headrest, hearing Kurt's voice was like a balm. It made these past few months seem lighter, "You're in a good mood."

"Of course I am, I'm finally getting to talk to my best friend again."

"Who? Mercedes?"

"Ha. Ha." Kurt deadpanned, "You do know I mean you?"

"Yes. You're my best friend too." Blaine sighed, feeling lighter and lighter. "Okay, tell me everything."

"Guess what? I came out to my dad!"

"Kurt! You did? That's wonderful. How did it go?"

"He knew. He already knew, Blaine. And he doesn't care. He's been amazing about it. I'm pretty much out now, I told Mercedes before I even told dad… she may have been developing a little crush on me that I needed to nip in the bud, and now the whole Glee Club knows and… god it feels so good."

"Wait, Glee Club?"

"Oh I joined Glee Club! It was just a bunch of us losers at first, but we have more people and are actually pretty good now."

Blaine wiped a tear from the corner of his eye, he hadn't felt this good in months. In a manner of
"seconds, Kurt had lifted his spirits better than his parents, teachers, friends or even his therapist had. "Kurt you have no idea how good it is to hear your voice."

"Well… I think I feel the same way about hearing your voice, so I might have an idea."

"I miss you so much. We've never even met face-to-face, but we go a whole year without talking and just pick up like we never stopped, I just… when we don't get to talk, I miss you." Blaine cleared his throat, his last words coming out a little shaky.

"I feel the same way Blaine," Kurt's voice was soft and sweet and shy. Blaine just smiled at the mirror across from him. "Are you okay Blaine? You sound upset."

Blaine laughed, trying to brush the comment off, "At least I'm not crying my heart out like I was at twelve years old when we first met."

"Ahh," Kurt hummed, "I remember well… but you have that same sound in your voice. Like you aren't crying but you could. And yeah, you're sixteen now, but… I'm still here if you need a figurative shoulder to cry on."

Blaine glanced down at the old quilt that covered his bed, and then unconsciously ran a finger down his arm again, "I had a little trouble in school this past year."

"Trouble?"

Blaine closed his eyes again, a headache coming on.

"Blaine?" Soft and plaintive – Kurt wasn't pressing – he sounded like he just wanted to be there for Blaine.

"There was a Sadie's Hawkins dance for Valentine's and I thought…" Blaine started, "I thought, why shouldn't I get to go with someone? I asked a friend, the only other out gay guy at my school and… we went and had a good time but…"

He could hear Kurt's breathing change, his breaths coming faster, and maybe telling Kurt who was so recently out of the closet himself was a bad idea.

"Blaine, what happened?"

Blaine let out a long breath, "We were in the parking lot, waiting for a ride, and these guys came up and…" Visions of that night came back to him, the shock he'd felt when the taunting turned physical, the pain of being curled up on the ground while someone kicked him. Glancing over to Phillip to make sure he was alright, but not being able to do anything to help. The terror of someone stomping on his arm and hearing the crack of the bone breaking.

"Blaine? Are you there?"

"They beat the crap out of us," Blaine finished hurriedly, no reason to go into detail.

"Oh god." Kurt's words were a breath of air pushed from his lungs.

"I'm okay now. And my friend is too, though I don't see him anymore. His family moved. And I… I transferred to a private school anyway."

"Blaine, I can't… I don't understand how anyone could want to hurt you."

"Now, you sound like you're about to cry." Blaine said, his chest hurting at the thought.
"I am crying," he heard Kurt sniff, "But I cry at everything, don't mind me. I'm *supposed* to be your shoulder to cry on right now."

Blaine shook his head, trying to collect his thoughts. "It's okay now. I promise. I'm healed up and I transferred to a private school that has a zero tolerance bulling policy. And…" Blaine searched his mind, trying to think of something to infuse cheer back into Kurt's voice, "Oh! I'm in show choir too. It's an acapella group at my new school."

"You're changing the subject."

"Yes."

"I've contained myself now, if you do want to talk about it."

Blaine smiled and let out a small rueful laugh, but didn't respond.

"I *hate* that I wasn't there for you when this happened." Kurt's voice was heavy with emotion and it made Blaine's hands twitch with wanting to reach out to touch Kurt.

"I'm glad you weren't there," Blaine answered quickly.

"Why?"

"Because if you'd been around I… I would have asked *you* to that dance and you would have been there when those guys… and… I'm just… I'm glad that didn't happen to you."

"You're making me cry again," Kurt said as he attempted a laugh.

Blaine sighed and straightened his posture, trying to shake off the gloomy mood, he didn't want to waste his time with Kurt being sad, "Okay then, let's talk about something good like you coming out to your dad, or about show choir. Our meetings are actually called to order by a *gavel* which the council bangs if we're unruly, though we never actually are, all of these guys are so well mannered it's a little crazy."

"I bet you fit in perfectly with those dapper prep school boys."

"I *have* been known to be dapper on occasion."

Kurt laughed and Blaine started feeling better again.

"By the way," Kurt said later that night as they were still talking, but falling asleep, "If you ever asked me to a dance, I'd say yes."

Blaine was leaving Maine in a couple of days, the weeks were speeding by too fast, and he'd come to a decision. He'd talked it over with Kurt the evening before and Kurt was more than happy to go along with it.

He was helping clear off the table after dinner when he decided to broach the subject with his aunt. "Aunt Helen, I've been meaning to talk to you."

"Hm? Yes dear, about what?"

"About the mirrors here."

She lifted her eyebrows in surprise. "Really? What about them?"
"I want to show you."

Helen tilted her head, "Show me?"

Blaine smiled, hoping this would go over as well as he'd planned, "Show you some magic you've never seen before." He grabbed her hand and led her up to his room, he was taller than her now, not by much, but he'd caught up to her over the years. He still felt like a little kid around her though, a little kid coming to his aunt's house in the summer to play on the beach and be awed by the magic his aunt lived with all the time. He was eager to be able to share this with her.

He pulled out the chair from the desk in his room so she could sit, then he nervously took a breath, "Don't freak out, okay?"

"I never _freak out_," his aunt said, primly adjusting her glasses on her nose and then folding her hands in her lap.

Blaine smiled and nodded, "Okay here we go." He turned to the mirror and called out Kurt's name.

It took a moment but then Kurt was there, answering back in a cheerful voice, "Hi Blaine!"

Blaine glanced quickly at his aunt whose expression hadn't shifted. "Aunt Helen, this is my mirror friend Kurt. Kurt, this is my Aunt Helen."

"Don't say 'mirror friend,'" Kurt laughed, "We'll sound crazy."

Blaine worried his lip, his aunt hadn't moved, had hardly blinked. Her face was a little pale.

"Aunt Helen? Are you okay?"

"Is it a ghost?" She asked breathily.

"No."

"A fairy?"

"What? No, he's just a person. A real live person. We talk to each other through the glass… we have been for years."

Aunt Helen slowly stood from her chair and walked over to the fireplace, tucking a stay graying hair behind her ear.

"Hello Aunt Helen," Kurt said a little nervously, "Nice to meet you."

Helen's eyes grew wide and she lifted her fingers to her mouth, sucking in a small gasp of air before turning to Blaine with tears in her eyes, "It's magic? Real magic?"

"Yes."

She laughed as a tear rolled down her cheek, "I'd started to give up hope! But it _is_ real. Magic is real."

"It is." Blaine said, beaming.

She turned back to the mirror clearing her throat and smoothing down her dress, "Kurt?"

"Hello."
"Hello Kurt, it is so very nice to meet you as well!"

Blaine hopped on one foot as he pulled on his shoes in a hurry. He was excited, today Helen had promised to take him whale watching and they hadn't done that since he was young. He couldn't wait. He rushed down the stairs to the kitchen finding Millie laying out toast and jam.

Blaine quickly slathered a piece of bread with homemade blackberry jam and took a big bite.

"Do you want me to make you an omelet?" Millie asked, watching him with a smile.

"No 'hank you." Blaine said swallowing. "I don't think we have time. Helen and I are going down to the shore today and she wanted an early start."

Millie's smile faded, "I'm not sure Ms. Helen is feeling up to it. I brought her breakfast as usual but she turned me away.

"Really?" Blaine asked in concern, looking out towards the hallway, "I should go check on her."

Blaine walked to the back corner of the house where Helen's room was and knocked on the door.

"No thank you Millie!" Helen called out.

"Aunt Helen, it's Blaine."

The was a pause and then some shuffling from behind the door before Helen yanked it open, standing in front of him in her clothes from the day before, her hair a frizzy mess and a huge smile on her face. She pushed her glasses up her nose. "I have to show you something," she said, grabbing Blaine's hand and pulling him inside.

Once inside his aunt's room, Blaine's mouth fell open in shock. Helen was a tidy person, a little absent minded, sometimes forgetting where she left the latest book she was reading, but for the most part, good about everything having a place.

This was not the bedroom of a tidy older woman.

The bed was unmade and covered with books, many of them lying open. Both Aunt Helen's vanity and desk were equally covered in books and papers and little jars of ingredients. Helen turned around in a circle for a moment as if lost in thought, "Where did I… Oh!" She reached for a big brown book in her armchair and then turned back to Blaine. He noticed a smudge of ink on her cheek. "Sit, sit!" She said, sitting herself; Blaine had to move a pile of books from her other armchair before he could join her.

"Look at this!" She leaned forward and held the book out, "It is a clarifying spell. I think we could try it on the mirrors in an effort to find out where Kurt lives!"

Blaine looked down at the book, scanning the page. Aunt Helen often tried spells, but never with any concrete results. "I mean we could try, but –" Blaine stopped as he saw the ingredients list, "This calls for human blood."

"Well, yes, but just a little. I'd use my own, it isn't like I'm going to go around stabbing people for a spell." She laughed a little frantically and pushed her glasses up her nose again.

"Right." Blaine was now officially concerned, Helen wasn't acting like herself at all, and why did she have a book that called for blood in the first place? "That's not happening."
"What? It would just be a little blood."

"Aunt Helen, if we do that spell – and it's a big if – we can use a little of my blood, not yours." Blaine hated that he felt a little excitement over the idea, not the drawing human blood part, but the finding Kurt part. Still right now is top concern was how erratically his aunt was acting. "I don't mean to be… unsupportive, especially since you're trying to help Kurt and me, but… you've never really had any luck with spells."

"Oh that! I've been talking to Kurt, and he says some people have a natural ability with magic. Like there are some spells he would need ingredients for and sometimes all he has to do is recite a charm. I may never be able to do a charm, but I could keep working on my spells!"

Blaine nodded slowly and looked around the chaotic room, there was a strange scent in the air, sulfur maybe? "What if we ate first and then we could talk about this more."

"Oh, I already told Millie I don't need dinner this evening."

"Dinner? I… Aunt Helen it is 6:00 in the morning. We had dinner last night together. Don't you remember?"

Helen blinked at him for a moment, her eyes looking owlish from behind her glasses, "I don't…" She laughed again, "I tried a spell that kind of blew up in my face – literally. I guess I lost some time."

"Okay!" Blaine stood up quickly. "You are leaving this room for a little while. We are whale watching today remember?"

"But Blaine…"

"No," Blaine held Helen's hand and pulled her up from her chair. "You need a break, let's go."

Blaine led her out of the messy, stuffy bedroom and shut the door behind them. He really hoped this wasn't going to become a problem.

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July 2011 – Lima, Ohio

"Hey little bro, you should hang with us tonight. A bunch of us are going to Breadsticks." Finn was standing in the kitchen opening cupboards looking for food.

Kurt watched him with a sigh and a shake of his head, "A bunch of who?"

"Glee Club people."

"And by that do you mean Puck, Mike and Sam?"

"Yeah."

"I think I'll pass."

"You know the guys would hang out with you if you let them."

"And I like those guys, but I have plans."

Finn pulled out a bag of Cheetos and stuffed a handful in his mouth, "Plans to 'tay in your 'oom all by yourself?" He mumbled while chewing.
"I am very busy Finn."

"With what?" He wiped his hand on his pants, "You need a life! You have friends now, you should enjoy them."

"I have friends now?" Kurt folded his arms across his chest and arched a brow, watching his step-brother squirm.

"That's not what I… you know what I meant, we both have friends, glee friends."

Kurt sighed and shook his head, Finn meant well. He walked up and grabbed the bag from Finn, snagging a few Cheetos for himself, "Thanks for inviting me, but I have some tea, a face mask and the latest issue of Vogue waiting for me."

"Okay, but if you change your mind…"

"Thanks Finn."

Kurt could hardly wait for Finn to leave. With a step-mom and brother, finding time to sneak away was harder than ever. Even his dad kept telling him that he wished Kurt would go out more. And Kurt would, but he'd been busy the past few evenings helping at the antique shop or practicing for Glee Club and he was worried he was missing time with Blaine.

He went downstairs with his cup of herbal tea, sitting at his vanity and sipping it while smoothing on an avocado face-mask, hoping tonight would be the night that—

"Hi Kurt!"

Kurt's face broke out in a wide grin, even through the drying face mask. He wiped his hands and cleared his throat, he had been longing to talk to Blaine for months, "Hi Blaine."

"I am in town three whole weeks this time!" Blaine announced excitedly.

Kurt couldn't help the way his heart beat faster at that thought as he walked from his vanity to his bed, sitting next to the mirror, "I'm so glad."

"Are you okay?" Blaine asked immediately. "You sound a little off."

Kurt stared at his hand mirror in surprise, did his voice give away so much? Maybe it was the fact that they'd only ever been able to hear each other, Blaine always seemed to sense when something was wrong.

"My dad had a heart attack," Kurt said, the words he'd wanted to share with Blaine for months tumbling off his tongue ungracefully.

"No. Oh god, Kurt. When? He is okay? What happened?" Blaine's voice was tense and scared and something about it was actually soothing, to know Blaine cared that much.

"Um, serval months ago now. Last October. He was in a coma for a week."

"God."

"He's better now. He has to watch what he eats, meaning I have to watch what he eats, but he made a full recovery."

"Kurt. I don't know what to say. I'm so sorry, thank god he's okay."
"Yeah."

"I can't imagine how hard that must have been."

"It was horrible," Kurt confessed with a humorless laugh, "The worst thing since I lost my mom… I thought I was going to lose him too…” Kurt had to stop talking as his voice choked up.

"I wish that I could be with you in person, I just want to hug you right now."

Kurt sniffed and smiled and felt a little better, "I talked to my mirror all that week hoping you'd be there – knowing you wouldn't be."

"Oh Kurt, I'm sorry."

"No, don't apologize, it helped, in a weird way, knowing you were out there and you would care."

"I do care. So much Kurt."

"I know, I... I had some trouble with bullying this year too— it's taken care of now," Kurt added quickly before Blaine could worry. "And it was nothing like what happened to you, but I honestly don't know what I would have done if I didn't know you were out there somewhere and that you'd gone through so much and made it through."

"Kurt." Blaine's voice was just a whisper and he wondered if it meant as much to Blaine as it did to him to hear his name said with such reverence.

"You gave me courage," Kurt shook his shoulders to loosen the tension in his muscles, "It isn't all bad news. My dad also got remarried."

"Oh my god! Who is this person, do you like her?"

"Her name is Carol, I adore her. She has a son, who I guess is my brother now. His name is Finn."

"Finn from Glee Club?"

"Yes."

"Finn who you had a crush on?"

"I never told you that!"

"I could tell by the way you talked about him. And now… he's your brother?" Kurt could hear the suppressed laughter in Blaine's voice.

"Do not mock my pain Blaine. It is very undapper of you."

"I'm sorry." He didn't sound sorry, "It's just… how awkward is that?"

"So awkward, or at first it was; we've worked through it. I don't think of him like that at all anymore."

"That's probably for the best."

Kurt smiled, "It is."

"And your dad really is okay?"
"Yes," Kurt answered, unable to keep a small smile off his lips while talking to Blaine.

"Do you… do you want to talk about the bullying Kurt? I wish I had been there."

"I always wish you were here."

Blaine didn't respond immediately and Kurt's cheeks flushed with embarrassment, maybe he'd admitted too much. It was one thing as kids to admit such a desire, but now that Kurt was eighteen, it felt like a heavier confession.

He heard Blaine take a deep breath before speaking, "You know last summer when you talked about Finn… I was a little jealous."

"You were not."

"I really was Kurt."

"Oh." And Kurt's face was on fire, but he also couldn't stop smiling. "Oh. I uh… oh."

"It's silly of me, I know. We only talk a few weeks a year, and even with Aunt Helen's help, we haven't been able to figure out a way to find each other in the real world."

"I don't think it's silly," Kurt said quickly. He had hoped last summer that the clarifying spell Aunt Helen found would help them, but she never got it to work, and another frustration of the mirrors is that they wouldn't let her read the instructions to Kurt so he could try from his end. Still, even without knowing how to reach Blaine outside of the mirrors, his friendship meant the world to Kurt.

"I just… we shouldn't hold out for something we may never have…"

Kurt nodded, the tension coming back to his shoulders, "Right, right. Sure." Kurt cleared his throat and tried to ignore the way his heart twisted in his chest. It seemed like Blaine might feel the same way he did, at least a little bit, but the damn magic of the mirror was keeping them apart. "How's Aunt Helen? I haven't talk to her since last summer," Kurt said, trying to reign in his emotions.

"Oh, she's… she couldn't get the mirrors to communicate with you when I wasn't here."

"Oh." That was odd.

"And she..." Blaine's voice was hesitant, "Maybe we could talk about her later? Right now, I want you to tell me everything. About the wedding that I know you had to have helped plan, and your dad and the bullying."

Kurt bit his lip, so grateful to have someone to talk to about all this, he hadn't ever told anyone everything that had happened at school, but with Blaine he felt he could, "So um, there was this football player named Dave…"

Three weeks to talk to Blaine… a mountain of time and yet still never enough.

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**July 2012 – Lima, Ohio**

"I can't believe this time next year you're going to be a college student." Blaine said as he sat cross-legged on his bed at Aunt Helen's and folded some laundry.

"Um… yeah… about that."
"Kurt?" Blaine glanced up at the unease in Kurt's voice.

"I won't be going to college this fall."

"What?" Blaine dropped the blouse he was hanging, "Why?"

"I didn't get in."

Blaine was quiet for a moment trying to make sense of that, "You said you were applying to a performing arts school."

"I did."

"How did they not let you in? Are they idiots? I've heard you sing Kurt!" Blaine thought back to a couple summers ago when he'd convinced Kurt to sing him one of his songs from Glee Club. He'd been astounded by Kurt's voice and it could only be better now.

"That's really nice of you-"

"I'm not being nice, I'm being serious." Blaine honestly couldn't believe Kurt hadn't gotten into his dream school, Blaine had taken it for granted that Kurt would be planning for college in the fall.

"It just… it didn't happen." The pain of his rejection was clear in Kurt's voice and Blaine wanted to kick himself for making assumptions.

"I'm sorry. I can't believe it and I am so sorry."

"It's okay. I can apply again next year, and meanwhile, I'm just going to stay here, I have my job, it will be fine." Kurt's voice sounded strong, but Blaine knew him well enough by now to know that it was a façade.

"You're a barista." At some coffee shop whose name must give a hint as to where Kurt lived or something because when he first told Blaine about his new job the name of the shop had been vibrated out.

"There is nothing wrong with being a barista," Kurt's voice was brisk and defensive and Blaine really was just stepping in it tonight.

"No, nothing wrong with it at all!" Blaine sighed, how could he put this? "But if you are going to serve coffee, don't you want to do it somewhere more progressive? You've been talking about getting out of your hometown since we met."

Kurt didn't reply.

"Is your friend Rachel leaving?"

"Yeah, she got in."

Damn, how good did that girl have to be if this school wanted her but not Kurt?

"Couldn't you go with her?" Blaine suggested, heart aching for his friend, "Didn't you say once that to help with college Rachel's dads offered to pay for her apartment?"

"I forgot I'd mentioned that to you…" Kurt's voice trailed off like he was thinking, "…I couldn't just leech off of her though."
Blaine smiled, Kurt deserved much more than the little town he'd grown up in. Blaine remembered what a struggle it had been for him to come out, he practically had no support at school with bullying and even his beloved Glee club hasn't always really understood him. Now was his chance to get out, to move on to bigger and better things. Blaine wanted all the best things in the world for him. "You could get a job, help with the bills and you'd be our Kurt, out of that town that has been dragging you down for years."

"I tell you too much," Kurt said, teasing.

"I just want the best for you."

"It isn't a bad idea... I'll think about it."

"Good," Blaine said, satisfied. Kurt may not have gotten into the school he wanted, but that didn't mean he had to delay his future, he hoped Kurt really would consider it. "And then next summer you can tell me all about your adventures in... wherever it is you're going."

They'd found the magic wouldn't let them share names of places they were thinking of moving to, or the schools they wanted to attend. Blaine knew Kurt was planning on going to school out-of-state and wanted to study performing arts, which was exactly what Blaine wanted to study as well. He hoped that somehow that meant that fate would bring them to the same place; maybe Kurt was going to NYU, which is where Blaine hoped to go, but with the magic not letting them share, there was no way to tell.

"You can tell me all about the people you'll meet," Blaine continued, "and as much about the places you'll see that the magic allows and... and about the people you'll date."

"Ha! Yeah, I'm sure I'll be dating nonstop."

"You sound sarcastic."

"No one has wanted to date me yet Blaine." Kurt replied dryly and Blaine held back all he wanted to say.

"You live in a small conservative town Kurt, there can't be many options. Things will change once you get out on your own."

"I don't even know how to date."

"You'll figure it out, I didn't know what I was doing at first either but it got easier."

"You..." Kurt cleared his throat, "You're seeing someone?"

"No. Oh! Um... no. I was kind of dating a guy at school, but not anymore." Blaine squirmed on the bed, thinking about his one failed attempt at dating. Surely things would get better once he was in college.

"Oh."

"It was never serious." Blaine said, picking imaginary lint off the clothes he was folding; maybe he shouldn't have brought up his ex. He didn't mean to rub it in Kurt's face, that he'd been dating when Kurt hadn't.

"Why didn't you mention this?"
"I just did?" Blaine said, hoping Kurt would take that as an answer. He didn't mention it because somehow he knew it would feel weird to talk to Kurt about it. Because yes, he'd dated someone, but they hadn't been Kurt, and it hadn't felt right.

"That must have been… nice. It's hard to see all my friends dating and not have someone to, I don't know… walk down the hall hand-in-hand with.

"You'll get your chance," Blaine said, his heart beating heavily in his chest.

"Yeah…" Kurt sighed, "Meanwhile…" Kurt cleared his throat and his voice shifted to something more cheerful, "I wanted to talk to you about your aunt."

Blaine didn't really want to change to that subject, but it was obvious that Kurt didn't want to talk about dating anymore. Blaine purposefully hadn't mentioned his aunt all week. Kurt had talked to her some more last summer and they seemed to enjoy those conversations but Blaine had started to regret telling his aunt about Kurt and the magic of the mirrors.

Aunt Helen had changed some in the last couple of years. Blaine noticed it the most the summer after she met Kurt and she couldn't get the mirrors to communicate with him when Blaine wasn't there. She'd become obsessed with finding out what was going on. Andrew told him she would lock herself in her room for days, barely eating the food Millie brought her.

It was like when she first learned about the magic mirrors but all the time. Blaine was particularly worried about her when he wasn't around to make her go out and do things. She was becoming even more of a hermit, and the spells she kept trying were causing her health to deteriorate. Right now, she had a cough she just couldn't shake and refused to see a doctor, saying it was the perfect chance to try a healing spell.

He'd called in a doctor to come see her that afternoon anyway.

Helen had always, or at least as long as Blaine had known her, let her life revolve around the study of magic, but now… now she was fanatical, it was all she seemed to care about.

"She's… she's Aunt Helen." Blaine said to answer Kurt.

"What does that mean?"

Blaine puffed out a long breath of air, lifting the curls that trailed his forehead; he always let his hair get too long in the summer. "Her health has taken a turn for the worse. My parents almost didn't let me come this year thinking it would be a strain on her, but I convinced them I could help and company would be good for her."

"Blaine, I'm sorry." He heard Kurt sigh worriedly and it made him ache, knowing Kurt so well and caring about him so much, but never being near him – it was getting harder and harder.

"It's the magic." Blaine said resolutely, "It's making her sick."

"I don't think it works that way… I mean she hasn't messed with the mirror on the third floor has she?"

Blaine sighed in frustration; he knew Kurt wouldn't understand, "Not that I know of, but I don't think it matters. I don't think magic is good for her. I've been thinking about it a lot and I know you say there is light and dark magic, but sometimes I feel even the light magic has some dark in it. I… I don't think I really like magic all that much." Blaine was surprised at his own words, they were things he'd been thinking but nothing he'd planned on actually sharing with Kurt.
"Blaine." He could hear Kurt trying to understand, to not get worked up about this. He knew Kurt loved magic. "I'm sorry about your aunt, I want to help, but... what about us? What about the mirrors? It's only because of magic that we even know each other."

"Yeah. But magic hasn't been a good thing in Helen's life. I think the magic in this house is taking a toll on her." Blaine fell backwards on his bed with a heavy sigh, forgetting the laundry for now.

"Sometimes when someone becomes obsessed with something, it isn't the something that is the problem, it's the obsession." Kurt answered slowly and Blaine knew it shouldn't, but Kurt's calmness was just making him more frustrated.

Blaine scoffed, "Of course you'd say that; for you, magic is accessible and charming – it is all enchanted typewriters and singing clocks, and magic mirrors. But to Aunt Helen? It is something she has wanted all her life, and even though she is surrounded by magic, it eludes her. It's like, it's like it is taunting her."

"The magic is taunting her?"

"You're the one that always talks about magic as if it were intelligent."

"Okay, yeah I do that, but..."

"And yes it is magic that brought us together, but it is also what is keeping us apart!" Blaine was on a roll, "It just seems, even what you call light magic, it just seems... duplicitous."

"Maybe that's because we don't understand it." Kurt did sound upset now, "I don't understand it, my mom never had a chance to teach me all she planned on teaching me. And you only know what I know. I think... maybe we only have part of the story here."

"And maybe messing with magic when we don't understand it is a bad idea."

"So what, Blaine?" Kurt asked and he actually started sounding angry, "We should just stop talking? I get rid of my mirror and never speak to you again?"

Blaine was quiet for a moment, his frustration fizzling out at the idea of never talking to Kurt again. He'd do anything for his aunt... but losing Kurt? No, he didn't want to think about it.

"Blaine?" Kurt called when Blaine didn't answer, he didn't sound angry anymore, only anxious, like maybe he was afraid Blaine was actually going to agree they shouldn't talk any longer.

"No, Kurt. I don't want to lose you... I don't know what I'm saying," Blaine rubbed his eyes and tried to think, he didn't know what to do. "I'm just worried about Aunt Helen."

"I'm sorry." Kurt exhaled, "I really don't want to fight with you."

"I don't want to fight either."

"I have this book..." Kurt said tentatively, "It's a big, old leather-bound monstrosity that must have belonged to my mother. I found it years ago, the year we met in fact. It made me a little uneasy, but it helped with my mirror – it's possible that a spell I used helped us talk to each other in the first place." Kurt took a deep breath and Blaine wondered how long he'd been holding that information back. Years apparently.

"Why haven't you told me this before?"
"Honesty? The book gave me the creeps and I didn't like thinking about it."

"Like the mirror upstairs." The hairs on the back on Blaine's neck stood on end.

"No." Kurt answered quickly, "I mean not exactly, I don't think the book itself is magic, but parts of it do deal with some pretty dark stuff, but maybe there is something in there that could help your aunt? I brought it out again recently and have been looking through it-

"God Kurt, no. Leave it alone." Blaine sat back up, his heart beating faster, worry for Kurt pulsing through him. He didn't think the answer to the problem was a book that Kurt sounded afraid of. "Stay away from that book like you told me to stay away from the mirror years ago. I listened to you about that, and I still haven't even told Aunt Helen about it. Please listen to me on this."

"But this is different."

"How?"

"Because the mirror is dark magic and the book just teaches about magic."

"Dark magic." Blaine countered.

"Yes... and light magic. I only practice the light magic."

Blaine covered his face with his hands and groaned. "Kurt. That is a fine line to walk," he dropped his hands quickly, looking at the mirror across from him as all of Kurt's words sunk in, "What do you mean practice?"

"I, um... do little spells? Nothing major. There is one for health and happiness and maybe if I mastered it I could use it to help your aunt!"

Blaine's heart thudded in his chest even as a smile spread on his lips. "Kurt... you... you're so." Blaine laughed anxiously and ran his fingers through his hair, he didn't like the thought of Kurt delving deeper into magic, and yet he was offering to try and help Aunt Helen... "Kurt, you're wonderful."

There was a moment of silence before he heard Kurt laugh shyly, "I was afraid you were mad at me."

"Not mad, worried. It just sounds dangerous. I don't want you to try any magic for my aunt's sake." Blaine insisted, "I'll deal with this."

"How?"

"I... don't know yet."

"But if your aunt was willing, maybe... we could at least try that spell."

"No."

"Blaine shifted uncomfortably on his bed. Kurt meant well. And Blaine did want to help his aunt, but he didn't think more magic was the answer. Aunt Helen needed less magic in her life.

"Blaine, I promise you a lot of magic is good. Will you just think about it?"

"Yeah, okay. I'll think about it," Blaine lied. He trusted Kurt, but he couldn't trust magic, not completely not when he'd seen what he knew had to be something evil up on the third floor all those years ago. Not with his aunt's failing health.
"Okay good, I'm actually really relieved! This could be great."

Blaine shook his head and went back to the pile of laundry he was doing for his sick aunt, "Yeah. I guess it could be."

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**August 2013 - New York City, New York**

Kurt heaved his suitcase up to his bed, and plopped it down heavily, making his pillows bounce. He felt like he'd found a new workout routine; lugging his suitcase through the airport. The trip to Lima hadn't been so bad, but he hadn't realized how much he'd packed until his return fight when one of his suitcase's wheels snapped off. After getting it through the airport and to a taxi, he still had to drag it up four flights of stairs to his apartment, because *of course* the elevator was on the fritz, *again.*

He flopped down on the bed next to his suitcase, he'd unpack in a minute, right now he just needed to catch his breath. At least Rachel wasn't here, he loved that girl and had missed her while in Lima, but he was too tired now to properly handle her.

He lay with his eyes closed for a moment wanting to just go to sleep, but instead, he made himself sit up and he reached to the floor by his bed where he'd dropped his carryon bag. He unzipped the top and pulled out a bundle of cloth, setting it on his lap as he slowly unwound it to reveal his shining silver hand mirror.

Kurt smiled and gently tapped the glass, an answering tap rang out. Still, there were no crashing waves or seagull calls that usually announced Blaine's likely arrival.

Kurt bit his lip and looked down at his reflection; hair that had been perfect this morning was drooping from his long day of travel and flattened a little on the side from where he'd fallen asleep on the airplane. His cheeks were rosy from fatigue, and his blue eyes furrowed over with worry. It was nearly the end of August, Kurt was back in New York because the fall semester was starting soon, and yet he still hadn't heard from Blaine.

Blaine had visited his aunt late in the summer before, so he could still show up, but Kurt couldn't help feeling nervous. He glanced up at the clock on his nightstand, 8:00pm, if Blaine was at his aunt's, he could be by his mirror by this time.

"Blaine?" Kurt called and then waited for a response. When none came, he tried again, "Hey Blaine, are you there?"

Nothing.

Kurt laid the mirror down and then got up to start unpacking and distract himself from his nerves. He was starting to worry maybe Blaine wouldn't show up this summer. Kurt tried not to let himself think like that. Blaine had never let him down before.

He sorted out the clothes from his suitcase, ones he could wash here and those that needed to go to the drycleaners. Then he took a warm shower to help the knots in his neck from his flight, all the while hoping that when he got back to his room, it would be to hear Blaine's voice coming from his mirror. *He missed him.* He always missed Blaine and he had so much to talk to him about since moving to New York.

He'd been worried at first that his hand mirror wouldn't work here, Blaine's mirrors hadn't worked outside of his aunt's house, but it still tapped and whispered sometimes and Blaine hadn't spoken through it even back in Lima. Kurt was left to assume Blaine just wasn't at his aunt's house yet.
When he got back to his room, pajama-clad and drying his hair with a towel, the mirror was still silent. Kurt huffed out a worried sigh and crawled into bed.

"Please Blaine." He said, looking at the mirror he'd placed on the nightstand beside him. He'd thought a lot about Blaine this past year. Blaine had been right about moving to New York, it had been the best decision Kurt could have made for himself. He was so much happier and freer here. Blaine had also been right about the dating pool, Kurt finally found out how fun it could be to date and not worry too much about what others thought about two men together.

Still, there had been nothing serious, no one that made his heart beat out of time the way Blaine always had. New York had made Kurt realize what he'd always known deep down. He was in love with Blaine. A person he could only talk to through the magic glass of an antique mirror. Love, it seemed, could be painful like that.

From the drawer in his nightstand, Kurt grabbed the old, black book he'd been studying the last year and a half, again trying to distract himself, but soon placed it on his vanity with a yawn, too tired to really read right then.

He flipped off his light and curled up under his covers, his mirror still within reach, allowing the sounds of magical items he collected all around him to lull him to sleep, but without hearing the one thing he wanted to hear most – Blaine's warm and comforting voice.
Kurt rushed down the busy New York street, the smell of the city wafting over him – steam and cigarettes and candied nut carts. He had his messenger bag slung over his shoulder, one hand holding a half full latte, the other hand held high and gripping the hangers of a garment bag – carrying it so that it didn’t drag on the ground, but hopefully did whip too many strangers in the face as Kurt dashed by.

He was late, today of all days he was late, and he was never late. He stopped abruptly as he reached the front of Britton’s Auction House New York, taking one last quick gulp of his mocha and then tossing the cup in a nearby trash bin, before nodding his head in greeting to Michael the doorman.

“Good morning Mr. Hummel,” he said with an amused smile.

“That is yet to be seen Michael!” Kurt called behind him as he rushed through the heavy glass door.

*Britton’s Auction House* was an old and reputable establishment at the heart of New York’s Art District where it had been housed since its founding in 1895. The first time Kurt had walked into the historic renaissance revival style building, he’d been in awe--chiseled statues, gleaming marble floors and impossibly high ceilings that were painted with colorful frescoes of gold bordered triangles fitted together with loops of flowers. Kurt had almost gotten a crick in his neck staring up at the late nineteenth century design.

The hall itself led to several beautiful auction rooms--deep, plush red carpet and marble stone walls--his first day, Kurt had been directed to a back office, no less impressive for being smaller than the hall. Cherry stained oak walls, warm, bright and complementing furniture, a grand hardwood desk, a deep seated chesterfield sofa and various paintings spanning many different decades and artists lined the walls. Kurt had never been so intimidated in his life.
Of course, today Kurt rushed through the hall, not noticing statues or décor or even the ceiling he loved and he went straight back to the office, pausing only when he reached the door to glance at Melissa, the assistant, who sat at her desk in the front.

“Go in quickly! He’s been asking for you every three minutes.”

“Shit.” Kurt swore under his breath and then reached for the brass doorknob, letting himself in.

Nathan Britton, co-owner and director of Britton Auction House New York was the fifth generation of Brittons to run this company. New York was where they were founded, but they now had locations in Chicago, London and Tokyo. Nathan was seated behind his desk, looking as handsome and refined as ever, brown hair swept back and parted, a little scruff on his chin, and scowling at his computer screen as Kurt rushed in.

Kurt breathed in deeply, wishing he had a moment to stop in the restroom and dab at his sweating brow, but there’d been no time. Nathan looked up at him and lifted a finger signaling for him to wait a moment.

“We look forward to seeing you. Please feel free to go to your apartment first and refresh before coming in,” Nathan said, apparently on speaker phone. Kurt waited silently, his racing heart slowing down.

“I’ll do that.” The voice said on the other end of the call—Arnold Britton. Kurt’s heart sunk. Nathan’s older brother Arnold was the CEO and traveled almost constantly, and Nathan was left to run the day to day operations in New York. Nathan was never in a good mood after speaking with his brother.

“See you this evening.” The brothers said good bye and Nathan hung up, looking up to direct his gaze at Kurt.

“I’m sorry,” Kurt said before Nathan had a chance to bring up the fact that he was late, “I went to pick up your suit and there was confusion at the drycleaners and I—”

“Kurt. Kurt, calm down, don’t have an aneurysm.” Nathan nodded to a hook on the wall behind Kurt, “Hang the suit up and come sit down.”

Kurt did as he was told, hanging the suit and taking the antique empire chair across from his boss.

“You brought something for yourself to change into as well?” Nathan said, glancing down at Kurt’s outfit. It was a great outfit, gray houndstooth slacks and a white button down shirt and fitted vest. He even had one of his favorite brooches on today, a green jeweled dragonfly with gold wings. Nathan was one of the few people Kurt knew who could out-dress him though. Right now, he wore an Ermenegildo Zegna suit that looked absolutely killer on him, his russet hair styled perfectly and his dark eyes sharp.

“Yes, of course.” Kurt answered quickly, “I have it with yours.” Kurt nodded back to the hook, internally hoping that it was okay that he had them both in the same garment bag; it had been the best way to carry them in a hurry.

“Good good, I want to go over the checklist for tonight. You know how important this event is.” Nathan was too focused on this evening to care about the suits.
“Of course.” Kurt slipped his messenger bag off his shoulder and pulled his planner out, flipping to the correct page to go over the list with Nathan.

Tonight was Britton’s annual *Diamond Gala*. A cocktail party followed by the year’s biggest auction; it was the only chance their patrons had to purchase Britton’s rarest and more costly items, the “diamonds” of their collection. Kurt had been helping to plan the event for months and Nathan was on edge, not only for the gala but because his brother was coming in town for it.

They took forty-five minutes going over every minute detail, most of which they had already gone over repeatedly, but there was no room for error. After the meeting, Kurt had an even longer to-do list than he’d started with, but he felt good about everything. They might actually pull off the most profitable auction Britton’s had seen.

“Oh! And I want you to go down to the storerooms,” Nathan said as they wrapped up their meeting. “The Psalms Book is still down there and I want you to make sure Jane has it ready.”

Jane Hayward was one of Britton’s premier manuscript preservationists, a fellow graduate of NYU with a Masters in Conservation and Art History, and Kurt had no doubt she had everything fully ready for the auction tonight. “I’m sure Jane is-” Kurt stopped, noting the worried, furrowed brow of his boss. Nathan just wanted everything perfect, “I’ll check with her.”

“Thank you Kurt.” Nathan nodded and Kurt knew that the meeting was over. He got up from his chair, taking his messenger bag with him and stopping to pull his tux out of the garment bag. He left the room with a relieved breath – that had gone much better than he thought it would.

“Did he eat you alive?” Melissa asked.

“I think he’s too distracted to bother with it.” Kurt smiled at the assistant. “Would you mind hanging this in my office?” He said, holding out his tux in its thin plastic cover, “Nathan wants me to go check in on Jane even though I don’t really have time for the storeroom.”

“No problem. I can take your bag too.” Melissa took his things, glancing through the clear plastic at his tux and then winked at him, “You are going to look hot in this.”

Kurt placed his hand over his heart in mock injury, “I thought I always looked hot?”

Melissa’s laughter rang out behind him as he hurried to the stairway. The basement of the building had been converted to storerooms and studios years ago. It was temperature and moisture controlled and very high tech. Most of the auction house’s items were stored down there until they were ready to be brought upstairs for auction. Kurt used his keycard and two sets of passcodes before he could get in through a double set of doors and past security guards to where Jane and other art conservationists worked.

This was his favorite place in the whole building. The rooms themselves weren’t nearly as gorgeous or striking as the rest of the building, but that wasn’t the draw anyway. Every time he came down here, it was like walking into *Elizabeth’s Antiques*, but bigger and packed with much more expensive items. It was organized chaos, antiques and culturally significant pieces covering the area and yet numbered and cataloged. If Kurt had the time, he would’ve stood still and let his mind focus, looking for the magic he found so often down there.

But not today, today there was no time for magic. It hurt to not stop and look at each item he was passing, a gorgeous dress from the 1950s hanging on a body form and encased in glass, apparently
Grace Kelly had worn it to a movie premiere. A Louis XV period serpentine table. An Ansel Adams photograph from 1944.

He passed them all by, needing to focus on his job. He stopped in a work studio, finding Jane at a large white, back-lit table hunched over an old manuscript, gloved hands delicately turning the pages.

“Hi Jane,” Kurt said quietly, knowing she got caught up in what she was doing and often didn’t hear people approach. Even with his soft words she still jumped a little.

“Oh. Sorry.” She sucked in a breath of surprise, “I wasn’t paying attention.”

Kurt smiled and nodded to the book, “Is it a good read?”

“Unfortunately, there is a lot of it that’s not readable at all. I’m trying to decide if there is anything I can do about that.” Jane smiled and patted the stool next to hers.

Kurt sat down and glanced over at the book. She was right; on the pages she had opened, most of the words were faded too much to decipher, but there were illustrations though that had fared better.

“What is this?” Kurt asked, something about the style of the illustrations familiar to him.

“It is a religious tome from the late 1700s,” Jane answered, “considered a holy book by many of the time.”

“That style of illustration is familiar.”

“Yes, it was imitated for centuries,” Jane said, a smile growing on her face, it was obvious she loved this kind of thing, “A lot of books from the 1800s and even early 1900s have similar drawings, trying to emulate this style, especially in books about religion.”

“Or witchcraft?” Kurt asked before thinking about how odd that question might sound. He knew why these pictures looked familiar, they were the same style of drawing in the old black leather book he had at home.

“Well, yes, that too.” Jane nodded, “There was a resurgence in the late nineteen and early twentieth centuries of the occultist subculture, people digging up old spells and superstitions, a lot of books were written in that time, many would have illustrations like this. Have you seen one?”

“I think I own one,” Kurt answered. Kurt had studied History and Conservation at NYU with a minor in theater, not fully giving up his love for performing even after he’d shifted gears when NYADA rejected him. Though, his historical focus was more on fashion and entertainment. Jane was the expert on manuscripts; he should have thought to bring his book for her to look at ages ago.

“You own a book on witchcraft?” Jane asked, raising an eyebrow in question.

“Magic and Witchcraft.” Kurt shrugged, “You know I love old things.” He left out the part about loving old magical things.

“I’m with you there.” She got up from the table, stretching her hands above her curly haired head; she’d probably already been hunched over this table for hours. She always started early. She pulled at a couple curls in her fro and smiled, “You’re probably here for the Psalms Book?”

“Nathan wanted me to bring it up himself, it is the star of the auction tonight.”
“Well, it’s ready.” She walked over to a small wooden box on the back counter, lifting the lid and pulling back soft burgundy velvet to show Kurt the book. “You know sometimes I hate that we sell things like this to the public.” She said with a sigh.

“We’re an auction house.”

“Yes I know. But things like this should be in a museum for everyone to see.”

Kurt nodded; he frequently felt that way about items they sold, they were often hoarded away in someone’s private collection only to be viewed by the rich and privileged. Still, as Assistant Jr. Curator at Britton’s New York, it was his job.

Jane packed the book up again and then turned to Kurt, leaning on the counter and biting her lip, “Actually… talking about witches and… um magic, there’s something I wanted to ask you.”

Kurt lifted his eyebrows in surprise, “Okay.”

“Have you ever… you know there are stories… sometimes do you think…” She stopped and started, not finishing her thought. Jane was young and beautiful, dark skinned and bright eyed and confident. And she was brilliant, graduating years ahead of others her age. Kurt rarely saw her as faltering as she was now.

“Is something wrong?”

“I don’t know,” she answered unhelpfully.

“Okay… what do you mean ‘there are stories?’”

“Just, anyone who is around old things as much as we are, we hear things, about certain historical items acting strange or… you know that Nan at MOMA swears they have a cursed vase right? She won’t go near it. And I’ve always thought that those kinds of superstitions were foolish, but…”

Kurt nodded along, his jaw tightening. In the two years Kurt had worked at Britton’s, he’d found many magical items. But only one with any dark magic, and thankfully it had been an inexpensive ceramic bracelet that had come in as part of a lot. Kurt had been able to purchase it himself. He had always dreaded the inevitable day when something valuable came along with dark magic, what would he do about it then?

“Is there something here that is making you uncomfortable?” Kurt asked.

Jane laughed, looking relieved, “You don’t think I’m being ridiculous?”

“No.” Kurt shook his head, “I may have experienced that before myself.”

“Can I show you?”

Kurt nodded and waited as Jane pulled her gloves off and tossed them, nodding her head for Kurt to follow her out of the studio. They made their way to a small storeroom in the back that Kurt knew housed some items they had just gotten in and weren’t yet ready for auction.

“It isn’t something we’re selling tonight?”
“No, in fact I’m not sure we’ll sell it at all. I don’t know why it’s here.”

That was a relief; it at least meant Kurt had time to find a way to deal with whatever the object was.

Jane pushed open the door and they walked into a room with a few unopened wooden crates and a few pieces of old furniture – Victoria era by the looks of them – in varying degrees of repair. Kurt’s eyes scanned the room and fell on an item in the corner that was covered with a cloth.

“Don’t laugh at me, but I covered it up. I kept having to come into this room the other day and I didn’t like looking at it.”

Kurt swallowed deeply, looking at the shape and size of the item as Jane walked over to it; he had a suspicion as to what it might be. Jane unceremoniously pulled off the sheet, bunching it in her arms and taking a step back. Kurt let out a small gasp of delight.

It was a tall, full length mirror, old and striking, with only slightly filmy glass and a gilded metal frame.

“It’s beautiful.” Kurt said, walking to the mirror with a small smile on his lips. He loved mirrors, he couldn’t help it, they reminded him of some of his best days growing up, and if this was a magical mirror, Kurt couldn’t help but be intrigued.

“Yes, admittedly it is. And besides that crack down the glass, it is in amazing repair… but that crack alone devalues it greatly.”

“We could replace the glass,” Kurt said, eyes still on the mirror as he walked closer to it.

“Yes, but that’s the original silver-backed glass, so it’d be a pity to replace it. Maybe someone would want it. I don’t know; I could be biased. I’ve never believed the rumors of cursed antiques until that thing.”

Kurt glanced at her, raising an eyebrow quizzically, “What is it about it that you dislike so much?”

“It…” Jane sighed and pushed her curls back from her forehead, “It does things.”

Kurt’s heart started beating faster and he glanced back at the mirror, placing his hand on the glass. “Like what?”

“Oh, I’m not crazy Kurt.”

“I know that.” Kurt gave her a reassuring smile, this mirror must have her spooked; he could tell it was valuable and just the kind of thing Britton’s would sell, crack in the glass and all, but Jane just kept backing away from it.

“It makes noises, okay?” Jane admitted, “Like it… knocks or something or… taps? And I sound crazy!” Jane tipped her head back and groaned, “I shouldn’t have told you.”

“Jane.” Kurt called and waited until she looked at him, “You aren’t crazy, I believe you. This isn’t the first time I’ve encountered a mirror that ‘does things.’”

“Really?”
Kurt nodded, “You say it taps?” He looked at his reflection in the mirror, he was smiling broadly; he couldn’t help the excitement that was coursing through him. His little silver hand mirror at home had stopped tapping and making noises years ago, as if all the magic had left it. He lifted his hand and tapped the mirror a few times with a fingertip.

“Yeah, that’s what the tapping sounds like, but it does it itself.”

Kurt waited for an answering tap but there wasn’t one, “Have you heard it do anything else?”

Jane shrugged her slim shoulders, “The tapping was enough for me. Doesn’t it give you the heebie-jeebies?”

“No, but like I said—”

“You’ve dealt with this before.” Jane laughed, “Maybe we’re both crazy.”

Kurt grinned at her, “Crazy can be fun.”

Jane shook her head, but she started smiling again, “Okay, I need to get back to work, and so should you, I know you’re busy, but one more thing.” She walked hesitantly to the mirror as if she didn’t really want to get close to it. “I wanted to show you this.” She pointed to one side of the mirror’s frame. The frame was melded into what looked like twisting vines, but there, where Jane was pointing, was some kind of symbol, carved into the art of the frame so you didn’t notice it at first glance. “It looks like it was carved in after the mirror was made.”

Kurt leaned in and scrunched his eyebrows, “Letters? Initials maybe?” Kurt said, trying to make them out. The carving may be newer than the mirror, but it had been there a long time, he wasn’t sure he would have even noticed if Jane hadn’t pointed them out. “It’s like someone carved in their initials, like you would do on a tree, but instead on a very expensive mirror. Who would do that?”

“See, and that’s the thing...” Jane worried her lip for a moment, “You know I’ve read a lot of historical texts, some on magic and witchcraft and such... and when you brought that up...”

Kurt nodded his head in understanding, “People would add their names to magical objects to let them have power over it.” He’d heard of this before, but for some reason, none of the spells he’d ever encountered called for it.

“Okay, you know more about this than I would have expected,” Jane said, shaking her head, “You’re an odd one aren’t you?” Jane smiled as she said it and was too kind to mean it as an insult.

“I’ve been told that I am.”

“Well, like I said I’m going back to work. I feel better knowing the mirror doesn’t creep you out, but I still don’t want to be near it if it starts making noises again.”

Kurt smiled, “I’ll let you work then.” He glanced at the mirror from top to bottom and then turned to look at Jane as she was leaving the room, “And thank you for trusting me enough to tell me about this.”

She just laughed, “You shouldn’t thank me, I just wanted someone else to be responsible for it. And don’t forget your book!”
Kurt stayed with the mirror for a little while after Jane left. He knew Jane thought the mirror was cursed, but he doubted it had any dark magic, she just wasn’t used to hearing from magical objects and he understood how that could be unnerving. Kurt closed his eyes and thoughts focused, waiting to see if the mirror would make a sound for him. It didn’t. He kept trying, even placing his palm on the glass and humming the tune he used to detect if something was light or dark magic. Still nothing. He opened his eyes and sighed, he had too much to do today to really spend the time he wanted to with this mirror, but he’d come back.

Before turning to leave, Kurt let his hand slid down the cool steel of the frame. “Blaine?” He called wistfully, his chest fluttering, but not really believing he’d get an answer.

Blaine hadn’t answered him in six long years.

The cocktail party was going wonderfully, Kurt was in a dark green tux that looked amazing with his complexion, his hair perfectly styled and his spirits high. He was only very slightly buzzed from the champagne he was drinking, knowing he had to stay sharp because even though everything was running smoothly, he needed to be ready for anything.

Nathan looked particularly dashing this evening in Armani. Arnold might be the face of the company and the one people expected the most out of, but Kurt often thought Nathan should be. Just because he was the younger brother didn’t mean he was less capable; he took over the running of Britton’s Auction House New York five years ago at the age of thirty-two and they’d seen greater profit in those years than ever before. Kurt was proud to work for him, and grateful for the opportunity.

Kurt had been recruited straight out of school and quickly promoted to Assistant Jr. Curator, a position unheard of for someone his age. Kurt was good at his job—he loved his job—but right now he wanted to ditch his job and hurry back down to the storerooms because all he could think of was that mirror.

“I hear you’ve gotten your hands on some lovely books and furniture for this evening.” He turned to his right to see an elderly lady who was dolled up in Prada and wearing too many jewels to be comfortable; they glinted on her like stars though, so he could see the appeal.

“Oh, Mrs. Acevedo, you look dazzling this evening.”

“Oh please, with so many attractive young people here?” She looked Kurt up and down in a way that would have made him uncomfortable if he hadn’t been used to it from her. Vivian Acevedo was a frequent at these auctions, and she spent as much time inappropriately flirting with anyone other than her husband as she did buying expensive antiques.

“Yes, we have a good selection this year,” Kurt confirmed, “but you’ll probably be more interested in the jewelry we have up for auction this evening; there’s a René Boivin diamond bracelet I hand selected myself.”

“Oh then I’m sure to want it.” She gave him a wink and was, gratefully, called away by her husband after that.

That was how Kurt spent most of the evening--complimenting the clientele and talking up the auction items--not that they needed much endorsement; Britton’s items spoke for themselves as only the highest quality antiques.
Still, by the end of the night, Kurt was exhausted. The party had gone beautifully and had loosened everyone up to spend obscene amounts of money at the auction. The Psalms Book went for more than Nathan was hoping, so all in all, the evening was a success – not even Arnold could complain.

Kurt was back in his office after the last guest had left and the paperwork that had to be completed immediately was done. His office was small compared to Nathan’s and Angela’s, the Auction House’s curator who was away on maternity leave, but still, it was his office. He’d shown it to his dad last summer when Burt and Carole had come to visit, and Burt had gotten all teary-eyed and had patted Kurt on the back, telling him how proud he was of him.

Now, Kurt was sprawled on a soft leather reading chair; he’d untied his bowtie and had let it hang around his neck, his suit jacket slipped off and back on its hanger. He was relaxing, paperwork done, trying to muster the energy to go home.

He looked up as someone rapped on his door and then Nathan slipped his head in, “Ah, I hoped you’d still be here.”

“Come in Nathan.” Kurt smiled as Nathan sauntered in, two glasses of scotch in his hands, “I thought you might want one of these,” he said, holding one out to Kurt. Kurt took it with a smile. He’d never really acquired a taste for whiskey, something Nathan should remember by now – but he knew it was from Nathan’s private collection, so he’d sip on it to make him happy.

“You should be proud of yourself,” Kurt said as Nathan sat in a chair across from him. Kurt had a little sitting area set up in the corner of his office; he didn’t like to have a desk between him and the person he was talking to during meetings. “Tonight was a success.”

“Arnold was pleased.”

“Miracle of miracles!” Kurt laughed.

“Vivian ended up with that bracelet you liked.”

Kurt nodded and smiled and sipped his scotch, “I thought she might.”

“You’ll get a hefty bonus out of this you know,” Nathan said, leaning back casually in his chair. “A large part of why we did so well tonight was because of the items you selected.”

“A bonus?” Kurt arched an eyebrow, he was paid well here, but still New York was expensive and he was paying off student loans, a bonus would be more than welcome.

“This is your first gala as Assistant Jr. Curator, I forgot that. You didn’t know a bonus was coming?”

Kurt shook his head. “No, but I’m very grateful.”

“Really Kurt,” Nathan said, leaning forward in his chair, “you did brilliantly on this auction.”

Kurt was about to protest that he hadn’t been the only one to put in long hours on this, but the words caught in his throat as Nathan slipped a hand to his knee, moving it up slowly and deliberately as if daring Kurt to stop him.

Kurt sucked in a quick breath, god it felt good to have Nathan’s hand on him again… but.....he
reached forward, lifting Nathan’s hand from his leg. “Nathan,” he scolded.

“Sorry,” Nathan breathed, but Kurt knew he wasn’t, “for a moment there I got lost in memories of old times.”

The old times Nathan was referring to were something Kurt regretted. They’d had a very brief fling the first year Kurt started at Britton’s. Nathan was older and sexy and worldly and Kurt was bright eyed and just out of college, and for about two months, thought he might be in love.

He hadn’t been.

Nathan was too severe, too caught up in his work, too self-centered for Kurt to really fall for. In the end, it had been a good growing experience for Kurt; he just wished it was one he hadn’t had with his boss.

One thing Kurt was grateful for at least was that it had been Arnold who hired him and Arnold who suggested his promotion, so at least Kurt felt better in knowing he wasn’t one of those people sleeping their way to the top. Nathan had been mostly well behaved since they broke up, keeping things professional between them; he only slipped up if he’d been drinking. Like tonight. Tonight, Nathan had drunk too much and would probably regret coming on to Kurt in the morning. Probably.

“No need to apologize,” Kurt said, standing and taking one last sip of his scotch. “I should be heading home.”

Nathan nodded absent-mindedly before rising. “I have some things to finish up.”

“Don’t work too late, you deserve a break.”

Nathan thanked him for his hard work once more before going to the door; he glanced back at Kurt and looked like he wanted to say something else, but he just shook his head, closing the door behind him.

Kurt was left alone to his thoughts, rubbing the back of his neck and wishing again that he and Nathan had never been an item.

He sighed and grabbed the hanger with his tux’s jacket and the outfit he’d worn to work today, he then shouldered his messenger bag and was about to shut the lights off and lock up his office when he paused, looking at the vest he’d worn previously that day.

He ran his fingers down the soft silky fabric and scrunched his nose in concern. His brooch was gone. The dragonfly one he’d been wearing earlier. He put his bag down, looking on the floor and then getting on his knees to look under furniture. Maybe it’d come off when he was changing?

He groaned in frustration after looking for a solid ten minutes. He couldn’t find it anywhere. Kurt prized his entire wardrobe, but that pin had been one of his more indulgent, expensive pieces. He couldn’t lose it. He started retracing his steps, going back and flipping on lights to rooms that he’d been in that day. Still, he couldn’t find the brooch anywhere.

Kurt sighed and anxiously combed his hand through his hair when a thought hit him. The storerooms. Had he noticed the brooch since he’d been down there this morning? Kurt headed that direction, using his keycard and passwords, nodding hello to Cynthia, one of the night guards.
Again, he retraced his steps – his path to the studio where Jane had been working – and all around that room, but still no brooch. Kurt got up from the ground where he’d been searching and smiled. He hadn’t planned on going back to the mirror this evening, but since he had to look there anyway…

He felt an excited prickle down his spine as he went towards the back storeroom; he entered the room and flipped on the light, which buzzed and flickered for a moment before going out. Kurt looked up at the ceiling waiting for the light to return. Soon the emergency lights came on but the main lights were still off. Kurt didn’t think much of it as he was immediately greeted by a soft murmuring sound. His heart leapt in his chest, the mirror was making noises! He walked up to the mirror, looking at himself, he saw his reflection grinning ear to ear. The mirror sounded like his little silver mirror had years ago, the same kind of whispering but *louder*.

Kurt focused a moment, seeing if he could hear anything else, but it was just that same incoherent whispering that he remembered from years ago. He tapped the glass and was rewarded by an echoing tap back. The mirror was awake with magic.

Kurt’s heart was pounding in his chest; with all of the magic items he’d found in the past years, this was the first mirror. *This* was what he’d been hoping for since his own mirror went silent.

A way to try again, another chance.

Kurt took a breath and tried to calm his enthusiastic heart. He closed his eyes and focused, tuning out all other sound but the mirror, longing to hear seagulls or ocean waves or *something* that would connect this mirror to his long-lost friend.

“Blaine?” He whispered, his lids still closed, hope blooming in his chest.

Instead of Blaine’s answering call, the whispering just got louder. Kurt opened his eyes in surprise. Never in the years of listening to his own magic mirror had he been able to make much out of the whispered words that vibrated from its glass. Now he could – it was definitely dialogue; many people were speaking all at once, voices overlapping, distinct voices, but he couldn’t understand individual words.

The words were more than just indiscernible muttering; they almost sounded *otherworldly*. These were voices, but they didn’t sound human.

Kurt took an involuntary step back; the hair on his arms prickling as the voices grew louder and stronger, filling the room. The sound was getting overbearing now and Kurt was worried anyone left in the building would hear it. It just continued to rise in volume, causing the mirror to pulse, and even making the wooden crates and other furniture in the room tremble. The noise was vibrating through his body, like the feeling of standing too near to loudspeakers at a concert, and making his heart pound in his ears.

“Stop!” Kurt yelled at the mirror, covering his ears and not knowing what else to do, “*Stop!*”

Just then, something buzzed through the air and right past his face; Kurt let out a yelp of surprise and then the mirror stopped. It grew completely silent, no yelling voices, no soft murmur, no tapping. Kurt found that he’d pressed himself against the wall farthest from the mirror. He raised a hand to his chest, feeling his heart drumming.

“*Holy shit,*” Kurt breathed. What the hell? That was something he’d never experienced before. It had been a little unsettling, but mostly it just made Kurt all the more excited about finding this mirror. He
took a step towards it, but was distracted by something whizzing through the air; there was a new sound in the room, a quiet buzzing noise that wasn’t coming from the mirror.

It had to be an insect; how in the world it had gotten down there to the environment-controlled room Kurt had no idea, then again, maybe it had come from one of the crates? Kurt looked around until he caught a flash of gold in his peripheral vision and then turned back to the mirror.

There it was.

Landed on the top of the mirror’s shining frame, was the insect that had been buzzing around the room. Kurt took a few steps closer, getting a good look at it. He shook his head and rubbed his eyes knowing he couldn’t be seeing this right. He stared, stepping right up to the mirror and craning his neck up to see. And no, he wasn’t seeing things, it was real.

There, on top of this enchanted mirror, was a sparkling green dragonfly with bright golden wings. It was his brooch. Kurt blinked a few times, watching the dragonfly flit its golden wings. It was beautiful, a real dragonfly, but not quite. The green of its body was too green and it shimmered like jewels, its wings were thin and delicate, but a solid gold, not the gauzy wings of a normal dragonfly.

It was his brooch somehow come to life.

Kurt held his breath and slowly lifted his fingers, hoping to catch the insect, but just as he was getting close, it lifted up in the air, glided around the room once and then came right back to land on the back of Kurt’s hand. Kurt swallowed and raised his hand, studying the dragonfly closely. It was stunning. He could see its unblinking eyes and thin legs, long sparkling body and bulbous head, it was a living thing. He turned his hand over slowly to ease the dragonfly into his palm, but as soon as he did, it went still, dropping heavily into his hand – once again made of cool metal and colored glass.

Kurt slid down to sit on the hard cement floor, heart in his throat and his legs a little wobbly. He held the brooch, turning it this way and that, it was lovely and unique; that’s why he’d bought it in the first place, but it was nothing more than a piece of jewelry now, the life in it gone.

Kurt was sitting next to the mirror and turned to look at it.

“Okay...” He took a deep breath and reached out with his open hand to touch the glass, “What in the world are you?”

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Kurt was back in his apartment in SoHo sitting at his sewing table and flipping through his book on magic and witchcraft. After leaving it hidden under his bed for years, he’d started reading it back when he and Blaine were talking. In fact, he’d spent a lot of time in the fall and winter of 2012 studying it and other books, trying to find out if there was something he could do to help Blaine’s aunt, and if it was possible that magic really was making her sick. He never had a chance to share with Blaine what he had learned; he’d mastered the spell on health and happiness. It wasn’t a cure all by any means, but it did ward off minor illnesses and created a feeling of contentment. He wondered if it would have helped Helen. It didn’t matter though – Kurt didn’t know at the time, but he wasn’t going to talk to Blaine that next summer.

In the years that followed, Kurt had learned more about magic than he thought was possible at 13 years old when this book had made him so nervous. He could successfully cast several spells, he
knew charms that aided in many situations – just little things like getting his clothes not to wrinkle, or conjuring light, or how to repair small broken objects, to heal minor cuts and bruises, or help getting a soufflé to rise perfectly. It was mostly household magic, used in bygone times by housewives to help in their day to day activities. Still, it was a thrill every time a spell worked.

He loved that he did more than just detect magic now, he performed it. A little at least. There were still whole chapters in his book that he wouldn’t mess with. He steered away from anything that seemed like it could be dark magic and he wasn’t really interested in ghost, sprites, or summoning anything.

Kurt had, however, practically memorized the chapter on mirrors. After that first summer where Blaine didn’t show up, his hand mirror had started to grow quiet, until it was completely silent and no divination charm he attempted could wake magic in it anymore. Maybe it didn’t even have magic anymore. In any case, it seemed like his connection to Blaine was gone and he had no idea why.

Kurt tried not to think about Blaine too much; that first year or so, he’d been in Kurt’s thoughts continually. In fact, if it hadn’t been for Blaine’s encouragement, he didn’t even know if he would have moved to New York when he had, or if he would have enrolled in NYU and found his passion for studying history. It was a surprise to him to give up the dream of performing for a living, but he didn’t really miss it. Growing up in an antique shop and knowing about the magic connected to old items–it just made sense that this was what Kurt was meant to do.

He hated that he never got to tell Blaine that. He hated that he didn’t know what happened to Aunt Helen. And he hated that six years later, when he did allow himself to think of Blaine, he still missed him like crazy. Not even memorizing every word his book had on mirrors could bring his long-lost friend back to him.

Kurt didn’t flip to the chapter on mirrors this evening though; tonight, he was more interested in a short section the book had on transfiguration. He’d read it before, a complicated spell for turning inanimate objects to life. He’d never attempted it; firstly because the ingredients needed for the spell weren’t easy to come by – where would he get bat’s heart anyway? And secondly, because it sounded a little risky to him – did he really want to be responsible for giving life to something?

It seemed like some kind of transfiguration spell had to have been cast on his brooch tonight. Kurt thought back to the voices he’d heard from the mirror in the storeroom; was it possible that someone had performed a spell through the glass? Kurt sighed and hung his head in his hands. He wasn’t getting anywhere, and he was probably not looking at the big picture anyway.

The most important thing was to get that mirror away from Britton’s. If Jane had heard it, others would too, and if the mirror was somehow performing magic, even light magic, Kurt had a responsibility to protect people from it. Kurt considered purchasing it himself, but despite Jane’s assertion that she didn’t think it’d sell well, the mirror had to be worth a great deal and Kurt wasn’t sure how he’d afford it.

He sighed and got up from his table, stretching his arms over his head and glancing out his window to see the sun coming up golden and bright over the horizon. He’d stayed up all night. At least he had today off. He looked down and realized he was still in his tuxedo shirt and pants. He was fuzzy-headed and felt grimy and rumpled.

He walked to his bedroom, smiling as he entered; it was small but well-organized and tastefully decorated if he did say so himself. He’d brought a few things from home, like his brightly lit vanity, but he mostly started fresh when he got this apartment, a warmer cozier look than his bedroom in
Lima had been. More refined than the apartment he’d shared with Rachel.

This morning, he could hear the cars on the street below him, and the squeaky plumbing that acted up when his neighbor started a wash, the oboe player down the hall must have been back in town because he could hear her doing scales--but his lips tipped up in a smile as he tuned that all out, standing there in his room and focusing on nothing but the magic he knew was around him.

There was the paperweight he’d taken from the antique shop with him when he moved, wind still rushing through it. The nightstand that was his first furniture purchased in New York; he’d gotten it at a flea market, both because he loved the late 1920’s look to it and because of the soft strains of harp music it emitted. Then there was the desk lamp he brought from home that sounded like a distant crowd cheering and reminded him of his dad watching football. All of them together made the sweet symphony that sounded like home.

Kurt drew in a deep contented breath and then grabbed a change of clothes and moved to the tiny bathroom off his room.

Kurt slipped out of his dress shirt and slacks and eased into the shower; he turned the water up a little hotter than normal and braced himself with his palms against the tile, letting the hot water run down his shoulders and back as it worked out some of the tension in his muscles. He was tired, but his mind was still going a mile a minute; he couldn’t stop thinking about the loud whispers of the mirror, the success of the auction, his brooch buzzing and flitting around the storeroom, Nathan’s hand on his thigh…

Okay, standing in the shower wasn’t a great time to be thinking of Nathan touching him. He was glad things with Nathan were over, but at the same time, it’d been a while since Kurt had been with someone and he felt a little needy. Oh, and of course his mind would drift to Blaine now, his warm, sincere voice and all the hours upon hours they’d spent talking about everything under the sun. There were still parts of Kurt’s life no one knew besides Blaine.

Honestly, he hadn’t thought about him this much in years, but after everything with that mirror, how could he not think about Blaine? It was a magic mirror that had brought them together. And while his friendship with Blaine had been sweet and innocent, he found that with the mood he was in, standing naked in the shower and thinking about the first boy he’d ever fallen for wasn’t a great idea.

He stood up straight and washed his hair and used his lavender scented body wash – the expensive one he only used when he really needed to relax. He got out of the shower, toweled off and dressed, but still, he could only think about Blaine’s voice and how much he missed him. It was making him angry.

Sure, his mirror didn’t seem to work anymore and it was very doubtfully Blaine’s fault, but still, it was Blaine who had left him high and dry without explanation. Blaine who had promised to come back every summer and then just… didn’t. Blaine who he’d given his heart to at a young age and was now haunted by as an adult. And now, Kurt was on the cusp of the biggest magical discovery of his life and all he could think of was some teenaged boy who’d abandoned him years ago.

It was maddening.

Kurt trudged through his living room to the kitchen; too preoccupied to cook, he just pulled out a yogurt and started some coffee. He leaned against the counter as his coffee percolated and slowly ate his strawberry-banana yogurt, going over in his mind everything that had happened last night.
The magic he’d seen had been wondrous, the voices though… they had been unnerving. The way they had risen in volume and felt like they were entering the room. Then there was that etching on the side of the mirror which made him think someone had once used this mirror for magic.

Kurt finished up his yogurt, tossing the empty carton and pouring himself some coffee, forgetting to even put in sugar or cream. Before it had gotten so loud, the voices in the mirror at Britton’s had reminded him of the way his hand mirror used to whisper. Was it possible that it wasn’t just Blaine that had been communicating through the glass back then? Maybe the whispers weren’t just a sound caught in the mirror but multiple someones somewhere actually speaking through it. That thought made chills run down Kurt’s spine.

He took a sip of coffee and grimaced looking down at his mug; he really didn’t enjoy black coffee. He took a moment to doctor it, using more sugar than needed, but he always did that, and then, distracted, he went back to the living room. He bumped into the corner of his sewing table and cursed under his breath as his book fell from the table top and hit the ground with a thud.

“Damn it.” The book was old and he was careful to treat it well, he didn’t want the spine to break. He knelt down to pick it up but paused when he saw what chapter it had fallen open to, “Hexes & Curses”.

He frowned and placed the book back down on the table, sitting with his coffee as he scanned the chapter. His book had fallen open to this section many times in the past years, but Kurt hadn’t bothered with it – it was part of the book that dealt with dark magic so Kurt hadn’t wanted anything to do with it.

He was about to disregard the section again when his eyes landed on a sentence that made his throat go dry.

“The most powerful incantation can’t be held by a mortal, to make use of it you must first place the spell in an enchanted object. Only then can the witch summon magik too powerful to wield on her own.”

Kurt’s fingers were shaking as he flipped through the rest of the chapter – all about how to endow an object with dark magic that could then be bent to the conjurer’s will. It even had a small illustration of a young woman carving initials onto the back of a pocket watch to calm the dark object and its magic as her own.

There was a reason Kurt had never come across this kind of marking in his magical studies. He only studied light magic and this seemed reserved for something dark and powerful, something cursed, something dangerous. Meaning the mirror at Brittons…

“Oh god.” Kurt breathed and then leaped up from the chair so fast he almost tipped over his coffee. He knew the mirror was powerful, but cursed? Something full of dark magic? That was so much worse.

He grabbed the book and raced towards the front door, stuffing it unceremoniously in his book bag and slipping on a pair of shoes by the door. He was about to leave when a thought hit him and he raced back to his bedroom, dropping to his knees and pulling a box out from under his bed.

He hadn’t opened this in years, but he dug through it until his hand landed on the cool, smooth metal of his magic hand mirror. He lifted it up, letting the light that was coming through his window cast rainbows off it like he remembered it had the very first time he’d found it.
He stood and wrapped a hand towel around the glass before placing it in his book bag, rushing out of his apartment.

Kurt hurried into Britton’s Auction House so quickly he didn’t even notice which doorman was working today; he didn’t stop to talk to anyone, or check to see if Nathan was here, he just headed straight for the staircase to the basement.

Britton’s was closed today so there was just a skeleton staff anyway, which Kurt was glad of.

“I thought you were off today!” He heard one of the security guards call from behind him.

He just called a quick, “I am!” over his shoulder.

In moments, he was pressing in his passcodes and going through two sets of doors, racing through the main storeroom, and to the little back room where the mirror was. He closed the door tightly behind, noticing the emergency lights were still on; meaning the normal lights and security cameras in the room must still not be working. That could be a blessing in disguise. Kurt had pulled out his book, flipping to the page with the instructions about how to create a dark magical object.

He walked up to the mirror – it was silent right now – and looked at the initials carved into the side; he lifted his fingers and brushed them over then indents. S.C.

Kurt knew from the start that this mirror was powerful, but he really hadn’t thought it was dark, maybe because he was so excited about the prospect of connecting to Blaine again. But now he looked at it in a new light and it made a shiver run down his spine, it really could be dark. If it was, it was a kind of dark magic Kurt had never encountered before – all the dark magic he’d come across up until this point was created the same way that light magic was – by powerful magic being performed nearby and bits of surplus magic embedding in the object. Kurt had never come across something that was purposefully created to be malevolent.

He took a long thoughtful breath. He didn’t need to jump to conclusions; just because he came across an illustration of someone using their initials to enhance a spell in a chapter on dark magic didn’t mean that the practice was always dark. Right?

Kurt licked his lips and sat down cross legged on the ground as he pulled out his little hand mirror. He remembered when he first got it and it had gone silent, he’d used the charm from his book to see if it was light or dark magic and that’s when he first started talking to Blaine.

He’d tried the charm again over the years, without getting the mirror to wake – he’d always thought maybe that meant something was wrong with the magic on the other side, wherever Blaine was – but now… well he needed to know for sure if this new mirror was dangerous or not and this charm did seem to work on mirrors when the tune his mother taught him did not. Maybe mirrors in general held magic in a different way than other objects? Something to do with them being used for communication? Kurt didn’t know. And what was important right now was finding out how dangerous this mirror was.

Kurt placed his hand mirror on the floor next to him and pulled out his book. He took a few calming breaths; he’d been rushing around and impulsive since Jane had shown him this mirror yesterday, he needed to stop for a moment and think.

This mirror was more powerful than his hand mirror had ever been, and when he’d tried the charm
on the smaller mirror years ago, he remembered how it had lit up and glowed and almost burned his hand-- was it really a good idea to try the charm on this bigger and more powerful mirror?

Kurt flipped to the back of the book where the charm was and then looked up at the mirror… finding out if this thing was dangerous or not was important. He nodded to himself, decision made, and glanced down at the charm, reminding himself how it went. He was going to do this because he honestly didn’t know what else to do. He closed his eyes and stretched his hand out on the smooth glass of the mirror.

He focused all of his energy and shut out all sound but his own voice, and then recited like he had when he was thirteen. "Golden light shine forth form here. Dark of night attend near. Nature come and nature called. Nature young and nature auld."

Kurt’s eyes immediately snapped open and his stomach lurched as a loud resounding clang came from the mirror; it rang through the small room, making the very walls vibrate, and before Kurt could do anything else, the whole mirror started to shake and rattle, like it alone was being tossed about by an earthquake nothing else in the room could feel.

“Oh crap!” Kurt sprang to his feet, backing away from the mirror. The glass started to bend in and out like it was breathing, the crack down the length of it widening. “No no no no.” Kurt gasped, his heart pounding; he glanced back down at his book still lying on the concrete floor. He knew there was a reversing charm in there, but he’d never used it and didn’t know how it went.

He took a quick step forward towards the book and then froze, the crack in the mirror groaned and then started to leak, water trickling out of it and pooling on the floor. Kurt forced himself to move, scooping up his book before it got wet; he started flipping through the pages, “What do I do? What do I do!”

His eyes landed on the reversal charm just as there was a terrible snapping sound and Kurt looked up to see the crack in the glass split open – In that moment, Kurt felt suspended in time, knowing he had to do something but unable to move fast enough before water was gushing through the mirror, fast and heavy like water spouting from a geyser.

It hit Kurt’s body hard and knocked him off his feet, his book flying out of his hands. He only had a split second to look back at the mirror; it was as if its glass was completely gone and all that was left was a large oval opening for water to shoot through. It was filling up the small air-locked room quickly. Kurt was struggling to get to his feet, soaked in salty tasting water, his book nowhere in sight. He finally stood and the water was already somehow up to his knees – swirling around the room and rising fast.

“Oh god!” Kurt turned frantically in a circle looking for his book, he needed that charm now!

He heard what sounded like a shout from behind him and spun around to face the mirror, but that was a bad idea – it was still gushing out water and Kurt had to quickly cover his face – he slipped again, this time going completely under the rising waterline, the sounds of the torrential water muted under the surface. He opened his eyes and looked around for his book, seaweed and sand flitting through the stirring water. He stood to take a gulp of air before plunging under the water again. It was high enough for him to swim through now and he did, glancing everywhere for his poor drenched book, hoping he’d still be able to make out the reversal charm.

He stood again to draw in a breath, the water was up to his neck now and the furniture in the room was floating in it, he couldn’t see his book anywhere. “Shit!” Kurt yelled before taking a long deep
breath and submerging himself again. Something hit him hard in the side, a coffee table pushed around in the water by the stream still coming from the mirror, but Kurt just kept looking.

He was about to go up for another breath of air when finally through the churning water, he saw his book lying on the ground, sunk down to the bottom of the room a few feet away. He started swimming towards it, but the water was pushing it farther from him and his lungs were aching from a lack of oxygen. His vision started getting blurry; he reached towards the book, unable to reach it, when another hand stretched out and someone else grabbed it. He couldn’t get a good look before the person was swimming upwards.

Kurt quickly kicked up to the surface, gulping in air and treading water; the mirror itself was underwater now, so at least that meant there wasn’t a jet of water hitting him anymore, but Kurt couldn’t even be grateful for that, his heart was in his throat and he was about to start panicking. The water would be at the ceiling soon and Kurt didn’t know how to stop it.

“Here!” A voice shouted, and he felt someone pull him by his shoulder until his feet hit something solid beneath him – one of the large wooden crates in the room. Kurt was able to stand on it and have his shoulders and head out of the water.

Before he had a chance to understand what was going on, someone was thrusting his open and waterlogged book at him. “Read this!”

He glanced down at the page, it was the reversal charm. Thank god. Kurt didn’t waste any time, but just shouted over the din of the flooding waters, “Hear these words heed them now. Spells before we disavow. Take this magic turn it ’round. Send it back from whence it bound!”

There was an immediate sound from under the surface, a muffled thud and then Kurt’s feet started slipping off the crate as the water in the room began to violently suck back towards the mirror.

“No no!” The other person in the room shouted.

The water was swirling out of the room quickly, and if Kurt wasn’t careful he was going to be sucked into the mirror with it. He swam against the flow of the water and latched onto one of the heavy crates that was steadily staying put; he saw the blurred figure of someone drifting past him, stuck in the current and being drawn in towards the guzzling mirror. Kurt instinctively reached out a hand, grabbing the person as they shot by; they clasped Kurt’s hand back with a tight and desperate grip.

They stayed like that, Kurt holding onto the crate, and someone else holding onto him, until the water level receded and their bodies floated down to the ground.

Kurt let go of the hand he was holding once the water stopped moving; he gasped deeply as he found himself sitting on the cold wet floor of the storeroom, his book soaked and lying next to him. He looked at the mirror; it was back to normal, glass intact with just a very fine crack going down its middle.

Kurt’s eyes stung and his throat was raw and he was dripping cold salty water, but he was alive. He hadn’t drowned or been sucked into a magic mirror, and besides the water dripping off everything in the room, he’d come out of that unscathed.

His breath caught as he remembered he wasn’t alone and he glanced quickly around the room, his eyes falling on the form of a man a few feet away, who was lying on his back, a hand resting on his
stomach, which was rising and falling with his heavy breaths.

“Are you okay?” Kurt asked, hurriedly crawling over to him.

He leaned over the stranger’s face; he was young, and handsome. Tan skin, defined jaw, thick black hair plastered against his head. The man opened his eyes and Kurt found himself staring into irises so golden they barely seemed possible.

Then, the man’s lips slowly tipped up into a smile. “We didn’t drown then?”

“No. I guess we didn’t,” Kurt said, his voice nearly stuck in his throat.

The man nodded and then sat up with a groan; he ran a hand through his wet hair and glanced around the room before looking back at Kurt. “Where in the world am I?”

“Um…” Kurt started, but then stopped, thoughts unsettled, both by what had just happened and the gorgeous man staring at him.

The man lifted his eyebrows and then very deliberately looked Kurt up and down before coming back up to meet Kurt’s eyes. “Wow,” he breathed and Kurt could feel himself blush, very aware of how his wet clothes were clinging to him because they were doing the same thing to the man next to him.

“You, um…” Kurt cleared his throat, “Are you hurt?”

The man shook his head, “No are you?”

“I don’t think so.” They both were silent for a moment before Kurt remembered the man’s question, “You are in the basement of Britton’s Auction House.”

The man scrunched his brow in confusion, “I’m not even sure where that is.”

“You don’t work here?” Kurt asked, voice going higher at the end, he was starting to feel nervous.

The man laughed, it was a wonderful laugh. Warm and somehow familiar. “No. I’m pretty sure I came from there.” He pointed to the mirror and Kurt turned to look at it. If he hadn’t just seen it flood the room, he wouldn’t have been able to tell by looking at it that it wasn’t just a normal antique mirror.

“You came from the mirror?” He blinked and looked back at the water-soaked man sitting in front of him.

“It seems so. Not that I live in the mirror.” He hurried to explain.

“Then should I have let you be sucked back in there?” Kurt asked, wondering what this man was and if Kurt should have let him go back where he came from.

“I think you saved my life by stopping that from happening, pretty sure I would have drowned.”

“Oh.”

“Britton’s Auction House?” The man said, his face lighting up, and really he was gorgeous, “Isn’t
that in New York?"

Kurt nodded, mind still trying to catch up with what was going on.

The man stood and reached a hand down to help Kurt to his feet. Kurt clasped hands with him and rose; they both stared at each other for a long moment before Kurt realized they were still holding hands and standing close.

There was a cut on the man’s cheek that was bleeding, but he didn’t seem to have noticed it; he was smiling broadly at Kurt and it made his stomach flutter. Kurt cleared his throat, dropping the stranger’s hand and backing up. “Um… I… I guess I should introduce myself, my name is-”

“Kurt,” the man finished for him, with an inflection that Kurt had only ever heard one person use when saying his name.

“Oh my god,” Kurt could literally feel his jaw drop, “Blaine?”
AN: Happy Saturday! Not much to say about this chapter except the boys are finally together. YAY! I hope you enjoy it. If you do please leave me a comment, they give a girl encouragement to write! xo

"The second principle of magic: things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the contact has been severed."— James Frazer

September, 2018 – Bluespruce, Maine

Blaine pulled his rental pick-up truck up to the front of the house; gravel crunching beneath the wheels and dried leaves drifting through the air. He turned off the engine and just sat for a moment, not ready to get out. He ducked his head and looked out the window at the old house – he'd never seen it in the fall. The autumn colors and drying leaves gave Callaway Place a melancholic feel to it, or maybe that was just Blaine himself feeling wistful at being back here.

Eventually he made himself move, stepping out of the truck and stuffing his hands in his pockets to keep them warm. He tilted his head back and continued to study Callaway Place.

"Here we are again," he thought to himself.

The house looked the same. The paint could probably use a refresher, the porch was covered in unswept leaves and the windows needed washing, but otherwise it seemed unchanged.

It'd been five years since Blaine had been in Bluespruce, Maine. He'd almost come back on his twenty-first Birthday when the ownership of Callaway Place had been transferred to him, but he'd been busy with finals at UCLA and really couldn't spare the time. He'd always planned on coming back here; it just ended up taking longer than he'd planned.

There was a crisp chill in the air, the trees around the house mostly bare, their orange and brown leaves covering the ground. He should go inside; his thick wool sweater wasn't enough protection against an east coast autumn. He'd come in from California where the weather was still fair, and while he'd packed for cooler temperatures, he didn't really have the clothes for Maine cooler temperatures.

He pulled his hands out of his pockets and blew on them, rubbing them together for warmth before taking a deep breath and finally walking forward. The porch steps creaked under him and his feet crunched piles of brittle leaves. Guilt churned, unwelcome in Blaine's stomach; he should have taken better care of the house; up close, it was looking faded and unkempt.

He turned the key in the lock and opened the front door, it squeaked on its hinges. Inside looked exactly as he'd remembered, thick red patterned carpet and gleaming wood paneled walls. A small smile quirked on Blaine's lips as he remembered himself at twelve years old, dripping mud and water on this very carpet. Aunt Helen had gotten it out somehow. She'd always taken such great pride in
this house; it'd break her heart to know it had been left abandoned and derelict all these years.

Blaine shut the door behind him. It was his fault the house was neglected; his aunt had left him Callaway Place because he was supposed to be the only other person besides her that really cared about it – he'd let her down.

He flipped on the lights and was glad he'd thought to call ahead and get the electricity turned back on. He took a few minutes to walk around the ground floor; everything was left covered by sheets and untouched. Luckily, no one had disturbed the house or tried to break in; its reputation had probably protected it. No one really wanted to mess with Callaway Place, especially after what happened to Helen Callaway.

Blaine paused in the parlor, his throat feeling tight; how many hours had he spent in this room with his aunt? He couldn't stay in the room long, emotion overtaking him; he kept moving. Happier memories graced him in the kitchen – afternoon snacks, watching Millie cook, delicious smells, watching his aunt make a mess as she pulled things out of the cabinets and tried to put together ingredients for some spell she was working on... Millie quietly cleaning up after her like it wasn't a bother at all.

Aunt Helen had financially provided for both Andrew and Millie if anything were to ever happen to her. When Blaine's mother had become executor of Helen's estate, she found Helen had specified that in her absence the house and funds for its upkeep would go to Blaine; a tidy amount went to the Bluespruce Historical Society, and there were generous gifts for both Andrew and Millie. Blaine had been proud of Helen for that, looking out for the people who had always taken care of her.

Blaine shook himself from his memories and headed back to the front of the house; he needed to get his luggage out of the rental and settle in, there would be plenty of time for reminiscing. He lugged his suitcase up the stairs and without thinking went to his room, the room he always stayed in.

He flipped the light on and stood in the doorway, the rolling suitcase beside him and heavy duffle bag slung over his shoulder. Had this room gotten smaller somehow? The room didn't feel the same; it was dark and dusty. It had the same busy wallpaper, the old desk and wardrobe were covered in sheets, the curtains were drawn over the window seat and the big canopy bed stripped of its sheets.

Blaine glanced at the mirror above the fireplace. It was shattered. A couple of jagged pieces left around the edges and looking like a large gapping snarl – just the way he'd left it.

He remembered picking up a book, the nearest thing at hand, and hurling it towards the glass. He remembered the feeling of vindictiveness that turned into pain when the glass shattered and he realized what he'd done.

Blaine walked further into the room and then froze on the spot, his heart skipping a beat when he noticed the splintered glass that was poured out onto the rug in front of the fireplace. Blaine put his duffle bag down and walked closer, his heart tight in his chest. This wasn't just the way he'd left it.

Blaine’s brow furrowed and he knelt down to examine the glass on the floor, glass that shouldn't be there.

He hadn't told his parents about the broken mirror, they'd had enough on their minds as it was; instead, he'd tried to take the broken mirror off the wall, but it was fixed there in such a way that removing it was impossible. Frustrated Blaine left it there and quietly cleaned up his mess. He'd worn yellow rubber kitchen gloves and picked the glass up piece by piece, vacuuming the rug when he was done; he remembered it clearly because he'd been so mad at himself for breaking the mirror that
even at eighteen he'd almost cried while cleaning it up.

Blaine swallowed deeply, feeling uneasy. He had cleared this glass up years ago and yet now the glass was spread out on the carpet just like the day he'd thrown a book at the mirror, breaking it beyond repair.

_This damn house_, Blaine huffed and stood back up. He should stop being surprised by the things that happened here. He would just clean the glass up again – partly out of stubbornness, and partly to see if the house would do anything about it. Would he wake up the next day with shards of glass on the floor?

There were still supplies in the kitchen – the same yellow gloves he'd worn years ago and big black trash bags; he went upstairs and carefully picked up the glass pieces, tossing the trash bag out back in the bins behind the house where he was done. Then Blaine started unpacking, glancing at the broken mirror every once in a while as if daring it to defy him.

He opened the curtains, letting in the sunlight, pulled the sheets off the furniture, folded his clothes and put them in the wardrobe, found fresh linens for the bed and then stood in the middle of the room with his hands on his hips. It looked more like he remembered from his childhood; besides the shattered mirror, it looked just like it had all those summer he'd spent here.

Instead of feeling accomplished, a feeling of sorrow clouded over him; it looked the same, but things were vastly different.

He needed to keep busy, Blaine decided, to distract himself.

He walked around the house, a pad of paper in his hands, starting a list of repairs that needed to be made and supplies he'd have to buy: almost all the lightbulbs on the first floor needed to be replaced, the sink in the kitchen only ran cold water, the hinge to the back door needed replacing, the front door needed oil.

His parents had been incredulous when he'd told them he was moving to Maine. He had a degree in Music Therapy from UCLA and a good job at a therapy center; what would he do in the small town of Bluespruce?

Blaine wasn't to be deterred; this move wasn't permanent, and he'd put it off for too long. He took an extended leave of absence at work because Helen had trusted him with Callaway Place and it was time he did right by it – and her. He was going to spend at least the next few months here, getting the place back in prime condition.

He had no idea what he was going to do with the old house once it was in better shape. Keep it? Rent it out? Sell it? He couldn't really stomach the idea of selling it, but at the same time, it didn't make sense to leave it empty and unused.

He'd cross that bridge when he came to it.

Blaine was getting hungry and decided to head to town for food and supplies when a thought hit him. He went upstairs and walked down the long southern hallway and then stopped at the door to the third floor, turning to scowl at the portrait of Saffron Callaway. She sat there smugly in her chair, seemingly mocking him with her familiar golden eyes.

"Hello again," Blaine said with a scowl.

He took the portrait down. He'd decide what to do with it later; for now, he just turned it around and left it on the ground leaning up against the wall. He didn't need Saffron Callaway's picture looking
out over the southern hallway anymore.

Then, he turned to head back downstairs, not even thinking of the third floor – there was nothing up there to worry about anymore.

Blaine found that Bluespruce had a new little coffee place and so he decided to enjoy a strong cup of coffee before going to the hardware store. Then, he had dinner at a cute little diner he'd been to before with Aunt Helen before doing some grocery shopping—he was so productive that he even called Andrew, who was surprised and glad to hear from him, and who also said he'd be happy to come up to the house to discuss repairs.

The sun had already set by the time Blaine returned to Callaway Place and had unloaded supplies from the truck. He was too antsy to turn in for the night, so instead, he started immediately on the list of small projects that he could do himself. Replacing light bulbs and torn window screens, scrubbing the kitchen and pulling sheets off of the furniture in the few rooms he knew he'd use.

He left the sheets on the furniture in the parlor.

By the time that weariness finally started taking over, the old house was already looking much better. Andrew would come by the next day and then they'd really get to work.

Blaine went to bed tired, both physically and emotionally; this house and its memories were taking a toll on him.

The next morning, the sun was bright in the sky, Blaine had slept through the night, but he felt weary down to his bones, as if he hadn't slept at all. He got dressed and planned on starting on some more chores first thing when he paused by a mirror in the hallway.

"Hello… Kurt?" He whispered tentatively, heart nervously skipping a beat. There was no answer. Blaine hadn't really expected one anyway.

Blaine went outside to sweep leaves off the porch, but as soon as the crisp autumn air hit him, he decided he needed to clear his mind; even though the air was still cool, it was turning out to be a beautiful day. He wanted to see the beach; he loved the beach here, so different from the beach back home. Besides, he'd never seen it this time of year. It would be far too cold to get in the water, but he still longed to walk along the sandy shore and smell the salty air.

He went upstairs to grab a scarf; it would be colder by the water, and he was already a little chilled. He opened the door to his room – it creaked loudly – he'd have to add that to his list of repairs as soon as – Blaine froze, not finishing his thought.

There on the rug, glinting in the light from the window, were shards of glass littering the ground again.

"Damn it," Blaine murmured to himself, crouching down and reaching out for a shard – the largest fragment was about the size of Blaine's hand, jagged and sharp; he was careful not to cut himself as he lifted it and looked at his reflection in the broken glass. "Not again." What was with the mirrors here? Noisy and magical and so very frustrating.

That's when the realization hit him, the mirrors weren't actually noisy. He hadn't heard any tapping from them since he'd arrived. He wasn't sure what that meant, but it made him feel irrationally uneasy. Which was ridiculous – he didn't like magic – shouldn't he be glad that the mirrors were silent?

He stood and grabbed a scarf from the wardrobe, but instead of wearing it, he used it to wrap up the
piece of glass and then stuck it in his jacket pocket. He went downstairs and around back where he'd thrown away the bag of glass; he scooped out the bag and opened it, only to find it empty.

"Of course," Blaine ran his hand through his dark curls nervously and considered moving rooms; if that glass was going to stay on the floor, he didn't want to be near it. For now, though, he just needed to get away from the house altogether. It was making him anxious.

He glanced up at the window to his room and then shook himself of the chill rippling down his spine. He stuffed his hands deep into his pockets, hunched his shoulders against the cold air and walked resolutely down to the beach, over sand dunes and across beach grass, until the sea wind whipped through his hair and the scent of the ocean filled his lungs. God, he'd missed this; sure, he didn't live far from the beach in California, and he loved the ocean there too, but this was different. Colder, more rugged, beautiful.

He sat down on the sand and wrapped his jacket more tightly around himself, shivering in the wind, closing his eyes and tilting his head back to let the sun warm his face as the breeze ruffled his curls. What in the world was he going to do about that broken mirror? What was he going to do about Callaway Place itself?

His eyes snapped open, worries coming to a screeching halt, as he heard an all too familiar sound. Tap, tap, tap.

"Shit." Blaine swore and quickly reached into his pocket, pulling out his scarf and quickly unwrapping the piece of broken mirror.

He held the glass, using his scarf to keep his skin from the sharp edges, and watched his reflection as the glass let out an unmistakable tapping sound.

"You have got to be kidding me." Blaine groaned. So much for the mirrors being quiet, maybe they were waking up now that someone was back at Callaway Place. Maybe they were just messing with him. In any case, it seemed when he'd broken this mirror, he'd just created a bunch of smaller, sharper magic mirrors. Like that mythical Greek dragon that grew more heads if you cut one off. He laughed humorlessly, feeling helpless and a little fanatic. He'd made things worse.

Did he really think he could ever sell this house or even rent it out? Callaway Place was cursed top to bottom, and Aunt Helen had unwittingly cursed him as well by leaving him the damned place. The same unmistakable anger that had caused him to throw a book at a magic mirror years ago coursed through him again now. He used to love that house, but now he hated it.

Blaine stood quickly and strode right up to the water line, his shoes sinking a little in the wet sand. "I don't want it!" He shouted to nothing and then raised his arm over his head and tossed the damn piece of tapping glass as far as he could towards the ocean waves.

Just as the piece of glass was arching through the air, Blaine thought he heard another sound from it—not just tapping – but a soft familiar voice he hadn't heard in such a long time.

"Wait!" Blaine shouted, but it was too late; as if in slow motion, the glass fell and hit the water with a light splash. It sunk immediately and Blaine knew he would never find it in the swirling currents that shifted under the surface.

"Kurt." Blaine inhaled, eyes glued to where the glass had sunk beneath the waves.

Blaine had done his best not to think about Kurt over the past few years. He'd been so angry and miserable at first that it had been easy. Eventually, as his anger simmered, he had to admit that he
missed his summertime friend. He really missed him. As much as he wanted to put magic behind him, he regretted losing Kurt's friendship more than he could even put into words.

As he looked out to the waves, Blaine's chest ached to talk to Kurt. If he was going to have to deal with magic again, at least he should be able to have something good in his life because of it. And Kurt had always been something good. Something so so good.

Blaine had thought he'd lost the chance to connect with Kurt, but if he had just heard his voice through that piece of glass, maybe it wasn't too late... there were other mirrors in the house he could use to try and reach Kurt, other pieces of that same mirror in fact. His half-hearted try with the hallway mirror didn't prove that Kurt couldn't be reached.

Blaine turned on his heel, feeling excited and hopeful and ready to head back to the house, anticipation starting to pump though him – but instead of moving forward, his foot slipped in the sand. He fell down to his hands and knees with a hiss.

He tried standing again, but slipped on the sand once more; it was wet and cold and Blaine's whole body shivered. He tried standing again, but couldn't – he was being pulled backwards. Back through the wet sand and towards the waves, his feet were already submerged and the cuffs of his pants were soaking up water.

Something unseen was pulling him. Tugging him towards the ocean.

"No! Stop!" Blaine shouted in fear, but it didn't help; in a split second, Blaine's whole body reeled backwards and he was pitched into the sea – as easy to toss around as a shard of glass.

Blaine hit the ice cold water with a splash, and then he was tumbling through the waves, kicking and trying to swim towards the surface, his jacket heavy with water. He kept kicking, but he didn't even know which way was up. It didn't matter, because no matter how much he kicked and struggled, his body was being pulled down, down, down, a stronger force than the current in control.

He knew in the back of his mind that he was being pulled towards the glass he had so thoughtlessly thrown away, but he couldn't think about that, not when his lungs were burning for air and his thoughts were a frenzied panic of, Oh god, oh god. I don't want to drown!

He was spinning now, caught in some kind of underwater whirlwind, being pulled towards the bottom like a bug being sucked down a drain. He caught a glimpse of the piece of mirror he'd tossed away. Larger now, having morphed and grown in size while it was lying on the ocean floor, the mirror was glistening and waiting for him. He kicked and thrashed, trying to get away, his lungs tight and his heart pounding.

Everything went pitch black and Blaine was sure he was about to die.

Then, his head broke through the surface and he took in a long deep gulp of air, his lungs expanding and his head clearing. He felt relief for only a moment before he got a good look around. He was no longer at the beach; he was treading freezing water in some kind of small, closed off, concrete room – a room coursing with roiling water, like the inside of a snow globe being shook.

He sucked in a startled gasp when nearby a person's head popped out of the water; they took a long gulp of air and then dove back under. Blaine kept treading, still catching his breath; the water in the room was splashing and moving, and it seemed to be rising. Blaine was tossed around in the water's current, but he kept waiting for the other person to come up; the more time that went by, the more afraid Blaine became. Worry, a tight hold on his heart – he was treading water while someone in the room drowned.
Blaine took a breath and dove under the surface. The first thing he saw was a large book laying on the floor of the room, pages open as if ready to be read; then, he saw the other person – a young man – struggling through the current and trying to reach the book, but he wasn’t getting any closer and he had to be running out of air. Blaine reached for the book himself and pointed up to the water’s surface, hoping the man would follow his lead, and then he kicked his feet to swim back up. He broke through the water and sucked in air before glancing down at the open book in his hands. His mind was swirling, but he quickly saw something about a reversal spell – great more magic. Still a reversal spell might be very useful right now.

The other man in the room broke through the water with a gasp, thank god. He looked tired, as if he wouldn’t be able to tread water much longer, and he was struggling against the stream churning in the room. Blaine’s feet had found purchase on something beneath him and he felt pretty steady; he reached out for the man, grabbing him and pulling him in, hanging onto him until he could get his footing as well.

Once neither of them seemed about to drown, Blaine shoved the book in the young man’s hands. He’d been trying to get to this; hopefully, he’d know what to do with it, and fast, the water level was still rising, "Read this!" Blaine shouted.

The man looked at Blaine in confusion for half a second before grasping the book, and in a voice Blaine immediately recognized, the man started to read.

New York City, New York

Kurt's hands were shaking as he opened the little white plastic first aid kit he kept in his office; he rummaged through, finding gauze and antiseptic and bandages. He glanced back up to see Blaine watching him intently, dark eyebrows drawn together and water still dripping from his thick hair.

Blaine. Blaine was watching him. Here, in New York, right in front of him.

Kurt looked away and cleared his throat, "Do you think it is bad? The cut? Should we go to the hospital?" He would use the little spell he knew for healing minor cuts, but he felt too shaky to perform magic right then.

Blaine lifted a hand to his cheek, "No, it doesn't really hurt," he answered in that rich sweet timbre Kurt remembered so well.

"Still, we should get it bandaged up, you don't want a scar." Kurt's hands were still trembling as he tore open a package of gaze.

"A scar could be dashing."

Kurt looked up again to see Blaine's eyes dancing, and his lips quirked in a small shy smile. They were sitting close to each other, turned to face one another in Kurt's little office sitting area. Kurt's heart thudded against his chest. This was unreal; to be sitting here with the boy he considered his first love, seeing him with his own eyes for the first time. And god, what a sight he was.

"You don't need a scar to look dashing," Kurt answered without thinking and Blaine's smile widened.

Kurt let out a breathy nervous laugh; he needed to find a filter before he said something worse.

They were both still dripping cold salt water on the rug, something that would have horrified Kurt if
his mind wasn't already running a mile a minute. He'd focus on that once he took care of Blaine's cut. Kurt scooted closer to Blaine, softly pressing some gauze against his cheek, cleaning the wound.

Kurt tried to determine why he felt so unsteady, a distraction from staring at Blaine's gorgeous eyes. It could be the fact that he almost drowned in the basement. Or the fact that the boy he'd missed for so long was sitting next to him right now. Or it could be apprehension, not knowing where he stood with Blaine – they hadn't talked for years, and as far as Kurt knew, Blaine had wanted it that way.

It was probably the almost drowning in the basement.

Or maybe it was just his cold damp clothes.

Blaine was watching him, his honey-colored eyes intense.

"I don't think it's too deep," Kurt said as he removed the gauze and saw that the cut had already stopped bleeding.

Blaine nodded and then looked nervously down at his lap, and Kurt, who had reached for the antiseptic, paused, diverted by noting how long and dark Blaine's eyelashes were against his tan skin. Kurt shook his head to himself. No, he was not going to get pulled in, not until he understood what was going on.

"I can't believe I'm here, with you," Blaine said and glanced up, his cheeks flushing a pretty rose.

Kurt swallowed deeply, his head feeling a little light, "Yes, well I can't believe a lot of things that just happened."

Kurt applied the antiseptic and finished it off with a bandage. He was still trying to process the fact that, minutes ago, he'd been in a basement storeroom swimming through an ocean that had gushed from an enchanted mirror. Not to mention the fact that a person had come through that mirror. Not just a person, but Blaine, his Blaine. Kurt had been around magic all his life and this was still extreme for him.

"Imagine being on a beach in Maine one moment and then in New York City the next," Blaine said, leaning back a little now that Kurt was done with dressing his wound. "My stomach is still churning from the lurch that was."

"You're okay though, right?"

Blaine looked down at himself, patting his body as if to check that he was still in one piece, "It seems like I survived."

Kurt smiled slightly and nodded, then stood from his chair, feeling jittery and distraught. He started pacing back and forth, his arms folded tightly across his chest. "Maine, you were in Maine."

"Yes."

"Is that where you were all those summers we talked?"

"Yes." Blaine was still sitting, leaning forward now, his elbows on his knees and his hands clasped, watching Kurt carefully.

"And then you stopped." Kurt said, turning on his heel to look at Blaine. "Then you stopped talking to me. You promised to come back every summer and then you didn't, and I thought maybe you couldn't come that summer, maybe it was out of your control. But then you didn't come back the next
summer or the next or the next." Kurt's voice was trembling with emotion, and something like anger ran through his body. Years of resentment and worry coming to the surface. "Anything could have happened to you and I didn't even know!"

"You're angry at me," Blaine said simply, still watching him with intent eyes.

Yes, Kurt was angry and Blaine's calm was only making it worse. Kurt finally stopped pacing and really looked at Blaine: his clothing dripping water onto the floor, his face bandaged, and the hands clasped in his lap clenched so tightly that his knuckles were white. Maybe he wasn't as calm as his voice seemed.

"Yes. I'm angry. Or… no. I don't know." Kurt sighed, "I was angry, but I thought I was over it by now. We… we were just kids." We were just kids but you meant the world to me. Kurt added in his mind.

Blaine nodded at that and looked down at his shoes. Kurt waited for an explanation but Blaine remained silent. Kurt felt tense, but he let himself fall back down into the chair next to Blaine. "Did your mirrors stop working?"

"No." Blaine answered softly, still looking down.

"Did you stop visiting your aunt?"

Blaine licked his lips and then exhaled; he looked up at Kurt, shoulders slumped and eyes weary. "I... It's complicated."

Kurt's stomach twisted, "Did you choose to stop talking to me or was it out of your hands?"

Blaine glanced away, not making eye contact with him. "I just traveled five hundred miles through a magic mirror and we both almost drowned in a basement and this is what you want to ask me?"

"Yes," Kurt said, his heart pounding. In fact, he had a million questions for Blaine, half of them about what had just happened, but this was where he wanted to start. He needed to know how a person who he'd thought he'd been so close to could just stop talking to him with no explanation. He needed to know if their friendship had meant to Blaine what it had meant to Kurt. He needed to know if Blaine had wanted to remove Kurt from his life or if he had had no choice. Kurt wanted an explanation for why he'd been carrying around a broken heart all this time. These were questions he'd had for years, so yes, everything else could wait.

"My aunt got sick," Blaine said, finally looking back at him, "You knew about that, but that last summer we spoke, she was sicker than I let on and after that she… she just…” Blaine stopped, shaking his head, obviously not ready to talk about this.

Kurt's throat tightened, worry for Blaine's aunt heavy in his chest. And as much as he wanted to know why things had happened the way they did, as he looked at Blaine's miserable expression, he knew he couldn't press for more information. Not when they were both wet and cold and reeling from what had just happened. And Blaine was shivering.

"What is your last name?" Kurt asked softly, his voice calmer. It was a question he'd had since he met Blaine, and it seemed like an easy place to start.

Blaine straightened up in his chair in surprise before a small smile tipped up the corners of his mouth and he unclasped his hands to reach one out to Kurt, "Hi, I'm Blaine Anderson."

Kurt smiled back and shook his hand, his skin tingly as it pressed against Blaine's, "Kurt Hummel,"
he said, hating the way Blaine's touch made his heart race, "Pleased to meet you."

They both let out shy chuckles as they held each other's hands. It was strange to know someone so well and yet not really know them at all.

"Well, Blaine Anderson, I for one am freezing and would love to take my clothes off," Kurt said, letting go of Blaine's hand and blushing profusely – god he hadn't stumbled over his words like this because of a boy since… well since Blaine. "I mean get out of these and into something warm and dry."

Blaine shot him a smirk, "I'm afraid my dry clothes are back in Maine."

Kurt stood, a plan already forming, "Come back to my place with me. We have a lot to talk about and you can borrow some dry clothes."

Blaine ran a hand through his wet hair, then stood to follow Kurt's lead, a small sweet smile still playing at his lips. "I still can't believe I'm here." He rubbed the back of his neck and looked so incredibly adorable that Kurt's stomach swooped the way it used to back when he was just a silly teenager with a crush. If younger Kurt had known then what Blaine had looked like, he probably would have melted.

"Come on." Kurt nodded; he had to bite back the questions that wanted to fall from his tongue, but there would be time for that. Blaine looked so tired that Kurt was actually worried he'd pass out if he didn't get him out of there. "We'll catch a cab."

Kurt stood in his kitchen with his thoughts a jumble and his stomach flipping over. He stared blankly at his pristine, marble counter until he shook himself out of his daze and reminded himself what he was doing. Coffee. He'd offered to make coffee for Blaine. Blaine, his childhood friend who was now in his guest bathroom changing into Kurt's clothes.

Kurt chuckled nervously to himself. For years, he used to fantasize about meeting Blaine, but even as a lovelorn teenager, he'd never imagined a meeting this dramatic. He grabbed two coffee mugs from the cupboard, and two pods for his Keurig and started the coffee. He watched the dark steamy liquid fill up a mug, distracted by thoughts of water rushing through mirrors, and magic charms, and the dark eyelashes of one Blaine Anderson.

Blaine had been mostly silent on the taxi ride to Kurt's apartment, leaning his head against the window and watching the city rush by. Kurt had watched him, hand itching to reach out and touch him, make sure he was real. Blaine, his mirror friend, grown up and sitting beside him. It felt indescribable and fragile, as if Kurt could breathe the wrong way and Blaine would disappear. Again.

"That smells good."

Kurt startled in surprise and then turned to see Blaine behind him wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt that he'd borrowed. Kurt had changed into similarly comfortable clothing, but as he looked at Blaine – and how soft and homey and attractive he was – Kurt wished he'd taken a little more time to spruce up his own appearance.

"Cream and sugar?" Kurt asked, hoping his voice came out steady as he walked to the refrigerator and pulled out both his regular cream and the hazelnut that he often liked to use.

"Just cream," Blaine answered, and they both stood silently as Kurt readied their drinks. They sat down together at Kurt's kitchen table, Kurt wrapping his hands around his warm mug. Even with his
dry clothes on, he was still fighting off the chill that being doused with literally tons of cold water had given him. Blaine trembled a little and took a sip of his coffee; he must still be getting over it as well. That and the shock of traveling five hundred miles in an instant.

Considering everything, Blaine was actually taking this all very calmly.

"You aren't in shock are you?" Kurt asked, and Blaine raised his eyebrows at him over his mug.

"Shock?"

"You're just taking what happened really well."

Blaine smiled softly, cupping his mug, "So are you."

"Yeah, I guess. Maybe we're both in shock." Kurt said jokingly, "Though I wasn't pulled off of a beach in Maine and deposited into a basement in New York."

"Yeah, I'm still catching up with that I think," Blaine said with a grin, and for a brief moment as he looked at Kurt, the tiredness fell from his features and Kurt was struck again by how lovely he was.

"So where do we start?" Kurt asked a little nervously, "With how in the world you got here? With why you abandoned me years ago? The unspoken words stuck in Kurt's throat.

"I don't have a good answer for you there," Blaine said, placing his mug down on the table. "I can tell you what happened, but not why or how."

"That's a start."

Blaine told Kurt about what happened back in Maine. About the mirror he broke years ago and the pieces that kept reappearing. About tossing one into the waves before being pulled into the ocean himself and sucked through the glass.

Kurt sat, enthralled, his heart hammering at Blaine's story. He momentarily forgot his resentment, lost in Blaine's tale. "That's amazing. I've never heard of magic like this, it's so strong."

"Amazing and dangerous," Blaine added, his eyebrows bunching up.

Kurt nodded, "Yes, but we're both alright."

"We both almost drowned."

Kurt nodded again and took a sip of coffee. Every summer when they used to talk, it was like their conversation had never stopped. They'd go months without hearing from each other and then just fall back in tune.

It wasn't like that now; things were halted between them and Kurt hated that. He tried to think of what he would say to Blaine if they were just talking through the mirror again like they used to.

"Tell me more about your aunt's house; I was always fascinated by it, and your aunt. I really like her." He hoped that wasn't pressing for too much information, but they had so much they needed to figure out and Kurt needed to get the ball rolling somehow.

Blaine bit his lip and looked down at his mug, "Helen liked you too. She thought you were smart and funny. You know she left me Callaway Place after she…" He cleared his throat and took another sip of coffee.
Kurt's heart plummeted. Aunt Helen had passed away then. How awful. He watched Blaine closely, his eyes downcast towards his mug, foot nervously tapping the kitchen floor, thick brows furrowed together.

Kurt realized he was staring so much because it was odd to actually see Blaine as they spoke to each other. Kurt was so familiar with all the inflections of Blaine's voice, and he could tell right now that there was a lot that he wasn't saying; but he could see it in his eyes now too, the reluctance to talk about this. Kurt wasn't sure what to do about that, because they had to talk about it.

"Callaway Place?" Kurt asked, trying for an easy question.

Blaine chuckled, "That's right. I forgot you could never hear the name of my Aunt's house before. Callaway Place. My mother's family, the Callaways, have lived there for generations. And now, for better or worse, Callaway Place is mine."

"How long have you lived there?"

"A day." Blaine said animatedly, his eyebrows raised, "This was my first trip back in five years. When Aunt Helen couldn't take care of the place anymore, it was entrusted to my mom until ownership was transferred to me when I turned twenty-one."

"But you haven't been back until now?"

"Right."

"And look how that went!" Kurt joked, trying to break the tension.

Blaine gave him a coy glance, "Not so bad seeing as I'm finally able to talk face-to-face with my mirror friend."

Kurt's heart skipped a beat; he knew his emotions were running high with everything that had happened, but he needed to rein it in. He wasn't sure he could completely trust his feelings with Blaine—as much as he wanted to – Blaine had let him down before.

Besides, there was a current of sadness in everything Blaine said and Kurt didn't want to sit there and grin at him like a fool just because every time Blaine said something Kurt's heart did somersaults. "And your aunt… She passed away?" Kurt asked, hoping to help if Blaine couldn't find the words.

"No." Blaine met his eyes with a steely look, as if he was determined to get this out, but not quite able yet.

"No?" Kurt lifted an eyebrow, "She didn't die? Oh thank god.

"She just…" Blaine waved a hand before his words poured out of him in a heated rush, "Magic hurt her. It might as well have killed her… No. I don't mean that." He shook his head, looking pained, "I was back at her house the summer after I graduated high school and I could have talked to you then but – I was so angry, Kurt. Magic took her from us and I just… I…" He trailed off, his hands clasped tightly around his mug and his brows knitted in discomfort. "I didn't know what to say to you then, just like I don't know how to talk about this now."

Kurt swallowed the lump in his throat; he didn't understand what Blaine was saying, but he also couldn't stand to see him hurting, despite the pain Blaine had caused him. He reached out to place a hand over Blaine's. Blaine looked up in surprise and Kurt smiled. This was new, the ability to comfort one another with touch. Kurt had wanted to do it so many times in years past.
"I'm sorry, Blaine. You don't have to talk about it right now."

"I never talk about it at all," Blaine answered. His eyes met Kurt's and Kurt was stunned by the intensity in them; for a moment, Kurt felt a connection with Blaine that he hadn't felt since he was nineteen and lying on his bed talking to the boy he'd so hopelessly fallen for. He wondered if Blaine felt something too because his breathing sped up slightly. Kurt glanced away and the moment was broken.

Blaine coughed to clear his throat and his hands relaxed as Kurt continued to rub his thumb across them.

"I was always sorry I didn't reach out to you," Blaine's voice was soft, "I've been sorry for years, but I couldn't make myself go back until now. Helen was placed in… um, a home, when I was nineteen. I was there the summer my parents made that decision, but I was so upset that I didn't want to use magic. I took my anger out on the house the only way I knew how… I had my parents sell off some of Aunt Helen's things."

"Nothing magical though," Kurt said, a knot of worry tightening in his stomach.

Blaine sighed and rubbed his forehead, "Of course magical. I hated magic for what it did to her. I broke the mirror I used to talk to you and I had my parents sell off items from the third floor."

Kurt pulled his hand back in shock as Blaine's words sunk in; he didn't understand what had happened to Helen because Blaine wasn't making sense – but if they sold items from the third floor…

"Blaine!" Kurt gasped in disbelief, "What about the third floor mirror? You sold that? It could be anywhere, with anyone. It could be dangerous!" Kurt's heart was pounding and Blaine just sat there calmly and looked at him like he was overreacting. Which was infuriating.

"Kurt," Blaine said, tilting his head, his brows bunched, "Have you not figured it out yet? I know where the third floor mirror is, so do you."

"I…" Kurt's eyes grew round. Of course! Of course he knew where the mirror was; his brain was just moving slowly—probably from the craziness of the recent ordeal. "Oh my god the mirror at Britton's."

"Yeah."

"You came here through your own mirror?"

"It seems like getting rid of the cursed thing did me very little good."

"Blaine," Kurt gasped, thinking back to why he'd been at Britton's in the first place and the initials carved on the frame, "That mirror, I'm sure it has dark magic in it. Like, really dark magic."

"Of course it's dark, I've always known that." Blaine's face was earnest, his lips tight, his jaw was set and his shoulders tense. He looked ready for a fight and Kurt knew he was serious, this was serious, but he also noticed how Blaine's dark hair was drying into little curly rings around his face and he was trying not to be preoccupied by that discovery, not when Blaine was so solemn.

"There is an evil mirror in the basement of my place of work." Kurt groaned and held his head in his hands. What were they going to do? They couldn't let something so powerful be auctioned off to some unsuspecting bidder, nor could he just leave it in the basement of Britton's.

"We have to destroy it, Kurt," Blaine said, reaching out and getting Kurt's attention by pressing his
fingers to Kurt's arm, "Once and for all, we have to destroy it."

Kurt looked up and sighed, "I know."

He watched as Blaine relaxed, shoulders loosening and brows unfurrowing, as if he was surprised Kurt so readily agreed with him. "Good." A real, true smile grew on his lips, "Good. Thank you Kurt."

It had been a while since a smile from a cute guy left Kurt flustered, but Blaine seemed to have that effect on him. He glanced down to his coffee, hoping his cheeks weren't giving him away. *Stop it Kurt! You're being ridiculous, you don't even know Blaine anymore.*

"We have to find a way to get it away from Britton's first though." Kurt said, focusing on the matter at hand, and his heart sunk as he realized what he was going to have to do. He glanced back up at Blaine who seemed to be studying him. "I have to call Nathan."

Blaine raised an eyebrow quizzically, and Kurt just sighed, wondering how awkward that conversation would be.
Chapter 8

Blaine was sitting on Kurt's couch, a plush cream colored sofa that you sank down into and didn't want to get up from, watching as Kurt paced the room, his phone to his ear.

Kurt's plan was to ask his boss if he could have the third floor mirror as part of a bonus he had coming. Blaine felt awful that Kurt was giving up his hard earned bonus, but Kurt had insisted, "Really Blaine, it's fine. Taking care of magical objects is kind of what I do."

Still, as Blaine watched Kurt make the call, he couldn't help but feel apprehensive. Everything was happening so fast; he had thought that he was rid of that cursed mirror years ago, and now he'd been magically swept away and was sitting in the New York apartment of his high school crush, anxiously waiting to know the fate of a mirror he hated. It was all too weird to take in; besides, he was still so tired. He really needed a good night's rest.

"Hi Nathan!" Kurt smiled into the phone, his eyes bright and a wide grin on his face. Blaine's heart skipped a beat.

Kurt made general chit-chat for a moment, laughing a lot and… was Kurt flirting with his boss? He certainly seemed less hesitant talking to Nathan than he had been talking to Blaine. Blaine looked away for a moment, his heart suddenly pounding a little faster and his throat feeling dry. What was wrong with him?

Blaine glanced back up when Kurt laughed again and then Nathan Britton said something from the other end that made Kurt's cheeks flush a pretty pink and Kurt cleared his throat, shot a glance to Blaine and then lowered his voice, "Um… we don't really have to talk about that right now," before slipping out the sliding glass door to finish his conversation on his balcony.

Blaine sat on the couch with a weird heavy feeling in his chest. He could still see Kurt outside, and while he tried to tell himself to look away – that it wasn't his place to pry – he couldn't help but notice
the smile that stayed on Kurt's face while he talked to his boss.

His boss, Nathan Britton, co-owner of Britton House International. Millionaire and eligible bachelor.

Blaine remembered reading about him once in GQ. He swallowed uneasily, trying to understand why he was feeling the way he felt right now because… because he felt jealous.

Blaine tore his eyes away from Kurt and glanced down at his hands. That was this heavy feeling in his chest, the reason his hands felt clammy. He wanted to excuse it as being overly tired, but it was more than that.

Yes, he used to have romantic feelings for Kurt years ago, back when they were teenagers, but he didn't realize he still felt that way. He had no right to be jealous – they'd never been anything other than friends – and it was Blaine's fault that communication between them had stopped. Still, as he stole another glance at Kurt, he couldn't deny the fact that all his pent up feelings from years ago were coming back full force now.

It didn't help that Kurt turned out to be absolutely breathtakingly beautiful.

Kurt had once described himself as, "ordinary looking with chubby baby cheeks and wide hips". Blaine had no idea where that boy went; in fact, he suspected Kurt didn't have a clue of how he truly looked because god – Kurt was tall and lithe and had perfect skin and perfect hair and his eyes? Blaine's heart fluttered a little just thinking about how blue and energetic they were.

Blaine already knew that Kurt was smart and brave and kind; the fact that he was stunning as well was more than Blaine could handle right now. Especially when he was just feet away, outside flirting with a rich eligible older man.

Soon Kurt came back to the living room, smoothing his immaculate hair and giving Blaine a guarded smile, "One enchanted mirror on its way."

Blaine lifted his eyebrows in surprise; he half expected getting the mirror to be more complicated, "He just let you have it?"

"Yeah, it was fine," Kurt said, shrugging it off as if it wasn't a big deal, his cheeks still rosy from his conversation with Nathan Britton.

"Ah," Blaine nodded and looked down at the sweatpants he was wearing, they were soft and comfortable and too long on him. He was sitting cross-legged and started playing with the hem, not making eye-contact with Kurt, "So you and your boss… Nathan… are you two…" He wasn't sure how to ask this without being too forward, "Um… do you. Are you together?"

"No," Kurt answered quickly.

Blaine's head came up, "No?"

Kurt let out a dramatic sigh and then flopped down on the couch next to Blaine, his long legs stretched out in front of him as he tipped his head back on the cushion, which of course arched his lovely pale neck and made Blaine's breath stutter.

"Nathan and I used to have a… thing."

Blaine nodded, "Oh."

He watched Kurt, trying to read his mood, but he was unaccustomed to actually looking at him when
they talked – his body seemed relaxed, but his lips were pursed tight.

"It was a while ago and it is over now."

"Is that why you blush so much talking to him?" Blaine teased, trying not to show any unjustified jealousy.

Kurt quickly turned his head to look at Blaine, his eyes wide in surprise. Blaine just smirked at him and Kurt's surprised expression morphed into a grin as he grabbed a decorative pillow next to him and threw it at Blaine, "Hush you."

Blaine caught the pillow and laughed, "That blush ruins your poker face you know."

Kurt rolled his eyes, "If I was blushing, it is only because Nathan might sometimes suggest that he'd like to start things up again."

"And?" Blaine asked, wishing he didn't feel so invested in Kurt's answer.

"And I think it's a bad idea."

Blaine nodded, his face breaking out in an irrepressible smile. He was relived, it was dumb to care when he hardly knew the man in front of him, but he had to admit he was relived. And he used to know Kurt well; once upon a time, Kurt was his best friend and maybe something more…

"I had a huge crush on you," Blaine blurted out; he never had been good at holding back his feelings.

Kurt sat up straight to look right at him as his mouth fell open, "You…. What?"

"Back when we used to talk," Blaine explained, "I had all these ideas in my head about how one day we'd run into each other and I would just know it was you and…" Blaine cleared his throat as he felt his own cheeks heat up, "Yeah I had it bad."

"You did know it was me," Kurt said quietly, his expression unreadable, but his eyes glistening. "In the basement you knew it was me."

Blaine let out an awkward chuckle and rubbed the back of his neck bashfully, was it getting very warm in here? "Your voice," Blaine said, his heart beating heavily in his chest, "I'd recognize it anywhere."

Kurt arched an eyebrow, "It is distinctive." He relaxed back into the couch, somehow sitting closer to Blaine now. "I had a crush on you too."

"Yeah?"

"I could hardly wait for summer time just to have the chance to talk to you for a few weeks."

"We never had long."

"Still, you were my best friend."

"Mine too," Blaine said with a silly grin, things were feeling easy with Kurt again, this is what he wanted, what he had missed for so long.

"And then you disappeared on me."
Blaine's smile slipped. "I…"

"Sorry to bring the mood down," Kurt added, his voice and posture stiff, "Actually, I'm not sorry. I just… I didn't know what happened to you for six years Blaine." He looked up, all traces of his blush gone. "And I understand your aunt got sick and that's horrible, I hate it… And okay, you don't care for magic all that much… but why cut me out?"

Blaine sighed; he owed him a full explanation, he knew he did. Besides, the expression on Kurt's face told him it was the only way for them to move forward. "After Aunt Helen… lost herself," Blaine said, forcing the words out, "I was so angry with magic that I just gave up on it, Kurt."

"But why?" Kurt scooted even closer, his hands twitching forward, as if he wanted to take Blaine's hand in his own, but he placed them back down in his lap instead. "Aunt Helen got sick? I feel so bad about that, but why blame magic?"

Blaine looked at Kurt's hands, smooth skin and long fingers – he reached out, twisting their fingers together, waiting to see if Kurt would pull back, but thankfully, he didn't. Blaine couldn't look Kurt in the face as he spoke; instead he kept his eyes on their clasped hands.

"Helen stopped caring about anything else in her life; she could only think about magic and Saffron and those damn mirrors. She worked herself sick, not sleeping, barely eating, trying strange spells and potions that only made her worse. The doctor put her on bed rest and then…" Blaine glanced up and swallowed deeply, finding Kurt's clear blue eyes watching him with concern.

"She disappeared. One morning, Millie went in to check on her and bring her breakfast, and she wasn't there. She was missing for three days before they found her wandering around the third floor in her nightgown, which was torn and muddy. She was muttering about mirrors."

"Missing? For three days?" Kurt said his voice shocked, "Where was she?"

"No one knows and she never recovered after that. My mom sent her to all the best doctors, but her mind was just gone… she was put in a home for the mentally ill in California where we could all be close to her."

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"But why?" Kurt scooted even closer, his hands twitching forward, as if he wanted to take Blaine's hand in his own, but he placed them back down in his lap instead. "Aunt Helen got sick? I feel so bad about that, but why blame magic?"

Blaine watched Kurt, waiting for a reaction as he took a deep breath, "I hated Callaway Place after that. I hated magic, and… and myself for letting it happen to her."

"Blaine." Kurt's face had gone pale, his lips pressed together tightly as Blaine clung to his hand. He couldn't read Kurt's expression and felt silly just sitting there with Kurt's hand in his, but at the same time, he really didn't want to let go. Finally, Kurt sighed, his eyes looking a little teary, "I am so sorry. I… that's awful. I'm sorry, but what happened wasn't your fault." He shook his head as if not knowing what else to say; he leaned slightly forward as if he might give Blaine a hug, but then didn't follow through.

"I felt like it was my fault." Blaine confessed, "I knew about the mirror and did nothing." He'd thought that for years, but was never able to tell anyone before, "So I told my parents to sell the things from the third floor, broke the mirror in my room and swore never to use magic again."

Kurt squeezed Blaine's hands and looked like he might cry, "Oh Blaine." And Blaine recognized
that kind tone; it was the same one Kurt had used to comfort him after the Sadie Hawkins dance all those years ago.

Blaine sighed, feeling a little better having told Kurt. He never really had the opportunity to share this with anyone else; Kurt was the only person to know about the magic at Callaway Place. "But, of course, somehow that mirror ended up with you and then dragged me here. I can't seem to get away from it and I doubt that's a coincidence."

"Definitely not a coincidence," Kurt said, as he folded his legs up on the couch and sat so close that their knees touched, "but I can't explain it any more than I can explain how our mirrors connected in the first place or how you came through the mirror today."

"I just want to find a way to end this, Kurt. I owe my aunt that."

Kurt nodded earnestly, their hands still clasped, "I'll help in any way I can. I know a lot more about magic than I once did, and there is information in my book – Oh god." Kurt's eyes grew round and he let go of Blaine's hand suddenly and stood from the couch, "My book!"

Kurt ran to the kitchen and Blaine stood and watched him. Kurt's messenger bag was lying on the counter, still damp. "Oh no no no." He cried as he opened the bag and pulled out the large, black leather-bound book Blaine had seen in the basement.

Blaine walked over to the counter as Kurt opened the waterlogged book. The pages were soaked through, and when Kurt tried to flip the first one, it ripped; Kurt sucked in a breath and froze. "Okay, okay. I can fix this, I can fix this." He carefully shut the book and grabbed his phone, looking shaken.

Not knowing how to help, Blaine waited on a barstool at the counter as Kurt had a hurried conversation with someone named Jane about her taking a look at his book. Blaine glanced down at the title; he couldn't make out all of it, the gold lettering was worn, but it had the word 'witchcraft' in it. Blaine shivered.

Kurt hung up and leaned against the counter, looking drained, "Jane will take a look at it; she does art restoration and specializes in manuscripts. Working at Britton's comes in handy."

"I hope she can help, but Kurt…" Blaine glanced down at the book, pushing it away from him gently, "What is this? Witchcraft? Really? " His stomach rolled at the word; the only witch he knew of was Saffron and he didn't even like to think of her.

"It's just another word for magic." Kurt explained, "Magic has been associated with all kinds of things in the past, witches, wizards, fairies… but it is all just magic."

Blaine let out a long breath of air; he'd almost forgotten how excited Kurt got about magic. In all these years, it didn't seem like his enthusiasm had faded.

"This book opened up the mirror at Britton's and closed it. It has the spell that allowed me to talk to you in the first place. Plus, there is a whole section on mirrors and communication and transportation… It isn't bad Blaine… it's just…"

"Magic." Blaine finished for him.

"Magic can be good, Blaine," Kurt said, his expression sincere, "it can be so good."

Blaine nodded slowly, but before he could argue, his stomach interrupted them by growling.
Kurt's eyes lit up with his smile, "What if I made us some lunch? And then we can talk more about this… about your aunt, if you want, or about anything. We have a lot to catch up on and the mirror isn't being delivered until tomorrow, and Jane will stop by this afternoon for the book. If you don't have to get back to Maine right away…"

"I don't."

Kurt tilted his head and shrugged a shoulder, "You could stay here."

Blaine looked at Kurt, his face nonchalant but his fingers drumming nervously on the counter. Staying here with Kurt seemed like a wonderful idea.

"Okay." Blaine nodded.

Kurt's eyes flitted up to meet his as he smiled, "Okay."

"Kurt Hummel, what have you done!" Jane stood in Kurt's kitchen that afternoon looking down at his sodden book with an expression of horror on her face, "Did you dump it in the Hudson?" She looked up at him, her eyes accusing, "I would have thought you of all people would know to treat an antique with more respect."

"It wasn't on purpose," Kurt said, shifting on his feet and feeling properly chastised.

Jane shook her head and gently lifted the leather cover, "This is at least 100 years old and seems to have been in good repair until you dunked it in water."

Kurt glanced over at Blaine who was leaning against a counter with a completely unhelpful smirk on his lips.

"I'm sorry." Kurt said, not knowing what else to say; he couldn't tell Jane how he ended up soaking a rare manuscript. "Can you save it?"

Jane tsked but nodded her head, "I think so. Maybe. The ink doesn't seem to be diluted so I need to separate the pages and get it dry. It may never be like it was before but I don't think it is completely ruined."

Kurt sighed in relief, "Oh god, thank you! I'll pay you for your time. I just really appreciate this."

Jane looked up with a smile, "I heard that you asked for that old mirror in the back storeroom?"

"Yes."

Jane shot a glance at Blaine, "Um well… consider that my payment, you getting that thing away from me."

Blaine lifted an eyebrow, "You don't like it either?"

Jane shook her head, "You know about the mirror?"

"Yeah, it's awful."

Jane laughed, sounding relieved, "That seems the right word for it."

Kurt looked back and forth between Jane and Blaine and smiled watching them, but he felt a little envious. Blaine seemed like someone easy to get along with; Jane obviously liked him. Kurt,
however, was still struggling to know how to feel about him. "Have you been in that storeroom by chance?" He asked, still glancing at Blaine, "Since the auction?"

"I was there this morning."

"How did it… look?" Kurt asked, looking back at Jane. The mirror had sucked everything back in – water, seaweed, sand… but Kurt had left so quickly that he didn't really know what kind of shape they'd left the room in.

Jane shrugged, "The electricity in that area is being fixed and some of the furniture has been moved… nothing out of the ordinary. Why? Did something happen?"

Kurt shook his head.

Jane nodded slowly like she didn't quite believe him but didn't want to ask, and then she very carefully placed Kurt's book in a thick plastic ziplock bag.

Kurt hated to see it go; now of all times he needed it, but this was the only way to make sure it wasn't destroyed.

"I'll get it back to you as soon as I can," Jane assured him. "Blaine, it was very nice to meet you. Please keep Kurt from doing anything crazy with that creepy mirror he has coming."

"I'll try, but you know Kurt," Blaine said with a wink and Jane laughed and nodded in agreement.

"I'll walk you out." Kurt followed Jane to the door and then out to the hall.

"Your friend is gorgeous," Jane remarked as they waited for the elevator, "How have I never heard you talk about him?"

Kurt cleared his throat, "I… um, haven't seen him in a while."

"Mmm, is something going on there?"

"Something going on?" Kurt asked, arching an eyebrow and pretending to not understand what Jane was implying.

"There just seemed to be some heavy air between the two of you. And you look at him a lot."

"I…" Kurt's cheeks flushed; he really didn't have a poker face. "I don't-"

Jane lifted a hand and smiled, "That's all the answer I need."

Things between him and Blaine weren't what Jane seemed to be assuming, not anymore at least, but there was no reason to argue the point. They said their goodbyes and then Kurt made his way back to his apartment.

Blaine was in the living room glancing over the books in the inset bookshelf that made up one of the room's walls.

"A Historical Index of Magical Objects," Blaine pulled the small purple book out and turned to smile at Kurt. "I remember you reading me passages from this book."

Kurt nodded and toyed nervously with the hem of his shirt, a warm feeling expanding in his chest at the memory, "You liked the part about Orpheus' lyre."
"I did. How could I not like an instrument so beautiful it could tune out the siren's song?"

"I can't believe you remember that."

"I remember all the things we used to talk about," Blaine said quietly, looking down at the book.

_Damn this man and his bashful looks and his sweet reminiscing._ He was breaking Kurt's iron resolve to still be mad at him.

"Oh!" Kurt walked to the shelf and grabbed the folklore and ballads book that he got from his mother, "Remember this one? I think I made you listen to the Ballad of Tam Lin more than once."

Blaine laughed and reached for the book, "I do remember. You loved it. I thought it was a little disturbing."

Kurt shrugged, "I just love magic."

"I know you do." Blaine nodded, growing more solemn.

Kurt bit his lip and studied Blaine's face; it was tired and sad. It had been a long day and Kurt couldn't imagine how Blaine felt taking this all in and stirring up feelings about his aunt. "We should order in," Kurt said, taking the books and placing them back on the shelf. "How to you feel about Thai?"

"I could go for some green curry right now," Blaine said with an easy smile.

"Great, I'll get the menu."

Over dinner, they discussed their childhoods and how things had gone for them since then. Kurt in Ohio and Blaine in California, how they both thought they'd be performers, but Kurt's passion of history and magic had led him to study at NYU and Blaine's experience with his Aunt Helen made him want to do something to help people with mental illness.

Blaine seemed as compassionate and smart and charming as he'd ever been. And he listened to everything Kurt said with a sharp expression and an eagerness that made Kurt feel like there was nowhere else Blaine would rather be than sitting in Kurt's little Soho apartment, hanging on his every word. It was flattering and sweet and broke Kurt's heart a little – reminding him just how much he'd missed Blaine over the years.

They cleared up after dinner all while sending each other shy looks, and Blaine asked if Kurt had any old photo albums that they could look through from when he was younger. Kurt grabbed an album from his bookshelf and they sat down next to each other on the couch.

"Oh my god look at you." Blaine smiled as Kurt flipped through some pictures of him in middle school.

Kurt groaned, covering his face with a hand and looking at the picture of him as a floppy haired, freckled thirteen-year-old, "This is embarrassing."

"Not at all." Blaine shook his head. "I used to try and picture you when we talked to each other, and here you are. I love this."

"That's because you have no pictures of yourself to show me. Look at my hair Blaine." He'd been such an awkward child that looking back, he thought maybe it was okay that Blaine couldn't see him when they'd first "met."
Blaine just laughed, "When I first met you, I was still learning to tame these curls; trust me, you haven't seen bad hair until you see my 6th grade class picture. Oh god! Or the way I used to shellac it down in high school. What a nightmare."

"I'm going to have to see pictures sometime down the line then."

Blaine's eyes sparkled, "Okay."

Kurt chuckled and cleared his throat, flipping to a page of photos from his Glee club days, "I always wanted to get out of Lima," Kurt said, remembering his aspirations throughout high school. "After being rejected by NYADA I thought I'd lost that dream."

"I remember that summer. You were heartbroken," Blaine said, his golden eyes round and earnest. Kurt gave him a smile and pushed down the fluttery way his heart seemed to react to Blaine's gaze. He wouldn't let himself fall for Blaine. Not again. "I was heartbroken, but it's an old wound now," Kurt said. A wound healed over by how happy he was with how his life had played out, "You encouraged me to go to New York anyway, which I did. I ended up at NYU and haven't looked back. I love my life."

"It suits you," Blaine said with a warm smile.

They talked late into the night like they used to do, catching up and discovering new things about one another. They had grown up on opposite sides of the country, Blaine closer to Kurt when at his Aunt's house, but their younger years had been similar. Struggling to be out and proud, singing in Glee clubs, planning big futures. Blaine gushed about his job as a music therapist and Kurt couldn't help but picture how kind and patient he must be with his patients.

Eventually, the day's events wore on them; Blaine seemed particularly tired, even though it was Kurt who hadn't slept in 24 hours. Kurt pulled out the folding bed from his sofa and grabbed a new toothbrush and some fluffy blankets for Blaine.

They needed their rest because the next day Kurt was going to perform a spell to destroy the biggest most powerful magical object he'd ever dealt with. He had to admit he was intimidated by the prospect.

Kurt made sure Blaine had everything he needed and then headed towards his own room, turning back for one more glance at the entryway of the living room. Blaine was climbing into bed, looking young and boyish. Kurt took in a deep breath, wishing for the again that he'd known Blaine, known him in person, when they were younger. "Goodnight Blaine," he whispered.

Blaine smiled sleepily at him, "Goodnight Kurt."

Kurt crawled wearily into his own bed, and it didn't take him long to fall asleep, his mind peacefully fixated on the charming, curly haired man asleep in his living room.

True to his word, Nathan had the mirror delivered the next morning. It arrived after Kurt and Blaine were up, had gotten ready for the day and had already had breakfast together. Kurt made French toast and tried hard not to keep stealing glances at Blaine. It was difficult.

Blaine was wearing more of Kurt's clothes and had worked on his hair a little more today, his curls shiny and perfectly styled. He seemed better rested too, his golden eyes sparkling and making Kurt's stomach do funny things. Blaine had only been in New York a day, but already, the bond they once shared seemed to be
reaffirming itself. The conversation over breakfast had been carefree and easy; Kurt just wished they'd had the last six years like this. The hole in their friendship still rubbed at Kurt like a sore wound, even with knowing why Blaine had done what he had.

Kurt could understand Blaine being angry at magic, from Blaine's perspective it made sense, but if he had just reached out, Kurt could have been there for him, as a friend and a comfort if nothing else.

When the couriers deposited the mirror in the living room, a heavy feeling filled the air. The easiness of the morning evaporated. The mirror was wrapped in cardboard and plastic for protection, and Kurt and Blaine quickly started unwrapping it, tossing the packaging to the side, both eager to get to the mirror.

Once it was opened, Kurt stood back and just gazed at it. It seemed much larger in the small confines of his apartment living room. Tall and gleaming. Beautiful yet daunting. He saw Blaine shudder beside him.

Blaine had a history with this mirror, but even without that, Kurt could feel what Blaine had described all those years ago, a kind of menacing sensation permeating the room.

He hadn't felt it at first back at Britton's, but that was before he'd tested to see if it was dark. And honestly, he had been so excited about finding a magic mirror that he probably wouldn't noticed any warning signs anyway.

"It's gorgeous," Kurt said.

"It makes my hairs stand on end," Blaine replied beside him, and Kurt looked at him through the reflection in the glass; his brow was creased and his lips a flat, tense line. "I can admit it is beautiful, though. It's like a wolf in sheep's clothing."

Kurt walked up to the mirror, placing his palm on the glass, "It's vibrating."

Blaine took a deep breath and moved to stand next to him. He tapped the glass, four rhythmic taps that were immediately repeated. "All the mirrors at Callaway Place do that."

"Do they all make you feel as nervous as this one does?"

"No." Blaine tore his eyes away from their reflections in the mirror to look at Kurt directly. "I don't know if they have dark magic or not, but if they do, they never made me feel the way this mirror does. I'll be happy to have it destroyed."

Kurt sighed and looked back at the expertly hand-forged mirror. He didn't want to have to destroy it; there was still so much he didn't know about the mirror and it held so much magic. Kurt was fascinated.

"You aren't backing out now are you?" Blaine asked, chuckling, but Kurt could hear the worry in his voice.

He turned to face Blaine, giving him a reassuring smile. He knew what had to be done with dark objects. "No, I'm not. I just… I hate destroying it when we don't really know anything about it. Why it has so much magic? What its origins are? What it can do? I told you about what happened with my dragonfly brooch, and the mirror transported you all the way here. Oh and look!" Kurt pointed to the initials on the side, "I think someone purposefully endowed it with magic… Saffron Callaway maybe?" Kurt just put that together, "It is just so intriguing."

Blaine's breathing hitched as he looked at the initials, "S.C.?" His face paled. "I never noticed those
before. But, of course, I was always trying to get away from this mirror as fast as I could."

"Do you really think it could have been her?"

"Does it matter? You said yourself it was dark magic," Blaine answered, looking away from the initials as if they made him ill.

"I know. I know." Kurt shrugged, "I just wish it was safe enough to keep around for a while – I still have so much to learn."

Kurt tried to ignore the way Blaine was so carefully watching him, looking instead at the intricate weaving vines of the mirror's frame. He had his brooch from yesterday with him and held it out on the palm of his hand, waiting to see if the mirror would transform it again. Nothing happened, and Kurt pocketed the brooch with a sigh.

"I'm sorry," Blaine said.

"For what?"

"That you can't get the answers you want, but Kurt, trust me when I say it's better this way."

He knew Blaine wanted to be rid of the mirror right away, and Kurt understood what he needed to do; he just didn't like it. "You really think it has something to do with what happened to your aunt?" Kurt asked. When Blaine had told him he thought magic had driven his aunt mad, Kurt had been sympathetic, but skeptical. Now, though, feeling the power radiate from this mirror, he wondered if it could be possible.

"Kurt," Blaine moved closer to him, looking him directly in the eyes and reaching out to hold his hand. Kurt swallowed deeply, still getting used to how tactile Blaine seemed to be, "I know this mirror had something to do with Aunt Helen's illness. I don't know what happened to her, but it was because of this mirror. She was gone for three days and came back… changed. And now that we know that this mirror can transport people… anything could have happened to her and I…" He closed his eyes and took a steadying breath. Kurt squeezed his hand reassuringly. "If I had made her get rid of the mirror years ago, maybe it wouldn't have happened."

"I should have told you how to destroy it when you asked," Kurt said, his chest heavy with remorse.

Blaine opened his eyes, "No Kurt." He let out a long sigh, "We were just kids – we didn't know what we were dealing with – but now we have the chance to do the right thing. To make sure this mirror never hurts anyone else." Blaine's eyes were pleading, and Kurt found he couldn't say no to them. Not that he would have anyway; he knew the mirror had to be destroyed.

"Okay," Kurt said, nodding and feeling resolved. He squeezed Blaine's hand again. "We're going to do this."

Blaine smiled in relief and then quickly leaned in and gave Kurt a soft peck on the cheek.

Kurt sucked in a hitched gasp and laughed breathily – for a moment he felt like he did as a flustered teenager talking through a mirror to a boy he'd never met, feeling so happy he could burst. Blaine didn't seem embarrassed or shy about the kiss at all; he just grinned at Kurt with those eyes of his and made Kurt want to wrap him in a tight hug.

He didn't do that, though; Kurt wouldn't let his guard down that easily. He couldn't. He let go of Blaine's hand and they both turned back to the mirror.
They ended up scooting the mirror towards the back of the living room so that they both had space to sit on the floor in front of it; then, Kurt gathered the supplies he would need. He'd only ever performed magic to destroy an object of dark magic twice without his mother, and his hands were shaking with nerves. He tried not to show it, though; Blaine was counting on him.

"Don't you need your magic book to do this?"

Kurt shook his head, "No this is a spell my mom taught me, it isn't in the book, it's in my journal. I just worry about my book because it does have a lot about cursed objects and mirrors if this doesn't work."

"Wait, there's a chance it won't work?" Blaine's eyes grew round.

"It's always worked before Blaine." Kurt reassured him, "It will be fine." Kurt hoped he was right. This mirror was different than any dark object he'd destroyed before.

Kurt went to his room and opened the wooden chest of drawers where he stored all of his spell ingredients. He pulled out rosemary sprigs, hemlock root, matches, salt, dried toadflax flowers and a jar of cellar spider legs.

He carried them all to the kitchen where Blaine watched him with wide eyes as he mixed his potion in a bowl with water and then returned to the living room.

"Okay, so we need to use the rosemary to brush the mirror with the potion and then recite the charm." Kurt opened his journal to where he had the charm written out. He had it memorized, but as nervous as he was feeling, he wanted the words in front of him as well.

"That's it?"

"It's worked for me before."

"I'm not complaining." Blaine continued to watch as Kurt smeared the mirror with his mixture. "I like that it is simple."

Kurt nodded and sat down cross-legged on the ground in front of the mirror, Blaine moving to sit beside him. Kurt took a deep breath and tried to calm himself. The actual steps were simple, but he was going to have to channel powerful magic for this to work.

"You said this was dangerous?" Blaine asked suddenly, "Back when we first talked about it years ago?"

Kurt knew he must look tense, shoulders high, brow creased. "It can be dangerous."

"How?"

Kurt worried his lip and held his journal tightly, "I don't know for sure. I mean, I know the magic could…" He cleared his throat, "Fight back, but I'm not sure what that would look like."

Blaine's face went a little pale, "Kurt."

"Actually, maybe you should step out for a while? No reason for us both to be here."

"Like hell am I leaving you. I'm staying here."

Kurt was stunned for a moment by Blaine's immediate insistence. Stunned and warmed. Maybe Kurt should try to change Blaine's mind, ask him to leave, but the truth was he really didn't want to be
alone right now. He smiled shyly and looked down at his journal, not able to meet the intensity of Blaine's gaze. "Okay, here we go."

"What should I do?"

"Just stay next to me and I need quiet."

Blaine nodded and made a motion as if he was zipping his lips.

Kurt would have laughed at how adorable Blaine was if he weren't so nervous. He reached out and placed a palm on the wet, cool glass, closing his eyes and tuning out all sound; Blaine's breathing, the cars on the street below, the mirror as it started whispering. Kurt ignored it all. He waited until his mind was cleared and then took a deep breath, not needing his journal after all, as he pronounced the spell.

"From wind and shadow and dark did rise, evil called forth shall now demise. Earth and salt and light take hope, thy powers called forth we now invoke."

Kurt expected that he'd have to repeat the words a few times before anything would happen—he was completely taken back when the mirror immediately let out a deep bellow. His eyes snapped open just in time to see the glass morphing, pushing out and arching forward. He let out a shocked gasp and quickly scrabbled backwards, Blaine doing the same.

"From wind and shadow and dark did rise, evil called forth shall now demise! Earth and salt and light take hope, thy powers called forth we now invoke!" He recited louder.

A deafening crack split through the air.

"KURT!" Blaine shouted.

Kurt's whole body was thrown backwards by a forceful invisible blow; it propelled him through the air until he collided with something behind him, his head banging hard and making his vision swim.

The air in the room felt electric, zapping with sound for a moment, and then it grew completely silent. Kurt lay on the floor on his back, too sore to move right away. His eyes were closed and his breathing fast. He lifted a hand to his head and groaned, blinking open his eyes to stare up at the ceiling.

He heard a hiss of pain from beside him and that made him move. He sat up quickly, too quickly; his head was still swimming, but he glanced over to find Blaine. Blaine was slowly sitting up a few feet away from him next to Kurt's side table, which was toppled over, the lamp broken on the floor.

"Are you okay?" Kurt asked urgently, crawling over to Blaine much as he had the day before in the basement at Britton's.

Blaine's hand was on his right shoulder and he rolled his neck, "Yeah I think so. Are you?"

"Bumped my head," Kurt said, touching the back of his head and wincing. "Nothing major."

Blaine scooted closer to him, looking him in the eyes. "You're sure?"

"Yes."

Blaine held onto Kurt's shoulders and studied his eyes for a little while, probably checking for a concussion, "Okay, good." He finally nodded, seemingly satisfied.
Kurt pulled himself away from Blaine's gaze and looked around the room. Everything in front of the mirror had been knocked over; even his couch was lying on its back. That must have been what Kurt had been hurled into. The pictures on his wall either had shattered glass or were knocked to the floor. Kurt glanced back at the mirror... still and quiet and untouched.

"Did it work?" Blaine asked, slowly getting to his feet. He was a little wobbly but reached a hand down to help Kurt up.

"No."

Blaine looked at the mirror, "How can you tell?"

Kurt blew out a long breath and rubbed a hand over his forehead, "Well, for one thing, the mirror is still standing. When I said we were going to destroy the mirror, I meant destroy it, Blaine. But it's still intact."

Blaine nodded slowly, looking small and nervous, but trying to put on a brave face, "I guess we know how magic fights back now."

"Yeah." Kurt turned away from the mirror to fully face Blaine, "Are you sure you're alright?"

Blaine nodded and then reached forward, brushing some hair back off Kurt's face, "I guess that could have been worse." Kurt trembled pleasantly at the touch and then watched Blaine as he took in the state of the room. "God Kurt, your apartment!"

"It could be worse," Kurt said, echoing Blaine.

They took the next hour to clean up - righting furniture, sweeping up broken glass. Hanging pictures that weren't ruined back on the walls. The damage wasn't too costly, and at the moment, Kurt really couldn't care less about it. The mirror still standing strong and indestructible in his living room did concern him.

He stood and studied it for a long time.

"What next?" Blaine asked from behind him; he was anxious and fidgety and it was putting Kurt on edge.

Kurt just sighed before marching into his kitchen, kneeling down to open the cabinet under his sink and pulling out a tool kit.

"What are you doing?" Blaine asked, watching him.

Kurt only answered by lifting up a heavy hammer.

"Kurt." Blaine's voice held a warning in it, but Kurt walked past him to the mirror and lifted his arm.

"Kurt!" Blaine shouted just as Kurt brought the hammer down hard on the glass. The glass vibrated and the hammer snapped back, bouncing off the surface; Kurt stumbled with the force of it. Blaine was beside him in an instant, holding his elbow to help him balance. They both stared at the mirror; besides the crack already in the glass, it still looked perfect.

"What was the point of that?" Blaine asked roughly; hand still on Kurt's arm.

"Just testing."

"Even if you broke the glass, it wouldn't have helped! The magic would still be there. I told you
about the mirror I broke; it just made a bunch of smaller magic mirrors. " Blaine's voice had an edge of panic to it.

Kurt sighed. Okay that had been foolish. But for a moment, his anger at the mirror couldn't be contained; he wanted to hurt it. "Sorry," he mumbled, feeling deflated.

Blaine walked up to the mirror and traced down the crack with a fingertip. "Kurt, what could have made this crack if a spell and a hammer does nothing to it?"

Kurt shook his head; he had no idea. He had started to tremble as he looked pleadingly at Blaine, "I don't know what to do." Blaine was counting on him; Kurt was meant to fix this, but he'd done the one and only magic destroying spell he knew and it had backfired.

Blaine ran a hand through his hair and then placed his hands on his hips, "Right. Okay."

Kurt could practically see the wheels in Blaine's head turning. "We need help."

"Yes, we do." Kurt agreed.

"Can we get your book back?"

"Even if we did I couldn't flip through it with the pages wet and stuck together."

Blaine's jaw tensed, "What can I do?"

Kurt shook his head, "We need help from someone who knows about magic."

"Do you know someone like that?"

Kurt crossed his arms over his chest and thought about it. Shelia. The only other person in Kurt's life, besides his father, who knew about magic. "I know a woman back in Lima. She owns this mystic shop, and we've never openly talked about it…" Kurt worried his lip, "but we both know the other one knows."

"I guess that's a start," Blaine said, looking as worried as Kurt felt.

"Oh sweet goddess of mercy," Sheila breathed through the phone.

Kurt glanced up at Blaine; they were on speakerphone so they could both hear what Sheila thought of their problem. Kurt had hurriedly explained the situation, that he could detect magic items and they had found something dangerous that needed to be destroyed, but he didn't know how. She hadn't been surprised by any of it until he got to the part about the indestructible mirror.

Sheila had gone quiet over the phone. Blaine shrugged his shoulders, lifting his brows in question.

"Sheila?" Kurt called, "Are you still there?"

"Moon and stars above," Sheila continued.

"Sheila?"

"Sand and earth beneath! Kurt, I don't think you understand what you've gotten yourself into!"

"I know I don't understand what I've gotten myself into, but I have to do something."

"And you called me? Kurt, I'm all about healing spells and spiritual wellness."
"Please, Sheila, any suggestions you can give us here," Kurt replied, resolutely not looking behind his shoulder at the mirror he felt was staring him down.

"I suggest getting that mirror out of your home, Kurt. Get as far away from it as you can!"

Kurt finally glanced back at the mirror, still in view from where he and Blaine were sitting at the kitchen counter. "I don't think that's an option. It isn't safe." He looked back at Blaine who was worrying his lip and also cautiously glancing back at the mirror.

"Messing with cursed objects and expecting me to help." Sheila grumbled under her breath. "Children."

Kurt chose not to mention that he was a 25 year old man; he felt like a child right now. "Can you help?"

"You say your spell didn't work?"

"It didn't."

"But it has in the past?"

"Yes." Kurt nodded. Blaine leaned in closer to the phone.

"I guess I have heard that some curses can't be broken outside of their origin of magic."

"What does that mean?" Blaine chimed in.

"It means that when this mirror was infused with magic, it happened somewhere special, somewhere powerful, and in order to destroy it, you may have to bring it back to that location. Do you know where it came from? Can you think of any place it's been that might hold magic in it?"

Blaine and Kurt met each other's eyes over the phone on the counter, "Yes." They answered in unison.

"Then my only suggestion is to take it there and try again."

"Thank you Sheila," Kurt said quickly, feeling grateful that at least they had something to try next.

"I don't want to be thanked Kurt. This is very risky and I wish you wouldn't attempt it."

"I don't know what other choice I have."

Sheila sighed, "Call me when it is done so I know you're okay."

"I will."

They hung up with hurried goodbyes and Kurt leaned his elbows on the counter, resting his chin on his hands and looking at Blaine.

"Kurt… would you like to go to Bluespruce, Maine with me?" Blaine asked with a tentative smile.

As if Kurt would actually say no. "I have always been fascinated by what you've told me about that house. Not just the magic but the history of it."

Blaine's nervous smile grew sincere, "Then it seems like we are going to Callaway Place."
Chapter 9

AN: Happy Saturday everyone! Not much to say today except that I really appreciate all of you and thank you for reading.
As always, all my love to Oleanna who is helping shape this story into something better than it would have been if I was on my own.
Enjoy!

"The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper." – Eden Phillpotts

Kurt did everything he could to not think about the mirror that they were dragging behind them. He and Blaine had rented a truck and trailer and were making the nine hour drive from New York City, New York to Bluespruce, Maine. At first, the trip was tense, with Kurt starting off behind the wheel and neither of them having much to say as they carted a cursed mirror along the east coast.

It was too exhausting to stay jumpy the whole time though. At some point Blaine flipped on the radio and started to softly sing along. Kurt tried to act like he wasn't listening intently to Blaine's rich tenor voice, but it wasn't long before they were both singing, radio turned up and their voices loud and harmonizing as they laughed and shot each other playful glances.

It was a long drive and Blaine grew quiet as they switched drivers and drew closer to Bluespruce. They spoke in hushed voices about Blaine's childhood at Callaway Place and Kurt's upbringing with magic. About college and their careers. They seemed to get along just as well as they always had, only clashing when it came to their impressions of magic.

To Kurt, it had always been bright and happy, a connection to his mother.

For Blaine, it was shadowy and eerie, the thing that stole his aunt from him.

Kurt wanted to destroy the mirror they were dragging behind. He had been reluctant at first, yes, but after being around it more, not to mention trying to destroy it only to have it push back, he knew it had to go.

Besides, anything that upset Blaine so much was something Kurt wanted to get rid of. Blaine was a naturally happy person, or at least he had been when Kurt knew him growing up, and he could still see that side of him at times – like when he was belting out Gwen Stefani with a grin on his face or animatedly telling stories about his job back in California – but he was somber more often now, thoughtful and sad in a way Kurt didn't remember him being. Kurt hoped having the mirror destroyed would take a weight off of his shoulders, even if it wouldn't restore his dear aunt's health.

Kurt watched Blaine's profile as he drove and they talked – his intense eyes and the way his lips seemed to naturally quirk up in a smile – but eventually, the rhythm of the tires on the road and the worries of knowing what he still had to do wore on him. Kurt nodded off, head leaning against the
window as the sun set, and Blaine continued to drive, his steady voice singing softly under his breath.

The truck eventually slowed and Kurt woke with a yawn, not knowing how long he'd been asleep. Kurt's eyes were still closed when Blaine called to him softly, "Kurt? Kurt, we're here."

"Mmmm?" Kurt mumbled, but then remembered where he was. He sat up quickly, rubbing sleep from his eyes to find Blaine smiling gently at him. Kurt quickly smoothed down his hair.

"We're here. Callaway Place," Blaine announced as he parked next to another truck in the driveway. Kurt looked out the window but couldn't make much out in the dark. They both stepped out of the truck and Kurt glanced up, getting his first look at Callaway Place.

The porch light was on and the house was silhouetted by the bright moon; he couldn't make out details, but he could tell it was large and looming and it seemed incredibly intimidating.

Blaine came and stood next to him, hands in his pockets as the fall air breezed around them. "I first saw it in the dark too, except it was raining and the lightning lit it up."

"And you were twelve?"

"Yes."

"Were you scared?"

"Yes." Blaine laughed.

"Understandable," Kurt smiled back at him.

"Come on," Blaine nodded to the front door, "It isn't as daunting inside."

They brought Kurt's luggage in, setting it in the foyer as Blaine gave the grand tour. Most of the rooms on the ground floor weren't in use, furniture still covered by sheets, and there was one door they didn't enter at all, Blaine just nodding towards it, "That's Helen's room." But everything Kurt could see was amazing.

"Blaine, I've never seen an old house this intact with the original furniture and decor. No one decided somewhere along the line to update everything?"

"I guess not, I mean the electricity and plumbing are newer, but yeah..." Blaine shrugged as Kurt walked around the parlor, fingers tracing over a mirror on the wall. "The house itself is protected by the historical society and I know they used to do tours here back in the day."

Kurt turned from looking at a mid-nineteenth century clock on the mantle still in pristine condition to shake his head in awe at Blaine, "This place is nearly invaluable, Blaine. I mean from a curator's perspective I'm basically in heaven right now."

Blaine grinned broadly, shuffling his feet bashfully, "I'm glad you like it."

"Like it? Blaine, I could spend months here just appraising things and it would be the best few months ever."

Blaine laughed at that and then held out his hand, "You haven't even seen the second floor yet!"

Kurt looked down at Blaine's hand, wanting to take it but considering if it was a good idea or not. He
was already starting to enjoy the feel of Blaine's hand in his own, but he shouldn't encourage feelings in himself or in Blaine.

Then again, what harm ever came from holding hands?

He took a step towards Blaine and then stopped in his tracks, "Wait, what was that?"

"What's what?" Blaine asked, letting his hand drop.

"Listen," Kurt said in a hushed tone, noticing Blaine glance to the mirror. But that wasn't it; not tapping or whispering… was that *singing*? Kurt closed his eyes and breathed in long and deep and then out slowly. He turned his body to the right as a smile lit his face.

Opening his eyes, they landed on a small bronze female bust placed on an end table; he picked it up and lifted it to the light, it was in good condition and only a little dusty from neglect. It was emitting a high, clear, very soft operatic voice. "Your sculpture is singing."

Blaine moved close to him, looking at the bust, "I can't hear it."

Kurt turned to him and smiled, "Trust me."

Blaine met his eyes, "I do."

Kurt drew in a breath and set the sculpture down, moving slightly back from Blaine's closeness. "We can test it to make sure that-" he stopped and turned towards the door, hearing something else.

He smiled at Blaine, "Come on." He lifted his eyebrows and nodded back to the hallway before rushing out of the room in excitement, Blaine trailing behind him. In the foyer on a table by the stairs was a vase that sounded like rushing water. "Magic here too." Kurt beamed at Blaine and then closed his eyes again, "Give me a minute."

This time, he really listened, not to just the bust or the vase; he tried to tune into the whole house. "There's more," he said, opening his eyes and unable to suppress the huge smile on his face or the tingly feeling in his stomach. "This way!"

He grabbed Blaine's hand and pulled him along, first to the dining room where, inside a big china cabinet, he found a cutlery set that chimed like bells. Next, to the kitchen where the table itself sounded like the pitter-patter of small feet on the kitchen floor. Then, they dashed to the drawing room, Kurt laughing and Blaine smiling after him. The piano there was playing a nearly perfect piano sonata. "I think that's… Beethoven?"

"Kurt, this is incredible," Blaine said, his eyes lighting up as he tilted his head towards the piano as if that would help him make out what Kurt was hearing.

"There's still something else down here," Kurt answered, listening. "Back in the foyer I think?"

"Well, come on." It was Blaine's turn to lead him out of the room in excitement as they smiled at each other and hurried back to the front of the house.

Once there, Kurt stood in place and turned in slow circles until his eyes landed on the crystal handle of the front door. "This," he said, walking up and brushing his fingers over it; he bit his lip, "It's crying."

"Oh," Blaine said, his excited smile falling, "That's a sad one."
"No," Kurt shook his head. "It doesn't feel sad. Maybe they are happy tears?" There was something about this one that made him feel nostalgic, like friends meeting after a long separation. He looked up at Blaine with his heart in his throat.

He felt Blaine's hand against the small of his back, "Amazing."

"This house is special, Blaine."

"I meant you are amazing, Kurt."

Kurt felt himself blush and laughed as he tore his eyes away from Blaine's steady gaze, "This is just the first floor; I bet we find more magic throughout the rest of the house."

"We can test to make sure none of it is dark though, right?"

"Yes of course." Kurt nodded, "But honestly, everything has given me a good feeling so far. I have never seen so many magical objects in one place..." Kurt looked up at Blaine again who was smiling softly at him, his honey eyes kind. "I can't understand how there is so much magic here."

"I don't really understand what makes something magical in the first place," Blaine said, reaching out and touching the doorknob gently as if he'd never really looked at it before.

Kurt shrugged, "This kind of magic is basically a very strong memory, most of the time a good one, that gets captured in the object because there is magic in the vicinity. If I had to guess, I'd say that the magic at Callaway Place has been preserving memories for decades, maybe centuries."

"Probably since Saffron Callaway's time," Blaine said with a gleam in his eye that looked a little frenzied.

"Likely," Kurt said, watching Blaine shiver as he let his hand fall away from the doorknob, "I know you aren't fond of Saffron Callaway, but it doesn't mean that all the magic here is dark. Or any of it really."

"Besides the mirror."

"Yes, besides that," Kurt said and smiled as he met Blaine's eyes. Blaine had been excited racing through the house with Kurt on his hunt for magic earlier, and Kurt wanted to light that same excitement again, show him that magic could be good and uplifting.

Blaine took a step back from the door, "It's late. We should bring your stuff upstairs and then decide what to do with the mirror. I don't feel comfortable leaving it in the trailer all night."

"Alright."

They brought Kurt's things upstairs to the room next to Blaine's, stopping for a moment to see the broken glass spread out on the floor by the fireplace. "I can see how that would get old quickly," Kurt said, hands on his hips.

"Look," Blaine knelt down and carefully picked up the largest piece of broken glass, "This is the piece I threw into the ocean."

Kurt felt a chill down his spine, "Okay that's creepy."

"Is this like the sounds you hear in other magical objects?" Blaine asked, letting the piece of glass fall. "Repeating a memory, but this time not a sound but actually breaking over and over again?"
"I…" Kurt paused; he'd never thought of that, "It could be, I don't know why it wouldn't just echo the sound of glass breaking though."

Blaine shrugged, "Because the mirrors at Callaway Place are strange."

Kurt nodded and smiled; he enjoyed talking about magic with Blaine, he didn't have that with anyone else and getting a fresh perspective was thrilling.

In the back of his mind, Kurt could hear other magical objects calling out from the second floor, but he would have time to hunt for them later. Right now, they needed to deal with the mirror they'd brought back to Callaway Place.

"Should we put it in the parlor?" Blaine asked once they were back outside. He threw the trailer doors open and they both stood and stared. They hadn't really bothered packing the mirror up, seeing as they wanted to destroy it anyway and it was indestructible, so they had just slid it on its back into the trailer and it laid there now just the same as they'd left it. The sight of it made Kurt's heart beat faster.

"Kurt?"

Kurt looked up from the mirror to Blaine, "Um no. Not the parlor. It did a number on my living room, so if it acts up again, it would be better not to have it in a room with so many valuables. Is there somewhere open and empty in the house?"

Blaine lifted his eyebrows as if in disbelief, "Yeah, I know a place."

Blaine found a hand truck in the shed behind the house, and he and Kurt maneuvered the mirror onto it and then inside and up two flights of stairs; once they had it placed in the middle of a large room on the third floor, they paused to admire their work and catch their breath.

"The third floor mirror back to the third floor," Blaine said gravely.

Kurt looked around the large open room, so different in its sparseness from the rest of the house. "This is where they found her?" he asked softly.

"Aunt Helen? Yes, three days after disappearing without a trace, this is where they found her." Blaine's voice trembled. Kurt watched him fold into himself, making himself smaller – and it didn't matter that Kurt's feelings towards Blaine were confusing, Blaine was his friend and he was hurt. Kurt moved forward and wrapped Blaine in a tight hug.

"I'm sorry," Kurt whispered and rubbed a hand up and down Blaine's back.

Blaine seemed to have needed the hug – the way he melted into Kurt, his head on Kurt's shoulder as his breathing evened out. They stood there like that for a few minutes, Blaine fitting perfectly against him, and Kurt hoped Blaine didn't notice how his heartbeat sped up. Eventually, Blaine pulled back sniffing and wiping an eye.

"Do we do this now or wait till morning?" Kurt asked, glancing at the mirror.

Blaine's eyes widened in surprise, "Now? Are you serious?"

"It is what we came here for. Besides I don't think I'd get a wink of sleep tonight if we didn't try."

"You're sure?" Blaine met Kurt's eyes with concern.
"Yes." Kurt's heart was hammering in his chest, but he honestly wasn't going to rest easy until they had attempted the spell again. Now was as good a time as any.

"I mean… okay." Blaine nodded.

Kurt went downstairs to unpack the ingredients they needed, while Blaine went to the kitchen to fill Kurt's spell-working bowl with water. Kurt's hands shook as he grabbed his things. This was it; if the spell didn't work here, at Callaway Place, he didn't know what to try next.

He also couldn't help but worry how the magic in the mirror would react. It had fought back last time; would it be stronger here in a place of magic? Kurt shivered and cleared his throat. Hopefully, his magic would be stronger here as well, but it didn't matter, really; this was the only option they had and he was going to see it through.

"I have the water," Blaine said, standing in the doorway of Kurt's bedroom; Kurt turned to face him and nodded. Blaine was brave to be doing this, to come back to a place that had taken his aunt from him.

"Okay." Kurt breathed, "Here we go."

They brought everything they needed upstairs, Kurt finally having a chance to admire the intricately carved wooden door to the third floor; it looked very old and Kurt's historian side prickled to stop and look. But there was too much in this house to stop and look at and he had a job to do first.

The large upstairs room had a light fixture at the center of its high arched ceiling that gave off enough light to work in, but still the room had a dark and sinister feel to it. Kurt could admit that that was probably a feeling magnified because of what they were about to do. He murmured a little charm that made the light shine a bit brighter.

They both sat cross legged in front of the mirror again as Kurt ground the spider legs and salt together with the hemlock root before pouring it into the water; he then ripped up the toadflax petals, dropping them in one at a time, causing them to float on the top. Lastly, Kurt lit a match, letting it burn for a moment before blowing it out and watching the small tendril of smoke swirl up into the air; once the smoke was spent, Kurt crushed the burnt head of the match and drizzled it over his potion. He whisked it with his rosemary sprigs and then turned to Blaine.

"Want to do the honors?"

"Really?"

"Just spread it over the mirror like you saw me do back home."

Blaine nodded and stood to follow Kurt's instruction as Kurt smiled and watched him. Maybe if Blaine could participate in magic a little, he'd see that it wasn't so bad after all.

The room filled with a sharp earthy smell that reminded Kurt of the Indigo Pyramid as Blaine brushed the concoction over the mirror, around the frame and down the glass, before looking over his handiwork and sitting down next to Kurt again.

"Is that good?"

"Perfect." Kurt smiled even as a nervous feeling rumbled in his stomach.

Blaine reached out and held Kurt's hand; Kurt was growing accustomed to the gesture. "You don't have to do this," Blaine said, "I feel like I pushed you into this and-"
"No Blaine," Kurt interrupted him, "You didn't push me into anything. I want to do this. My mom always said that as a diviner, someone who knows about magic, it was our duty to keep people safe from magic. I'm doing this because it is what I'm meant to do."

Blaine stared at him fondly, his golden eyes bright as he nodded.

"I gave you this option before, and now that we know what could happen, I feel like I need to give you this option again. Could I convince you to wait downstairs?" Kurt asked, mostly hoping Blaine would say yes and retreat a safe distance away.

"My answer is the same – not a chance." Blaine's face was serious and his voice firm. "We're in this together."

"Okay," Kurt sighed, some of the tension in his stomach lessening. "Then let's do this again." Kurt kept hold of Blaine's hand – it made him feel braver – and reached out to touch the mirror with his other hand.

He closed his eyes and focused, hearing the distant sounds of magical items throughout the house. He made them quiet in his mind as the mirror started whispering, clear as day, as if the voices were coming from inside the room with him and not behind glass; Kurt braced himself, pushing down his fear as he tuned all sound out and recited, "From wind and shadow and dark did rise, evil called forth shall now demise –"

Before Kurt could even finish the spell, a loud scream cut through the air. Not a bellow this time, but a harsh, angry, wordless wail. Kurt gasped; the voices that had once been only whispers started shrieking. Kurt couldn't understand the words, but he didn't need to know the language to hear the venom in them.

"From wind and shadow and dark did rise, evil called forth shall now demise," Kurt yelled quickly. "Earth and salt and light take hope, thy powers called forth we now invoke!" He glanced at Blaine, whose face had gone all but white and who was looking back at him with wide eyes, and then—

Blaine was gone, torn away from him in an instant. A loud clatter filled the room and a strong gush of air ripped through the mirror, making it shake. The wind was harsh enough that it had pushed Blaine away from Kurt, and now it started circling the room. Kurt was flung forcibly backwards, head whipped forward as he flew through the air, body lifted off the ground and tossed around the room.

"Blaine!" He shouted, as he saw Blaine's body whip by him in midair. They were both stuck in a room- sized whirlwind, the mirror the eye of the cyclone.

"From wind… and shadow and… and dark did rise!" He heard Blaine shouting somewhere behind him, but he trailed off after that.

Kurt took up the chant. "Evil called forth shall now demise!" He covered his head when he looked like he was going to be slammed against a wall, but he just missed it and continued to circle the room. "Earth and salt and light take hope!" His voice was shaking, but gained strength when Blaine flew past him and joined him for the last phrase. Their voices joined together even as they continued to circle the room at dizzying speeds, the wind roughly pitching them around. "Thy powers called forth we now invoke!"

The wind had carried them up to the rafters, but as they finished the spell together, it cut off abruptly, dropping them unceremoniously to the hard wooden floor. Kurt hit the ground with a thud. He heard an echoing thud nearby and knew in the back of his mind that Blaine must have fallen to the floor as
well, but he couldn't look to see if he was alright –

All Kurt could do was let his eyes slide shut as the world went black.

Blaine blinked open his eyes with a moan; his head ached, his muscles were stiff, and his body was sore. He felt hungover, but with a killer neck ache. Sunlight was streaming in from a nearby window and hitting him across the face. He sat up with a wince, trying to remember where he was and why he felt mowed over by a truck.

He drew in a sharp breath as he started to recall what happened; looking up, he saw the large full length mirror standing in the center of the empty room.

"Oh god." Now he remembered last night, Kurt trying the spell again only to have the mirror repel them; they had been lifted in the air like they were no more than a flurry of fall leaves, and then they were dropped to the ground with force and –

"Kurt!" Blaine quickly scrambled to his feet, his heart in his throat, eyes falling on Kurt who lay on the floor a few feet away from him, limbs splayed out and eyes closed. "No!"

Blaine ran to him and skidded on his knees to kneel next to Kurt's prone form. "Kurt?" Blaine ran a hand down Kurt's cheek. "Kurt, please wake up." Blaine's heart was tight in his chest, his mind panicking. This was his fault, he'd brought Kurt here and–

Kurt's eyes flitted open.

"Oh thank god," Blaine's body sagged with relief, he felt like he could breathe again.

Kurt looked up at him in confusion, "What happened?"

"The mirror fought back again. Stronger this time." Blaine's hand cupped Kurt's cheek and he searched his eyes, making sure he was alright.

Kurt moaned and started to lift himself, Blaine helped, his hand on his elbow and shoulder. Kurt sat on the floor and scooted back to lean against the wall.

"Are you okay?" Blaine asked, eyes scanning over Kurt, "Where do you hurt?"

"Everywhere?" Kurt said with a grimace. "What about you?"

"I'm okay."

"Blaine."

"Yes, I'm sore, but I'll live."

"Did it knock you out too?"

"All night it seems."

Kurt nodded and Blaine moved to sit next to him, also leaning against the wall.

Kurt turned his head to face him and they both just looked at each other silently for a moment.

"That didn't work."
"No." Blaine reached out to cup Kurt's neck, thumb skimming over his jawline. "Are you sure you're alright?"

"Um... I..." Kurt swallowed deeply, his cheeks tinged pink, "Probably as alright as you are. My head aches, my whole body aches, but I don't think I have any serious injuries. I think it was more the magic that knocked us out than the floor."

Blaine nodded, glancing from Kurt's blue eyes down to his pink lips. He pulled his hand away and cleared his throat, both of them breaking their gaze. "Is that meant to be comforting? Magic knocking us out?"

"I just meant that it lessens the chance of brain damage." Kurt's voice sounded like he was trying to make a joke, but Blaine was too anxious to laugh.

"Now what?" Blaine asked, nervously rubbing a hand up and down his arm.

Kurt gasped next to him, "Blaine, look."

Blaine glanced up quickly, first at Kurt and then in the direction he was looking. The mirror. Kurt braced a hand on the wall behind him and stood to his feet; after a moment of surprise, Blaine followed suit.

"I can't believe it," Kurt said, taking a step towards the mirror.

Blaine hadn't noticed in the confusion of first waking up, but the mirror wasn't the same. Alongside the long crack that went down the mirror's length, dozens of small fine fissures had appeared all over the glass, like a network of thin delicate veins reaching out from the middle and spreading to the edges.

Kurt walked up and brushed his fingertips over the glass and Blaine saw him tremble slightly.

"Are you okay?" Blaine knew he kept asking that, but he was concerned for Kurt; anything that happened to him would be because Blaine brought him here, his stomach twisted at the thought.

"Blaine, it worked," Kurt said with a small smile on his lips. "Well, not completely, but it's a start."

"A start?" Blaine asked, heart leaping to his throat, "Wait, you want to do that again?"

"We have to, we took a step in the right direction, and I think we weakened the mirror, we created these fractures..." Kurt looked at him before closing his eyes. "Listen, can you hear the whispering? It's very faint but still there."

Blaine was still standing a couple feet from the mirror, hating to be close to it, but he took a step forward now. He didn't hear whispering, he never had except... "Wait, last night those voices shouting at us, is that the whispering you hear?"

"You heard that?" Kurt said, his eyebrows rising in surprise.

"Yeah. It's the only time I've heard voices from a mirror... well besides your voice, but yes, I heard that. It was terrifying."

"Agreed. And it must have been strong magic if you heard it." Kurt said, worrying his lip and letting his fingers brush over the mirror again.

"Strong and angry, Kurt." Blaine said, reaching for his hand and pulling it away from the glass
because that thing was evil and Kurt seemed too enthralled by it, but also because he didn't want him
to cut his fingertips on the glass. "I think we're lucky to have gotten out of that mostly unscathed." Blaine's heart was beating hard just thinking about it. "It fought harder this time; there is no telling
what it would do if we tried again."

Kurt turned to face him. "What do you want to do, Blaine? I think we have to completely destroy it,
and now we know that it's possible, we hurt it last night. But we don't have to try again right now, it
is your call."

"Now? No. We aren't trying it again now, Kurt."

Kurt nodded, "Okay, what do you want to do?"

Blaine closed his eyes and sighed. He felt restless and worried, Kurt's hand in his own his only
comfort. "I want to go downstairs and have breakfast," Blaine said, opening his eyes and smiling at
the beautiful man next to him. "You're right, we do need to finish this, but let's think it though first. It
seems to get angrier every time you try the spell, and I don't know that we should go for a third
round without being sure about what we're doing."

Kurt glanced at the mirror and then back at Blaine with a small smile, "That is very wise. Breakfast it
is."

The first thing Blaine did when they got downstairs to the kitchen was try to start some coffee, but
the coffee maker wasn't working. Blaine huffed as Kurt scrunched his eyebrows and walked to the
light switch, flipping it a few times. Blaine glanced up at the light; it didn't seem to be working either.
"Great."

They went out into the hallway and tried another light switch and another until they had tested all of
the lights in the main rooms on the first floor.

"Do you think we blew a fuse?" Kurt asked, Blaine standing by the unresponsive light switch in the
dining room.

"Maybe. But..." Blaine thought back to when he'd first found the third floor mirror years ago,
"Could it be the mirror? The lights on the third floor used to not work either. Andrew thought it was
the breaker, but now I'm not so sure."

"I don't even know any more, Blaine." Kurt sighed wearily, and he looked so lost that Blaine wanted
to kick himself for bringing him to this place, "But yes, it could be the mirror. I think it might have
done the same thing at Britton's."

"Well, I have eggs and bacon in the fridge and the stove is gas." Blaine wanted to help Kurt think
about something else, "I'll call Andrew later about the electricity, but I'm starving."

Kurt laughed at that, visibly relaxing. "Eggs and bacon sound perfect right now."

Blaine started breakfast as Kurt sat at the kitchen table, his head held in his hands. They both needed
some rest, but Blaine knew the bulk of the weight of this was on Kurt's shoulders. Blaine hated that,
hated that he'd brought such dark magic into Kurt's life. No matter what Kurt said about it being his
job to protect people from magic, it was too heavy a burden for him to have to carry.

Blaine despised that mirror for what it had done years ago and he hated what it was doing now to
people he cared about. Because of course it didn't matter how many years had gone by, he still
deeply cared about Kurt. Just the sight of Kurt made his heart flutter and his stomach flip over. That
same feeling Kurt had always given him when he was growing up but now it was intensified by
having met him face to lovely face.

All he wanted to do was smooth the worry from Kurt's brow, kiss the grimace from his lips, hold him and keep him safe from the magic of this old house... And, wow, that was a little much. Blaine needed to get hold of his emotions; Kurt seemed reluctant around Blaine and he didn't want to push him farther away. Besides, they had just come back into each other's lives and Blaine did have a bad habit of letting his emotions lead him.

"Are you burning the eggs?"

Blaine was jerked out of his thoughts by Kurt's question. "What? No." Blaine looked down at the scrambled eggs, quickly plating them next to the bacon he'd already finished and then bringing them to the table along with a couple glasses of orange juice.

"This looks wonderful, Blaine. I feel like I have a magic hangover, and you know greasy food is good for a hangover." Kurt took a bite of bacon and closed his eyes for a moment, letting out a pleased hum.

Blaine watched him, face relaxed for the moment, eyelashes long, and lips tipped up in a satisfied smile. "God, you're gorgeous."

Kurt coughed, choking on his bacon, "What?" He stared at Blaine with round eyes.

"I… I mean." Blaine's whole face felt hot, he quickly looked down at his plate. Yes he was exhausted, but did he have no filter at all? First he said something about his crush back at Kurt's apartment and now this? And wasn't he just chiding himself for letting his heart run away too fast? Kurt was going to think he was crazy. "Sorry." Blaine hurried to explain. "It's just that I've been thinking it since the basement at Britton's and apparently I have no self-control."

He heard a quick laugh from Kurt and glanced up again to see his face bright with a blush, "You do have a tendency to blurt things out, but don't be sorry." Kurt pushed eggs around on his plate, smiling ear to ear. "It's a nice thing to hear; besides, I may have very similar thoughts about you."

Blaine's chest felt like it was expanding, "Oh."

"Yeah. Oh." Kurt looked up at him with a grin, taking a bite of scrambled eggs. Blaine matched Kurt's grin when he felt Kurt's foot slide against his own under the table.

After breakfast, Blaine called Andrew, who reprimanded him about missing their appointment the other day, "I uh… had to go out of town… unexpectedly," Blaine said, making a face at Kurt who started to laugh, "Sorry about that."

Andrew couldn't come that day but said he'd swing by the next morning to take a look at the electricity. He didn't seem to think it was odd that it was out, "It's an old house after all," he explained.

Blaine and Kurt spent the day gathering all of the items that Kurt had found with magic in them, bringing them to the parlor. Blaine finally uncovered the parlor furniture – he felt better using the room with Kurt by his side—and Aunt Helen had always liked Kurt and he felt she would approve of including him in this space that they had always shared. Even with the furniture uncovered, they ended up sitting beside each other on the floor, the magical objects gathered around them, all but the kitchen table and piano, which they tested previously without moving them.

Blaine watched intently as Kurt picked up one item at a time, cupped it in his hands reverently and then closed his eyes humming a sweet little melody. Kurt was so full of goodness that Blaine could
practically feel it radiating off of him in the way Kurt said he could feel light magic from each of the antiques he tested. Kurt was kind and brave and handsome and Blaine was so grateful to have him here; he couldn't put the feeling into words.

He wished he could hear the magic Kurt heard from all the objects. All Blaine could hear was the periodic tapping from the mirrors in the house.

"Can we test the mirrors?" Blaine asked once Kurt assured him that all the objects they'd found so far had light magic in them. "I know there are a lot, but they obviously have magic too."

Kurt nodded, "Yes, of course." He stood from the floor and held out a hand to Blaine, pulling him up. They walked to the mirror in the parlor, the first one Blaine had ever heard tapping. Blaine watched as Kurt pressed his hand against the glass and closed his eyes, humming his tune.

Nothing happened so Kurt tried again.

After a moment, Kurt opened his eyes and turned to Blaine, "It doesn't work."

"It just worked on everything else."

"Back when I first found my mirror, the one I used to talk to you, the tune didn't work on it either. And it didn't work on the third floor mirror. I have a spell from my book I could try, the one I used on my own mirror, but…"

"Isn't that the same spell that sucked me off the beach and into the basement at Britton's?" Blaine asked, lifting his eyebrows. As grateful as he was to have found Kurt, he didn't want another gut churning journey through a mirror, or to watch as Kurt was magically swept away from him.

"Yes..." Kurt said slowly.

Blaine puffed up his cheeks and blew out a long breath of air, "What do you think?"

"I don't think this mirror is as strong as the mirror upstairs and nothing like that happened when I used this charm on my own mirror."

Blaine nodded. "Okay, let's try."

Kurt closed his eyes again and Blaine took his hand, twining their fingers together, "If you get pulled through a mirror, we go together." Blaine laughed, only half joking.

Kurt recited the charm, his voice taking on a soft, reverent tone the way it did when he used magic – the mirror started tapping. Kurt opened his eyes and Blaine watched him, "The whispering is back, very faint and-" He stopped, his face lit with a soft golden glow. Blaine turned to the mirror which was now shining.

"Whoa."

"Mine did that too," Kurt said in a hushed voice.

The mirror grew brighter and brighter and then winked out, leaving the room darker and seemingly colder.

"Is that good or..." Blaine asked nervously.

Kurt squeezed his hand. "Good. It's light magic. And exciting, it seems to have the same kind of magic my hand mirror did."
"Okay. Good. That seems good," Blaine said, feeling more relieved than he expected; he hadn't known he'd been so nervous about that result. He tapped a finger against the glass and it tapped back, "You know these were silent when I first arrived a few days ago. Not anymore."

"You woke them up."

"What?"

Kurt shrugged like it was common knowledge, "This house has magic, but most of the time magic sleeps without people who have magic nearby, unless it is very strong. The mirrors tapped when Helen lived here and then grew quiet when she left. When you came back they woke up again."

"I don't have magic," Blaine said, feeling a little overwhelmed.

"It's in your family," Kurt answered patiently, and Blaine noticed he was standing very close. "I have magic, a specific kind; I'm a diviner because my mom was."

"Are you saying I can use magic?"

"I have no idea," Kurt answered, reaching out to squeeze Blaine's arm, "Maybe. You may have already when you were helping me recite that spell last night."

He quickly glanced down to Kurt's lips; he was so close that it made Blaine's breath shallow. "I guess if it helped, then that's a good thing, but I'm not really interested in learning it."

Kurt took a step back and smiled, "That's alright. I'm not going to force you to try and use magic."

They spent the rest of the morning testing the mirrors on the ground floor. Blaine steered Kurt away from his aunt's bedroom though; he still couldn't face it. All the mirrors reacted the same as the first. Glowing bright before fading out.

They had an easy lunch together of turkey sandwiches and sliced pears and then decided to take on the second floor. There were a lot more mirrors up there and Kurt seemed to hear magic from several other items as well. They were both distracted from the ominous presence of the mirror on the third floor by going through the rooms, each one special and unique.

The historian in Kurt seemed ecstatic. "Blaine! The lamps in this room alone are extremely rare. Are they Tiffany's?"

Kurt found magic in a magnifying glass, a rug, an old picture frame and a pair of worn white leather gloves. He was practically buzzing with delight. In watching Kurt's animated expressions and the joy in his voice, Blaine decided Kurt had to be right; there had to be some good in magic. Anything that made Kurt this happy Blaine was willing to give a chance.

It was the best afternoon Blaine remembered having in a very long time. And slowly, the house started feeling less sinister, less cursed. With Kurt there, Blaine could remember how much he'd loved this place growing up. Along with that hopeful feeling, Blaine was becoming more and more intrigued by the magic Kurt was discovering. He felt a spark of excitement and longing in his chest. Longing to know more, to understand the magic of Callaway Place. He wondered if this was the same spark that Aunt Helen had felt for years.

As the sun started to set, the lack of electricity in the house became more of a problem. Blaine found some big yellow candles in a drawer in the dining room, and he lit a few, placing them around the kitchen so he could put something together for dinner.
"Let me," Kurt said, "I like to cook." He took over, pulling things out of cupboards.

"Okay, I'll be right back." Blaine was struck by an idea as he hurried out of the kitchen.

Blaine used a flashlight to navigate upstairs to a hall closet and pulled out a few blankets. He took them downstairs and spread them out on the floor in the parlor in front of the fireplace. Next, he went outside to grab an armful of wood, which he piled in the fireplace and soon had a modest fire roaring.

Blaine went back to the kitchen, clasping his hands in front of him and rocking on his heels. Kurt had a plate of sliced fruit, some grilled cheese sandwiches and a couple mugs of hot cocoa ready.

"Let's find a tray to put that all on." Blaine said, "It looks delicious by the way."

"What are you doing?" Kurt asked, watching him as Blaine pulled out a large silver platter.

"We should eat in the parlor."

Kurt gave him an inquisitive look but Blaine didn't explain. They loaded up the food, Kurt carrying the mugs separately as Blaine balanced their meal and led him into the parlor.

Kurt walked into the room and a wide smile spread across his face as he saw what Blaine had done.

"I figured since it was dark and it is getting cold, a fire would be nice," Blaine said by way of explanation as Kurt stood in surprise by the door. "Or do you… do you like it? We can eat in the kitchen if you-"

"Blaine… this is perfect," Kurt said, walking past him and making his way to the blankets, sitting down and placing the mugs on the brick of the fireplace; he patted next to him and looked up at Blaine. His face was cast in the flickering light of the fire and his blue eyes were dancing. It took all of Blaine's self-control not to swoop down and kiss him on the cheek.

Blaine sat close to him, placing the platter on a footstool and smiling shyly. This felt like a date, it wasn't of course, but it still felt really nice.

They enjoyed their food and the hot chocolate in silence for a little while until Kurt spoke up. "This has all happened so quickly I can hardly believe I'm here with you."

"I hope it isn't too much for you. I know you gave up your bonus to get the mirror and you've had to take off time from work and what we're doing here is dangerous and-"

"Blaine."

Blaine stopped talking and looked up at Kurt's cheery face.

"There is nowhere else I'd rather be than right here with you," Kurt said and then blushed deeply as if surprised by his own words.

"I'm glad," Blaine answered, feeling a little nervous still and hoping they were both doing the right thing by being here. "I would hate to think I got you involved in something you don't want to be involved in."

Kurt carefully placed his mug down and turned to fully face him. "Blaine," he said, leaning forward so close Blaine could see freckles across the bridge of his nose by the light of the fire. "I've been involved with magic since before I can remember and involved with you and this house since I was
thirteen. When I say there's nowhere else I'd want to be, what I mean is that I've been waiting for this chance, to be here in this house with you, for a long time."

"Oh." Blaine's breathing hitched as he looked down at Kurt's lips, rosy and parted; he glanced back up only to find Kurt looking at his own mouth. Blaine swallowed as his eyes fluttered closed and he leaned in towards Kurt, all thoughts and worries quiet and forgotten in his desire to press his lips softly against Kurt's.

He didn't meet Kurt's lips, though; instead, he heard a mumbled curse.

Blaine's eyes blinked open in confusion, finding that Kurt had leaned away.

"Sorry," Kurt whispered.

Oh god, what had he done? Just because Kurt was kind to him and interested in the magic of this house didn't mean they had gone back to where they'd been before Blaine had left him high and dry.

"No, I'm sorry." Blaine shook his head, moving quickly away from Kurt and almost shuffling on top of his plate of half-eaten food. "I… I don't know what I was thinking. I can't believe I - That was so stupid."

"No! No, it wasn't." Kurt shook his head looking troubled. "It's just that a lot is going on and you…"

"I was making assumptions," Blaine said, looking down at his hands in his lap, "I mean you're probably not even single and we haven't seen each other for years and you're here for the magic and I…" Blaine groaned, not knowing what else to say. Had he ever been this embarrassed? Probably not. This would be a good time for a mirror to suck him in and sweep him away.

"I am!" Kurt said eagerly.

Blaine glanced up, "What?"

"I am single," Kurt said, clearing his throat, "It's just that… Blaine, we haven't talked to each other in six years and now everything is happening at once and so fast and… and if we kiss." Kurt's face flushed, "I just think we need to focus on what we are doing here and not be caught up in something just because our emotions are high right now."

Blaine's breath caught in his chest. He wanted to kiss Kurt, not because his emotions were high right then, but because he'd wanted to kiss Kurt ever since he was a teenager, and getting to know Kurt in person was surpassing his wildest dreams.

But if Kurt didn't feel the same way, Blaine would back off. So he just nodded and settled down more comfortably on the blankets, picking up his grilled cheese sandwich, "Okay, yeah. That's smart." He took a bite, but had a hard time swallowing; his throat felt tight.

Kurt looked conflicted, staring down at his hot cocoa for a moment, brow furrowed, "I'm still glad I'm here with you," Kurt said eventually, looking at Blaine with a soft smile.

"Me too," Blaine replied, "Glad doesn't even cover it." He reached out and squeezed Kurt's hand, relieved when he didn't pull it away. Instead, Kurt scooted closer to Blaine, shoulder to shoulder, as they finished dinner side by side and watched the fire as it slowly blazed out.

Kurt lay in bed for a long time. He should have fallen asleep right away after the long drive from New York and trying that spell against the dark mirror and then finding all the magic in this old house; Kurt was exhausted. But instead of sweet sleep, all Kurt could do was berate himself for that
almost kiss. He smacked a hand against his head "What were you thinking Kurt!"

It had been too much too fast and Blaine… all of a sudden Blaine was so close. But they had been flirting off and on for three days, and they had admitted and talked about their crushes on each other as teenagers. And Blaine had told him he was gorgeous. Kurt shouldn't have been so surprised.

It could have been even worse he supposed; Blaine was sweet about being denied and still wanted to sit next to him afterwards and hold his hand. Kurt just needed to remember that they were both under a lot of stress right now, Blaine probably more so because this all had to be bringing up a lot of emotions about Aunt Helen.

Helen Callaway who'd been driven mad by dark magic. Kurt shuddered.

Yeah, he couldn't get involved with Blaine right now, as much as a part of him really wanted to. Blaine had disappeared on him once before, who was to say he wouldn't do it again once this was all over?

Kurt finally let himself curl up on his side and fall asleep, thoughts of Blaine's lovely eyes and rosy lips in his mind.

He slept right through the gush of wind that came down from the third floor bypassing his room and sweeping with purpose into Blaine's.

Blaine slept fitfully, dark images in his mind, a breeze circling his room and a faint voice calling his name.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

AN: I am too tired to even write a proper AN - But here sweet friends, have a long creepy chapter. I hope you like it.
And thank you Oleanna for being amazing and creative and a wonderful beta.
Enjoy.

"It's a fairytale so tragic, there's no prince to break the spell. I don't believe in magic, but for you I will, for you I will." – Bruce Springsteen

Blaine woke up still tired, again. He just didn't seem to sleep well at Callaway Place. The best night's sleep he'd had in a week was on the springy fold-out bed at Kurt's apartment in New York.

He stared up at the canopy over his bed and sighed. His hand moved up to his lips, his fingers pressing there lightly. He'd almost kissed Kurt last night. After years of longing and confusion and wishing after a boy he'd never met face to face, he'd let his heart race ahead of his brain and had probably ruined everything by moving too fast.

What was wrong with him? Why had he done that?

Blaine groaned and turned over to bury his face in his pillow. Kurt meant so much to him. He should have never let him go and now it might be too late to get back what they had lost.

Blaine rolled back over, fingers carding through his tangled curls. Today was another day. Maybe, if he hadn't completely failed with Kurt, maybe they could continue on like the failed attempt at a kiss hadn't happened? Maybe he'd have a chance to make it up to Kurt. A chance to bridge the six year gap in their friendship that Blaine had caused.

He sat up in bed and stretched his arms above him, yawning deeply before quickly hopping out of bed, eager to see Kurt. He wasn't going to let his reckless behavior the evening before ruin the time he had with Kurt, he'd show Kurt they could be friends again.

Blaine headed towards the wardrobe to grab some clothes for the day and then stopped – there was still glass spread on the floor. If he wasn't careful, he'd cut himself, his feet only protected by a pair of socks.

Blaine ran his hand down his face. Oh yeah, the mirror. The magic. The curse of this house. For one glorious moment he'd forgotten about it all, lost in thoughts of Kurt and his brilliant eyes and gorgeous smile and soft hands and infectious laugh.

Blaine sighed and skirted the sharp shards of glass. He would clean them up again, but he knew it'd only be a matter of time before the rug was covered once more. He really should change rooms; it was just that this was his room. The one Aunt Helen had made his own. Blaine opened the doors to his old wooden wardrobe and carefully selected an outfit; he'd noticed Kurt put a lot of thought into his clothing, and he wanted to do the same. Once he'd picked out something presentable, he headed
towards the shower.

He was yawning and watching his feet when he stopped in his tracks outside of the washroom, almost bumping into Kurt.

"Oh. Hi." Blaine couldn't help but grin as he looked up at Kurt, comfy pajamas and sleep mussed hair and rosy cheeks, Blaine's heart skipped a beat. "Good morning."

Kurt smiled back sincerely, he didn't seem upset by last night, "Good Morning Blaine."

Kurt was carrying clothes too and his toiletry bag. "Oh, were you?" Blaine nodded to the bathroom, "Of course you are, go ahead."

"No you can go first," Kurt said, his smile growing.

"No, that's fine I'll... go downstairs and start some coffee."

Kurt bit his lip and looked like he was suppressing a laugh. Why was Blaine feeling so nervous? They'd spent days together and it had been lovely and easy and like old times but better... besides the looming magic of the dark mirror. And Blaine was a grown man for crying out loud! Why was he acting like a flustered teenager?

"Blaine, the electricity?"

Blaine let out an awkward chuckle, "What? Oh... Right."

Kurt just shook his head as if he found Blaine's fumbling adorable and then leaned forward, lifting his hand to brush some curls back behind Blaine's ear. Blaine's heart thudded hard in his chest, but Kurt stopped midway and let his hand fall again.

"There has to be another bathroom in this big house?"

"Yes. Of course." Blaine led Kurt down the hall and showed him the other guest washroom before heading back down the hall with a self-conscious groan.

Was this how he was going to act around Kurt now? Fumbling and nervous and awkward? No. He could control himself. Focus on the problem of the third floor mirror and work on his friendship with Kurt because now that he had Kurt back in his life, he wasn't going to give him up again.

Blaine showered and readied for the day and made it downstairs before Kurt, the soft morning sun streaming through the kitchen windows and giving off enough light to start breakfast. The food in the refrigerator was still good, but they needed to get the electricity fixed soon or he would have to do all of his grocery shopping again. Had it really only been a few days since he went to town and got supplies? It felt like ages ago, so much had happened since then.

He'd only known Kurt a few days, but if felt like more. Blaine mixed some pancake batter together and thought about it; it felt like he'd known Kurt longer than a few days because of course he had, sure he met him face-to-face a few days ago, but he'd known him since he was twelve.

He'd been half in love with him since he was fourteen.

"Pancakes?"

Blaine turned to see Kurt standing in the doorway of the kitchen looking absolutely stunning, hair a perfect quaff swooped to make him seem even taller, long lean body clothed in a tight green and blue
patterned button up shirt rolled to the elbows and bringing out the gorgeous color of his eyes, and designer jeans that Blaine had to force himself not to imagine what Kurt's ass looked like in.

"Yes," Blaine cleared his throat, "Pancakes."

"You're spoiling me."

Blaine chuckled, "You haven't even tried them yet; they're Millie's old recipe, and if they turn out even half as good as hers, all other pancakes will pale in comparison."

They sat next to each other during breakfast, feet and hands casually brushing as they ate pancakes and shared happy smiles. It seemed like Kurt wasn't holding a grudge over last night, he still seemed happy to be here with Blaine; in fact, if anything, he seemed even more flirtatious – which was confusing, but also really nice. They needed to talk about what they were going to do next about the third floor mirror, but neither seemed eager to break the content little bubble they were in by bringing it up.

After breakfast, they were washing the dishes together in the old porcelain kitchen sink, bumping hips and teasing, when there was a knock at the front door. Apprehension immediately ran up Blaine's spine – a reminder that as much as they were trying to pretend otherwise, things weren't fine – before he remembered Andrew was coming by this morning.

"That's Andrew." Blaine said, drying his hands on a bright yellow tea towel and making his way to the foyer; he smiled as he glanced down to the glass doorknob, remembering that even though he couldn't hear, it had magic there, good magic.

"Andrew!" Blaine called as he opened the door and took in the older man. He looked much the same, a little more salt to his salt and pepper hair, a few more lines around the mouth and eyes, but still tall and strong looking, still sporting a thick mustache, his fisherman's cap tucked under an arm and carrying a big red tool box. The years had been good to him.

"Well, well." Andrew clicked his tongue, "Look at you, little Blaine Anderson all grown up."

Blaine smiled and stepped back to let him in.

"You were nothing but a little shrimp of a boy when I first met you."

"It's good to see you Andrew, I'm sorry it's been so long."

"Nah," Andrew said, lifting a hand as he walked in and messing Blaine's curls the way he always had when Blaine was younger, "I understand. How's your Aunt doing?"

Blaine's stomach dropped at the mention of Aunt Helen, but of course Andrew would ask about her.

"She's… the same. The home she is in is lovely really, and they take good care of her. Mom goes to visit her a lot, I do too – or did, when I was in California."

"Glad to know she's not on her own."

"Never. I'd never let that happen."

Andrew smiled at him, soft and warm, "You always were a good kid."

They both looked up when they heard a shuffle to find Kurt standing by the stairway smiling tentatively, as if he was afraid of interrupting.
"And who's this?" Andrew asked, nodding to Kurt.

"Oh Kurt! This is Kurt." Blaine walked Andrew over to him, "Kurt, this is Andrew."

"Hello." Kurt held out a hand to shake and Andrew met it with a strong grip. "It's nice to meet you. I've heard so much about you."

"Kurt is it? You two known each other for a while? I think I remember something about a Kurt."

"Yes, childhood friend," Blaine said, not able to wipe the silly grin off his face, feeling elated to introduce two people who meant so much to him.

"Pleased to meet you young man," Andrew said with a tip of his head. "Any friend that makes Blaine smile like that is someone I want to know."

Kurt laughed and Blaine felt his face heat up.

"So um… the electricity?" Blaine interrupted before Andrew embarrassed him anymore. "I have a list of things that I'd like to hire you to do, but that seems the most pressing. I tried flipping the breakers, but it didn't help."

"Sure thing. Let's start by looking at the fuse box and we'll go from there."

"Blaine," Kurt said, moving towards him and reaching out to place a hand on his arm. Blaine looked down at the hand and then back up to Kurt's face, "Is it okay if I look around a bit?"

"Of course."

Kurt smiled and let his hand drop before he turned to Andrew, "Talk to you later, I have questions about what Blaine was like here as a child."

"Oh god," Blaine groaned while Andrew winked.

He and Andrew made their way to the back of the house, a knowing smirk on Andrew's face, "So Kurt is a friend huh?"

"Yes."

"A boyfriend?"

"I... he..." Blaine cleared his throat and laughed nervously, "No. Not a boyfriend."

"Uh huh." Andrew smiled and Blaine looked wistfully in the direction he'd left Kurt.

Kurt watched Blaine go with a happy feeling warm in his chest. After years of pining after Blaine, and then missing him when he was gone, it still felt unbelievable that he was here with Blaine in this house where it had all started.

Then there was the almost kiss last night, which Kurt had aborted when their lips were just about to touch. Kurt couldn't stop thinking about it. He knew Blaine had some kind of feelings for him, which was an elating thought; the problem was that Kurt didn't really know how deep those feeling were or if he was ready to return them. Taking their newly reformed friendship and turning it into something deeper seemed like a huge risk right now. Still, Kurt wished that last night, for just a moment, he'd let his heart make that choice, not his head.
For now, he would try and focus on Callaway Place. Kurt was enthralled by the magic here, but he knew his main focus had to be destroying that mirror. If they could just take care of that, maybe he could focus on other things – things like how he really felt about Blaine – his emotions were a yo-yo right now.

With that goal in mind, Kurt had a plan. He knew that Blaine's aunt had studied magic, and more than likely, she hadn't told her young nephew everything she'd learned. Meaning that somewhere in this house, there could be helpful information that neither he nor Blaine had.

Kurt had kept his eyes peeled yesterday for any books on magic or anything that might be a clue to what Helen Callaway had been studying, but he hadn't found anything. There was one room on the ground floor that they hadn't entered though – Helen Callaway's bedroom. From what Blaine had told him about his aunt that was the one place he was most likely to find something useful.

Kurt crept quietly to the south corner of the house, something about this area making him feel as though it deserved reverence. He stood for a moment outside the door he knew led to Helen Callaway's room half thinking he should knock. He took a deep breath and then reached for the handle, pushing the door inwards to reveal the space behind it.

He had expected the neat and tidy bedroom of an older woman, maybe a flower-covered comforter over the bed, doilies on the end tables, perhaps an old mirror over an antique chest of drawers. Nothing prepared him for what he actually found.

There was a small twin sized bed pushed against the wall in one corner, and a closet with closed wooden doors and then…the rest of the large room was filled with mirrors, mirrors of all shapes and sizes, though most of them were big full length mirrors like the one upstairs, leaning against the walls and reflecting each other in an endless gallery of mirror in mirror in mirror.

Kurt sucked in a breath of surprise as he took a step in. His trained eyes could tell that most of the mirrors were old, spanning anywhere from early to late nineteenth century, but there were a few newer ones too, probably made in the last decade. Kurt walked to the middle of the room and then turned in a slow circle, viewing his reflection from all angles in the overabundance of mirrors on the walls.

What in the world had Helen Callaway been doing?

Kurt walked up to one of the mirrors that looked the oldest and tapped a finger on the glass. He waited a moment and the glass tapped back. Then the mirror next to it tapped the same rhythm and then a mirror behind Kurt and then one across from that. It was a ripple effect: one mirror caught the pattern and then another, until all the mirrors in the room, even the new ones, were echoing the same rhythm over and over again with increasing sound and urgency. It sent chills down Kurt's back.

"Stop!" Kurt shouted, and all of the mirrors immediately grew silent. "Oh god." That wasn't actually any more comforting. That was the second time mirrors had stopped on his command. It had happened back in the basement of Britton's as well.

Kurt's throat felt tight, and his first instinct was to leave the room as quickly as possible; instead, he turned towards the closet. He squared his shoulders and walked to it, opening the doors, hoping it wasn't full of more mirrors. It wasn't. Instead, he found a bunch of empty hangers on a bar to one side, an empty shoe rack on the floor, and a dresser pushed against the wall with books lining the top that were kept standing by two brass bookends on either side.

The books looked old and Kurt knew he'd found what he'd come for.
He reached forward and pulled out the first book his eyes landed on, a small green cloth-bound volume; he held it in his hand and found it didn't have a title on it, the cover completely blank. He opened it carefully and was surprised to find it wasn't a printed book at all. Flowing loopy handwritten script filled page after page, all clearly written with a dip pen – old text – probably as old as the book itself. However, there were notes written in a small neat print in the margins. This writing was done by a ballpoint pen and was much newer. Kurt moved over to the small twin bed and sat on the edge as he flipped through the book, excitement growing like buzzing bees in his stomach.

It was a journal, and not just any journal, it was the private diary of Saffron Callaway. Kurt settled on the bed, back against the wall, as he skimmed the old yellowed pages. It was a treasure trove of information, lists of magical books, some of which he hoped he'd find in the closet, magical spells he'd never seen or heard of, charms and rhymes and all kinds of drawings and explanations. To the sides, it seemed Helen had made notes, charms she'd tried, spells that worked, others she couldn't get the hang of. While Saffron's descriptions were colorful and excited, Helen's grew more and more frustrated, unable to duplicate Saffron's magic.

There were a lot of mentions about mirrors, and Kurt realized that he needed to slow down, curb his eagerness, and start from the beginning. He wanted to read the whole thing back to back, but it was thick and the writing small; instead, he started at the first page and skimmed for any mentions of mirrors or glass and worked from there.

It seemed like somewhere along Saffron's study of magic, she had heard an old tale that you could communicate with the dead through looking glasses, a thought that made Kurt's blood run cold. She had become determined to conquer this feat. As Kurt moved along in the book, the story seemed to change. No, it wasn't actually spirits that you could speak to through mirrors; Saffron had found people were wrong about that, though mirrors were tools for communication.

Kurt knew that well enough.

Then, Kurt came across a passage that should have surprised him, but somehow didn't.

"Many mages and students of magic in this modern society believe the conventional looking glass to be an entranceway to the land of the dead," Saffron wrote, and Kurt had heard that term before, from Blaine no less, "This assertion is false. Further study reveals a looking glass boasts powerful magic, not because it unites us with those we have lost, but for the glass's capacity to connect us with a world of the mysterious. A land set apart from our own. An extraordinary fairy realm filled with magic and power beyond comprehension."

Kurt's throat felt dry. A fairy realm? That sounded ridiculous… but so much of the magic here was different than anything Kurt had run into before. Could it be true? Could there really be a whole other world only separated by the enchantment of a mirror?

Kurt swallowed deeply; if that were the case, where had Helen been those three days she went missing? And Blaine may have been lucky the mirror only pulled him to New York and not somewhere else!

That thought made Kurt's stomach ache.

And god, when he and Blaine tried to destroy the mirror and it seemed like something was coming at them from the other side what was it?

"Oh god." Kurt breathed, his hands trembling slightly. "Oh god." Kurt had already come to fear the mirror; after trying to destroy it twice and being overpowered both times, he'd have to be foolish not to fear it. But if Saffron's journal was correct, Kurt should have been much more afraid. Dark magic.
Blessed magical items. Witches. Even curses weren't new concepts to Kurt. But other worlds?

Kurt continued to flip through the journal needing more information; both Saffron and Helen seemed obsessed with accessing this "fairy realm." Helen, from her sweet eager notes, wanted to learn all she could for the joy of learning; Saffron was a different story. She seemed to crave the power she thought could be found behind the glass. Her hunger for power was rather unnerving.

In the final part of Saffron's journal, all she wrote about were mirrors. She had made all the mirrors at Callaway Place come alive with magic. That explained some things about this house.

However, there was one mirror Saffron's family had brought over from Europe, one mirror Saffron had invested with the most power, one mirror she expected to use to reach the other side and enter the fairy world. One mirror with magic so strong even Saffron sounded wary of it as she wrote.

Kurt had no doubt which mirror that was.

The journal ended abruptly with blank pages left. Kurt glanced up to the mirrors in the room. The newer ones had tapped earlier, as well as the older ones, so he had to assume that Helen had learned something about transferring magic to glass. The antique mirrors, though – he wondered if Helen had been looking for the mirror that Saffron was describing, not knowing it was upstairs on the third floor, maybe not finding it until she disappeared for those three days… Kurt shivered.

He hadn't realized how much time had passed until he was pulled away from the journal with a start.

"What in the world."

Kurt glanced up to see Blaine and Andrew standing near the door, Blaine's face pale and his eyes round, Andrew with his hands in his pockets as he shuffled his feet.

"You hadn't seen this yet?" Andrew asked as Blaine took a tentative step in, his jaw slack. "Ms. Helen started moving her furniture out about a year before her… Breakdown. And uh, she gathered mirrors from all over the house and had them brought here."

"Why?" Blaine breathed, looking over the mirrors in the room much the way Kurt had when he entered.

"I've never really talked about it, but come on kid; we both know there's something fishy about the mirrors here. It's always been an open secret between Millie and me. Something we knew, but didn't mention."

Kurt watched Blaine's Adam's apple bob as he gulped and nodded, "Aunt Helen was obsessed."

Andrew shifted his weight and scratched his head, looking nervous, "That she was. I can't help but think I should have tried to stop her… but your aunt had an iron will unlike anyone I'd ever met. I don't know what she was doing right there at the end, but it seems to have gotten to her."

Kurt felt helpless seeing the look of sorrow and despair on Blaine's face. He suddenly realized that he wanted to hug him tightly and tell him everything would be alright. But everything wasn't alright. Blaine's beloved aunt had dabbled in magic too strong for her and lost her mind over it. And they were still stuck with the cursed magic that had driven her to it.

"I think I might know what she was trying to do," Kurt said gently, standing from the bed, and feeling like he was interrupting a moment of grief between Blaine and Andrew, but he wasn't able to keep what he knew to himself.
Andrew quickly lifted a hand and shook his head, "I don't want to know. I don't want to hear. Dear sweet Ms. Helen is gone from this place and I don't want to be involved with any of it."

"Okay," Kurt nodded.

Blaine cleared his throat, like he needed to get control of his emotions before he spoke, "Thank you for your help, Andrew." He turned to Kurt, "We have electricity again; some fuses needed to be replaced."

"Good."

"I can come by again next week," Andrew spoke up, "Bring some things you need for us to start the rest of the repairs, and you call that number I gave you; Hector will do a great job repainting the place."

"Thank you," Blaine repeated, still looking stunned.

Andrew nodded and put his cap on, tipping it to them, "I'll talk to you soon then. I can see myself out." He turned and left the room without another glance, leaving Kurt with a very upset looking Blaine.

"I'm so sorry." Kurt hurried to say, "I shouldn't have come in here without asking, I just thought that… I was just looking for something that could help us and-"

"Kurt. It's okay." Blaine looked away from the mirrors with effort to meet Kurt's gaze, "You didn't do anything wrong."

"It feels like I did."

Blaine shook his head, "I asked for your help." He walked up to Kurt and tried to smile, but it was weak, "We need answers, and if you've found some, that's a good thing."

Kurt frequently wanted to reach out for Blaine but had been (mostly) stopping himself, trying so hard not to let his heart get as involved as it had once been – but in this moment, he didn't stop himself. He stood close to Blaine and reached out to cup the back of Blaine's neck, thumb brushing over the short hair at his nape. "I don't like seeing you look so miserable."

Blaine leaned forward, eyes closed, exhausted but seemingly comforted by Kurt's touch. "How can I be miserable when you're here?"

Kurt's emotions bubbled over inside of him and he quickly wrapped his arms around Blaine's shoulders, pressing in for a tight hug. Blaine trembled slightly against him and looped his arms around Kurt's back. Kurt would do anything he could to help this man, his friend who he'd cared about for so long.

"So, um." Blaine smiled bashfully as they pulled apart, "I want to hear what you've found, but maybe we could go somewhere else? This room is…"

"Yeah, I know," Kurt said, looking around and feeling the weight of the room. He grabbed Blaine's hand and led him out. They ended up sitting at the kitchen table because the kitchen was bright and sunny and felt lighter than many of the old dusty rooms in the house.

Blaine was finally able to make them both some coffee, and they sat at the table going over what Kurt had found in Saffron's journal.
"It's incredible, Blaine; your ancestor knew some potent magic. She must have been remarkable."

"That's the word Aunt Helen used to describe her."

Kurt nodded, "I think that all the magic just made Saffron crave more; I mean, she seemed to be fixated on gaining more and more power."

"Do you think that happened to my aunt too?" Blaine asked, face downcast as he worried his lip.

"No." Kurt said quickly, "Whatever happened to Helen, it doesn't seem like it was because she was unfeeling or power hungry. Helen is good and kind and well loved."

"Helen isn't even really Helen anymore and she was intense about magic."

Kurt's chest ached at Blaine's words, "Blaine, her notes have a different tone to them than Saffron's words do. No matter what happened to her, your aunt was and is a good woman." Kurt reached out and placed his hand over Blaine's, waiting until he looked up to meet his eyes. "I wish I had been able to help Helen, I… I hate what happened to her, but at least we might be able to end this. If Saffron found a way to put magic in the mirrors, there has to be a way to remove it."

"Meaning you want to study the same things my aunt did," Blaine stated, his voice hollow.

Kurt sighed. He could understand why Blane was worried; he was nervous himself, and the last thing he wanted to do was keep that expression on Blaine's face. "Yes and no. Study the same material but for opposite reasons."

"I can't let anything happen to you, Kurt. I won't," Blaine said, his voice sounding stronger.

"Okay." Kurt nodded, his heart beating fast at the earnestness of Blaine's words, "Okay, we won't do anything until we know more. We can read over the books together, but we won't do any magic until we have something concrete, no more flying blind."

Blaine drew in a long breath, "That sounds good." He smiled gently, his honeyed eyes looking less lost as he finished the last of his coffee, "Thank you for being here with me. I actually feel like I can face all of this with you."

Kurt smiled and glanced down at his mug, his heart skipping with the sweetness of Blaine's words. After lunch, they spent the afternoon reading Helen's books. They moved to the parlor; Blaine seemed to like it there and Kurt wanted to make him happy. They sat on the couch, legs intertwined on the cushions, as they read and skimmed and handed books back and forth to each other. It was starting to feel more and more natural to just be with Blaine. Like those six years apart had been no time at all.

Aunt Helen's little library on magic was incredible; there was more magic in these old books of Saffron's than Kurt had ever dreamed of. Big powerful magic. Magic to create and to mend. Magic to destroy and ruin. It was fascinating and Kurt's pulse was racing just reading a small part of the magic Saffron had once controlled. He kept himself in check though; all that mattered now was learning more about the enchantment over the mirrors at Callaway Place and how to destroy the one on the third floor.

What Kurt wouldn't give to have his own magic book here, but it was still drying out with Jane back in the workroom at Britton's. Jane said she would ship it to him and it could be here any day, but still, he didn't have it in his hands right then and he wasn't used to not having it.
"My mirror." Kurt's head snapped up at the thought.

"What about your mirror?" Blaine asked, "Do you think its magic is awake again now that it's here?"

Kurt lowered the book he'd been reading and stared at Blaine, his stomach twisting, "Oh my god my mirror."

"What's wrong?"

"Blaine," Kurt couldn't believe he hadn't thought about this, "I don't have it. I didn't even bring it!"

"What? Why not?"

"I don't even know… Oh god! Blaine! It's still at Britton's! I just left it there. He sat up straight, the book in his hands forgotten, "I had my mirror and my book with me but then the room flooded and you came out of a mirror and everything has happened so fast!" Kurt's words were flowing out quick and worried; how could he have forgotten something so valuable to him?

"Hey, Kurt, it's okay."

"How is it okay?"

"Because I've seen the security at Britton's; if that is where your mirror is, then it is safe. Call Jane. I bet she can find it for you."

"Right. Right." Kurt nodded, his worry slowly subsiding. "I still can't believe I just left it there."

"It will be alright." Blaine smiled reassuringly at him.

Kurt got up to have a hurried conversation with Jane over the phone.

"Your witchy book is almost as good as new," Jane said from the other end of the phone.

"Witchy book?" Kurt smiled, "Is that the historical term?"

"Of course. I'd go with that or 'book that would make Puritans burn you alive', but that's a little long."

Kurt laughed at that and let Jane catch him up with news from Britton's, "Nathan says you didn't give him a concrete time on when you'd be back?"

"Yeah," Kurt answered and glanced back to the parlor where he'd left Blaine reading, "I'm working on something."

"Something to do with that mirror?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"I do not." Jane laughed, "Nathan wants you back though. He's like a puppy waiting for its owner to come home. Did the two of you get back together?"


"Because of Blaine?"

Kurt's cheeks flushed. "Not because of Blaine. Because I should have never been with him at all."
"Right."

"Listen, since we're on the subject of mirrors," Kurt hurried on. He hadn't thought of Nathan once since he left New York. He already knew they were over for good, but the past few days with Blaine had cemented that. How could he settle for a Nathan Britton when there was a Blaine Anderson in the world? Not that he was with Blaine either. "I left an old silver handheld mirror in that back storeroom. When you send my book will you send that too?"

"Is it creepy? Do you have a collection of creepy mirrors?"

Kurt glanced to the mirror on the wall closest to him, tapping it and listening to it tap back. "I don't. But, it isn't creepy. Promise."

"Of course I'll send it. I think the book is ready so I could overnight them to you."

"Thanks." Kurt sighed in relief.

They finished up their conversation with warm goodbyes and Kurt walked back into the parlor. He stood by the door for a moment silently watching Blaine. His back leaning on the arm of the couch, legs out on the cushions and Saffron's journal in his hands. His eyes were intent and his lips pursed in concentration, a stray dark curl curved over his forehead, and Kurt had the sudden urge to rush forward and plant a kiss on his sweet red lips.

Crap.

Kurt closed his eyes and breathed; there was too much going on for him to really have time to understand what he was feeling towards Blaine. There was attraction there, yes, and fondness from when they were younger… But was it more than that? And if it was, what was Kurt supposed to do about it anyway?

He opened his eyes and looked back at Blaine. They were in Maine together now, but soon Kurt would be back in New York and Blaine in California, and he wasn't going to have his heart broken for a second time by the same man.

Blaine broke through Kurt's thoughts when he looked up at him with a breathtaking smile… and maybe one little kiss wouldn't hurt anything…

"I think we need a break," Blaine sighed, closing his book, "or at least I do." He looked at Kurt with eyes sparkling with expectancy, "Want to see Saffron?"

"What?" Kurt breathed, his heartrate quickening and all thoughts of kissing fleeing his mind.

"Her portrait is upstairs," Blaine said with a smirk, his spirits seemed to be somewhat lifted. Kurt was glad of that.

Kurt walked to the couch, "Yes, I really do." Blaine laughed and Kurt reached for his hand, pulling him up off the sofa, "Show me."

Blaine led him upstairs and down the hall in the opposite direction of their rooms, towards the third floor.

"How did I miss it before?" Kurt asked, recognizing where they were.

"Well, we were lugging a heavy mirror and then coming back downstairs after being attacked by that same mirror."
"Ah yes, I now recall," Kurt said, shooting Blaine a wink.

Blaine stopped outside of the intricately carved wooden door leading to the third floor, "But really, it is because I took the portrait down in a fit of anger at a woman who has been dead for over a hundred years."

"That sounds completely reasonable," Kurt said with a mock-serious expression, as Blaine leaned over  – *don't stare at his ass don't stare at his ass* – and picked up a huge painting that was leaning against the wall. He hefted it up, turned it around, and hung it, taking a step back to look at it once it was secure.

"There she is, Saffron Callaway," Blaine said, motioning to the portrait.

Kurt took a step closer in awe. She was beautiful and the painting masterful; he felt as if he was in the room with her. "She looks like you," Kurt breathed.

"She doesn't," Blaine said, and Kurt glanced back to see his confused expression, "Saffron is tall and trim and blonde."

"Okay sure, but..." Kurt turned back to the painting; it was her eyes that drew you in, her eyes that were hard to look away from, "You two have the exact same eyes, I've never seen anyone with that shade of gold irises before. You even have matching eyelashes."

"You've spent a lot of time looking at my eyelashes have you?" Blaine said from behind him.

Kurt didn't turn around, "Yes I have. Probably the same amount of time you've spent looking at my lips."

"I... I don't... oh god."

Kurt laughed and turned, the blush on Blaine's face confirmed he was right. "You're welcome to look."

Kurt took a step closer, their bodies only an inch or so apart, and a warm shiver went down his back as Blaine smiled at him, his lips so so close... Here they were again, a moment away from kissing. Kurt could just take a step backwards to break the moment. He should do that. He really didn't want to do that.

Enough of making the smart decision; he was going to indulge himself just this once...

"I know I backed away yesterday," Kurt whispered, "I don't mean to yank you around, but..." Kurt glanced down to Blaine's lips, "Can I kiss you, Blaine?" Kurt's heart was pounding in his ears; all Blaine had to do was lean forward.

Blaine swallowed deeply and nodded, his breathing speeding up, but he didn't budge.

Kurt took the cue; after yesterday, it was Kurt who would have to close the distance between them, something he was happy to do, tilting his head slightly as his eyes started to close.

"Wait." Blaine whispered, "*Not in front of Saffron.*"

"What?" Kurt's heart was thudding against his chest, lips tingling to press against Blaine's – and he probably had this coming after shutting Blaine down the evening before. Blaine's eyes were open and a smile was on his lips, "You're kidding me, right?" Kurt asked.
"Only half kidding," Blaine said with a smile, taking a step back and giving the portrait a furtive glance.

It wasn't like last night, when Kurt ducked away from a kiss; Blaine was teasing Kurt now. Kurt sighed in frustration, but at least it seemed like Blaine's mood was still improving.

"I could actually stand to get out of the house for a while," Blaine continued, "I'm not good cooped up and there is a beach right outside."

"I would love that," Kurt said with a smile, "Let me grab a coat."

They walked hand in hand over sand dunes behind the house, the sound and smell of the ocean in the air. Blaine's smile grew the closer they got to the water, and as they sat down next to each other on the sand, Blaine had the most content look Kurt had seen on his face.

"You love the ocean," Kurt stated, seeing it written all over Blaine in the way his breathing evened out and the worry lines around his eyes smoothed.

Blaine closed his eyes and hummed, the wind coming cool off the water and ruffling his curls, "I really really do."

Kurt sighed happily, deciding that, for just a little while, he could let his walls down and just enjoy being with Blaine. If he kept reminding himself this was just a short fling, then he could keep his heart guarded. He leaned his head on Blaine's shoulder, hoping he wasn't taking this too far, but Blaine just wrapped an arm around his back. The ocean was beautiful, green and blue, washing foam to shore. He could imagine being a kid here in the summer and how lovely that must have been. Blaine tightened his hold, slightly tugging Kurt in closer to him.

"Are you a cuddler or are you just cold?" Kurt said, turning his head to look at Blaine.

"Yes," Blaine answered.

Kurt laughed and Blaine turned to face him, "I'm a California boy, you know, I'm used to the sun."

"Mmm, and I'm a New Yorker, used to the cold," Kurt said, studying Blaine's expression; his stomach dropping a little, what would living on opposite sides of the country mean for them once this was over? Not that it mattered, Kurt reminded himself, because he was not falling for Blaine again... just enjoying his company.

"I love New York," Blaine said, looking out to the ocean, "I'd like to spend more time there."

Kurt's heart leaped, and he internally groaned at his reaction and his own erratic feelings before leaning his head back down on Blaine's shoulder. They stayed like that for a while looking out at the beautiful view, sharing soft conversation and each other's warmth. The sun started to slowly dip in the sky, but Kurt was happy to stay on the beach with Blaine for as long as he wanted to be here.

Eventually, Blaine turned towards him, Kurt lifting his head to meet Blaine's gaze, "About that kiss..."

"Which one did you want to talk about? The one I stopped last night or the one you stopped this afternoon?" Kurt teased.

"I wasn't thinking about talking at all."

"Oh?" Kurt breathed, his heart fluttering and his eyes subconsciously drifting down to Blaine's lips.
"Kurt… I've wanted this for so long."

Kurt looked back up at Blaine's beautiful eyes, and as a warm smile spread over his face, his heart was hammering against his chest. His breath caught in his throat as Blaine leaned forward, their lips so close Kurt could feel Blaine's breath against them. Just kiss him, Kurt. Stop over-thinking everything.

"Me too," Kurt confessed, and Blaine closed the gap between them, softly bringing their lips together.

Kurt's skin tingled; Blaine's lips were perfect against his own, gentle and inviting. The kiss was only the tender press of lips together at first until Blaine let out a suppressed moan and then surged forward, his hand on the back of Kurt's neck as they both parted their lips slightly and slid them together. Blaine tasted like coffee and sea salt and Kurt's body shivered when he felt Blaine's hand on his lower back tugging him in closer.

Their lips moved seamlessly together, Kurt drawing in a breath through his nose to keep Blaine against him longer as his hand moved up from Blaine's back to tangle in his curls.

Kurt had kissed and had been kissed plenty of times before, but not like this; he felt this all the way down to his toes and deep in his chest. He wanted this so much; he had wanted this for so long. This was Blaine, he was kissing Blaine! It was everything he'd ever wanted and so much more.

Eventually, they parted with breathy sighs, faces still close. Kurt was too stunned for a moment to do or say anything; he hadn't counted on one kiss affecting him so deeply. It was meant to be simple and satisfying. He hadn't expected the rush of emotions that were now rolling through him.

Blaine let out a quiet, happy, laugh and tipped his forehead against Kurt's. "Wow," Blaine exhaled, hand still cupping the back of Kurt's neck, thumb rubbing up and down.

Kurt pulled back enough for them to look at each other, their hands still on each other's bodies. "Yeah… wow." Kurt agreed, breath hitched, "I've been thinking about doing that for twelve years."

"You've wanted to do that since you were thirteen?"

Kurt chuckled nervously, "That might have been a little more involved than what I imagined at thirteen, but basically." Kurt's head was swimming from that kiss and his heart was nearly beating out of his chest.

"I'm sorry, Kurt," Blaine whispered, still so close they could easily kiss again.

"No! No. God no." Blaine hurried to assure him, "For not coming back each summer the way I had promised to, for not keeping up our friendship. We… we should have had more time together."

Kurt smiled and shook his head. It was a wound that still hurt, losing Blaine with no explanation, but maybe a wound that could be healed by more of that kind of kiss … "I guess we'll just have to make up for lost time," Kurt said coyly, glancing at Blaine's eyes with a small smirk.

With that, he leaned in and kissed Blaine again, pressing forward this time until Blaine fell backwards on the sand with a laugh. Blaine moved his hands to spread out on Kurt's back, kissing him deeply. And god, this was perfect. Maybe Kurt would regret it later, but right now, he just didn't care.
Blaine flipped them so that he was hovering over Kurt, lips moving against him, letting out small noises that set Kurt's skin on fire. He tasted delicious and Kurt couldn't get enough of him as he reached up to wrap his arms around Blaine.

Blaine moved his lips from Kurt's mouth, nuzzling down under the collar of his jacket and pressed heated kisses to his neck, and Kurt groaned embarrassingly; that had always been a tender spot for him. Blaine seemed to like his response and he stayed there for a while, making Kurt's body tremble and his breath quicken.

Kurt started skimming his hands under Blaine's coat; it took some doing, but eventually he was able to slide his hands under his shirt, feeling the warm skin of Blaine's back against his palms and wide spread fingers.

"Oh god," Blaine moaned, lips hot on his skin, and Kurt arched his head back, asking for more, "Is this okay, is it too much?" Blaine asked suddenly, lifting his head and looking down at Kurt with those golden eyes of his, darker in the fading light of the sun.

"Blaine," Kurt couldn't keep the almost whimper out of his voice; he just wanted Blaine so much and he didn't want to stop and think about what they were doing. "No, it isn't too much, and if you agree, I would really like to be kissing you again right now."

Blaine smiled so big his eyes squinted, then he leaned down to kiss Kurt's mouth long and slow, lips gliding together, tongues tasting; Kurt's whole body felt like it was vibrating. He didn't know how long they spent like that, slowly kissing even as the sky grew darker.

Kurt was pleasantly buzzed, his lips tingling and his mind fuzzy, Blaine's warm body pressed against him, tasting his lips and then… Blaine's mouth was gone. Kurt whined and opened his eyes to see what was wrong and found Blaine looking up with his brows furrowed and a frown on his lips.

"Blaine?"

"What is that?" Blaine asked, looking back towards the house. He sat up on his knees and Kurt was suddenly very cold without him. He sat up as well and followed Blaine's concerned gaze. At first he didn't see anything, but then… You couldn't see the house well from here, not sitting on the ground with the sand dunes in the way, but just over them, was a dim yellow light coming from the direction of Callaway Place.

"What in the-" Kurt murmured, and then Blaine was on his feet.

"Oh my god."

"Blaine, what's wrong?"

But before Kurt could get an answer, Blaine was off, running and stumbling over the sand. Kurt moved as fast as he could, springing to his feet and chasing after him. That's when he saw what Blaine saw. The light was burning brighter than he'd imagined and it was most definitely coming from Callaway Place.

"Blaine!" Kurt called out in fear; if the house was on fire, running straight for it wasn't going to help anything. He pushed himself to catch up with Blaine; it shouldn't be hard, his legs were longer, but Blaine was fast.

He saw Blaine come to a startling halt outside the house, his body a dark silhouette against the glowing lights of the windows. Kurt came up beside him, panting hard and blood pumping. And then his breath hitched for a completely different reason. "That's not fire," Kurt whispered.
Blaine didn’t answer him as they both stood at the back of the house, looking in the windows as they saw small golden lights drifting through the air inside. Hundreds of them, no bigger than a penny each but so many that they were bright enough to look like flickering fire from the beach.

“What are they?” Blaine finally spoke, his voice hoarse.

Kurt had a cold knot in his stomach. “I have no idea.”

Blaine reached for Kurt’s hand, which he was grateful for; he was feeling a little overwhelmed. The only thing he could think of was the golden glow of the mirrors when they’d tested them; it was the same kind of golden light. “It’s magic.” Kurt answered – even though that was obvious – and turned to look at Blaine. Somehow it didn’t feel like the warm golden magic of the mirrors; these little lights were bright but they felt off somehow.

Blaine swallowed deeply, “Do we go in?”

Kurt’s heart leaped to his throat; he was so used to seeing magic as a good thing that his immediate response should have been yes… but things at Callaway Place were complicated.

“I say we go in,” Blaine suggested.

Kurt wasn’t sure, but his curiosity was winning over his caution, “I’m with you.”

They slowly opened the back door and Kurt half expected the little floating lights to drift outside, but they didn’t.

They walked hand in hand into the kitchen and Kurt gasped as he squeezed Blaine’s fingers. It was gorgeous; all around them was shimmering gold, swooping slowly over the room and glistening off anything reflective.

“It’s beautiful,” Kurt whispered, and Blaine turned to look at him. Kurt smiled as a few lights landed on Blaine’s curls, making them sparkle. Blaine’s golden eyes were practically on fire in this light.

“Is it good or bad? Light or dark magic?” Blaine asked.

“I… I don’t know. I really can’t tell.”

Blaine nodded.

They moved through the kitchen to the hallway, also filled with lights, and then to the wide open foyer. It was a sight to behold, such a large area filled with tiny floating stars all the way up to the high two-story ceiling. They both stood in the middle of the room, staring up and spinning around to take it all in. Kurt heard Blaine laugh softly behind him and turned towards him.

“It is beautiful,” Blaine giggled.

Kurt giggled too, feeling weightless and happy. Blaine echoed his laugh, which only made Kurt laugh harder, his arm holding his stomach. Blaine sucked in a deep breath and let out another long string of frenzied laughter; he leaned over, almost heaving with it, laughing so deeply his breath was stuttered.

Kurt followed suit, laughter bubbling over inside of him and pouring out in hysterical bursts. In the back of Kurt’s mind, he knew something was wrong; this feeling of ecstasy wasn’t real – but the more persistent part of his mind could only crumple down on the ground, laughing so hard tears were streaming down his cheeks.
Blaine fell to the ground near him, snickering like a mad man; he reached out towards Kurt but wasn't able to grasp him. Kurt wanted to stop laughing but he couldn't; he felt drunk and a little ridiculous. The lights dancing in the air started to spin around them faster and faster, making Kurt dizzy; they were swarming together now, like a hive, then they grouped into a column and rushed up the stairs, leaving the foyer empty and sad.

"We should follow them!" Blaine said excitedly.

No we shouldn't, was the first thought in Kurt's mind, but Blaine was already on his feet and rushing towards the stairs.

"Come on!"

Kurt sprang to his feet, catching up with Blaine and grabbing his hand; they rushed up the foyer stairs together to find the lights swirling around the main hallway on the second floor. They looked at each other briefly, both smiling like fools, and then raced towards the light, which hurried, churning and swarming, ahead of them. The lights whooshed through the closed door to the third floor, and Kurt let out another loud laugh as he noticed the carved stag on the door was moving, its head turning to look at them. Blaine didn't seem to notice as he quickly pulled the door open, running upstairs to follow the lights. He didn't even seem to realize where he was going; Kurt didn't know what to do but follow him.

They found themselves in the large open room of the third floor, the mesmerizing lights circling slowly again, enchanting and heartbreaking lovely.

"We… we shouldn't be… be here." Kurt was barely able to get the words out between renewed laughter.

"I know!" Blaine laughed back, but neither of them made a move to leave.

The lights clumped together again, zooming around the room all at once, and then with a sound like chiming crystal, dove into the mirror. Blaine ran towards the mirror; the lights were no longer in the room but shining through the reflection of the glass on the other side.

Kurt swallowed deeply. It was depressing and cold without the little happy lights and he just wanted to be where they were; he should follow them through the mirror – but something stopped him – he knew this was a trick.

Blaine walked to the mirror. Kurt felt like he was stuck, unable to move fast enough to stop him. But then Blaine reached out towards the glass, and Kurt was suddenly filled with panic – he leapt forward, grabbing Blaine's shoulders as he spun him around away from the mirror. "No! Don't!"

Blaine's eyes were wide and glassy, his lips tipped up in a dull smile. "Kurt, let's follow them," he said, and his voice was strange.

"No." Kurt blinked, trying to make his fuzzy brain think clearly, "We… we should leave."

"Right. Yes. Okay." Blaine nodded and turned to give the mirror one last look – that was a mistake. He giggled again and moved towards the mirror. The little golden lights were circling behind the glass and Blaine seemed entranced by them. Kurt watched as Blaine lifted his hand and pressed his fingers against the glass, Kurt's mind too sluggish to stop him. To Kurt's shock and horror, the glass dimpled where Blaine touched it, and his fingers looked like they were about to sink in.

That did it; it was enough for Kurt to at least partially come out of whatever trance he was in, "God damn it Blaine!"
Kurt grabbed Blaine's wrist, yanking it away from the mirror. Blaine looked at him with a blank expression, and Kurt lifted his hands to Blaine's shoulders and quickly and decisively pressed their lips together.

Kurt's mind cleared, the fuzziness gone, the laugh that had been tickling his throat vanishing, as all he thought of was Blaine's lips against him.

When he pulled back, Blaine was looking at him with more life in his eyes, "Kurt… We have to go."

"Now." Kurt agreed and grabbed Blaine's hand, tugging him away from the mirror as he marched them towards the stairs, determined to get away, even though part of him still wanted to stay.

Once they got back to the second floor, Blaine slammed the door behind them, fished a set of keys out of his pocket with shaky hands, and locked the door securely.

Kurt's breath was coming quickly and he felt like he'd just woke up from a bad dream. The carving on the door was motionless now, no magic giving it life.

"Blaine," Kurt said, gripping his hand hard.

Blaine turned to him, face serious, and reached up to place a hand on his shoulder, "Are you okay?"

Kurt blinked a few times and then nodded, "Am I okay? Are you okay?"

"I didn't mean to. I wanted to stop."

"I know, I felt the same way."

"But you did stop," Blaine said, his face a little pale and his hand in Kurt's trembling, "And you stopped me."

Kurt laughed, feeling relieved; it wasn't like the mad laughter from before, it was tired and resigned. He stepped closer, feeling solemn, as he leaned in and placed a light kiss to Blaine's temple, "I was only able to stop because when I saw you were in danger it was as if I suddenly woke up."

Blaine breathed deeply, seemingly trying to calm himself, but then looked past Kurt, behind his shoulder.

Kurt turned to find Saffron Callaway staring at him from the portrait, "Saffron," Kurt breathed, her golden eyes almost seeming to shimmer the same way the lights had. But then it faded and Kurt wasn't even sure if he'd seen it.

"Maybe she should come down again." Blaine reached out towards the portrait just as Kurt's eyes landed on the little table beside Saffron's chair.

"Wait!"

Blaine froze as Kurt pointed to the hand mirror in the painting sitting on the table. "That's my mirror. That's my mirror!"

"Your mirror?"

"My hand mirror!" Kurt said, turning towards him, "The one I used to talk to you in? The one I left at Britton's! That's my mirror."

Blaine stood next to him, staring at the picture, "Are you sure?"
"Blaine, do you know how much time I've spent looking at that mirror and talking to you?" Kurt arched an eyebrow. "Yes, I'm sure."

"So then… your mirror is actually a Callaway mirror?"

Kurt sucked in a breath, "I never understood it, why my mirror connected to the mirrors here; I should have known."

"But when I left Callaway Place my first summer, I took a mirror with me and it didn't work away from this house; why would yours?"

"I have no idea, but I know that's my mirror."

Blaine glanced quickly at the portrait and then to the door behind them, and then he tugged on Kurt's hand, "Come on." He led him to his bedroom, shutting the door and then leaning his forehead against it, hands against the wood as he caught his breath. Eventually, Blaine turned around to face Kurt, his eyes a little wild. "What if we did just burn it down?"

"What?" Kurt asked nervously, not liking the frantic look on Blaine's face.

"From the beach, I thought Callaway Place was on fire and… and a small part of me was relieved."

"Blaine no," Kurt walked up to him as Blaine leaned back on the door, obviously exhausted.

"Why not?" Blaine's voice sounded choked and his were eyes damp, "The magic here drove Helen mad and tonight it tried..." He broke off, not able to finish the thought.

Kurt couldn't stand the thought either; he didn't know what the mirror had wanted with Blaine but it couldn't be good. Kurt drew in a ragged breath; Blaine crying had always made him want to cry too. "Blaine, we can't just burn the place because when it was over, the house both you and Helen love would be destroyed and we'd be left with an indestructible mirror that was still full of magic."

Blaine wiped at his eyes, catching any tears before they fell and then laughed humorlessly. "I know you're right, but I don't like it."

Kurt nodded, he understood. They could just leave this place, close it up and lock it down and hope that no one ever came here. It didn't seem like the responsible thing to do in the long run though. Kurt felt accountable to keep people safe from magic; he always had.

Kurt reached out and brushed the pad of his thumb under Blaine's eye, sweeping away a tear. "What if we go grab some dinner downstairs and then call it an early night?" Kurt suggested.

"I'm not hungry."

Kurt moved so he was standing close to Blaine, so close it would only take a slight lean forward to bring their lips together. "Then how about we just call it an early night?" He pressed a kiss to the corner of Blaine's mouth. He'd worry about the consequences of being this open with Blaine later; right now they both needed the comfort.

He saw Blaine shiver and Kurt smiled, hoping it was a good shiver.

"Yeah, okay."

Kurt glanced briefly at the broken glass still on the floor by Blaine's fireplace. "We should both stay in my room," he said, turning back to Blaine.
Blaine smiled slightly, nothing like the mad grins on both of their faces earlier. It was sweet and sincere as he closed the gap between their lips, kissing him with a murmured, "Okay."
AN: Oh my gosh it has been so long since I updated! I am so very sorry. If you follow me on Tumblr you know I ran into some issues with this story, namely I lost three chapters I had written and couldn't find the motivation to re-write them. I finally kicked myself in to gear though, with the help of my wonderful Beta, and hope to get back to a regular posting schedule now.
Thank you all for your patience with me!

"All the ancient classic fairy tales have always been scary and dark." - Helena Bonham Carter

The air was heady and too sweet, like a room full of dying flowers. Blaine blinked his eyes a few times to make out where he was in the darkness. It was cold, and the ground was spongy and damp, but as he turned in a slow circle, he realized he was indoors – or at least surrounded by stone walls on every side. His heart rate quickened; something about this wasn't right, he wasn't meant to be here.

"Hello?" Blaine's voice was stuck in his throat. "Hello!" He tried again, but the words came out as little more than a hoarse whisper. Something really wasn't right. He needed to get away from this place, but as he continued to scan the area, he realized none of the walls had doors or windows. A shiver ran down Blaine's spine; there was no way out.

"Blaine." A soft voice called out behind him and Blaine spun around, his heart in his throat. Suddenly, he wasn't alone; a woman with graying dark curls and green horn-rimmed glasses smiled at him. "Oh sweet Blaine, you shouldn't be here."

"I… don't know how to leave."

She held out a hand towards him, "Let me help you."

"Blaine!" Another voice cut sharply through the heaviness of the room; Blaine gasped and turned again. Another woman, this one young and beautiful with golden hair and golden eyes that seemed to burn right through him in anger. "Come with me Blaine." There was a mirror behind her, not just any mirror, but the tall, looming silver glinted mirror from the third floor. "Come to me."

"No." Blaine answered, starting to break out in a cold sweat, even as he took a step towards her.

"Yes Blaine." The young woman's ruby lips curved up into what was probably meant to be a smile but the baleful expression just made Blaine's stomach tighten. "It is your destiny."

"Blaine don't," the woman behind Blaine called. Blaine turned to look at her, but Aunt Helen was gone.
"Blaine!" Saffron screeched to get his attention again and Blaine's eyes snapped open as he sat up quickly.

He was sitting in bed, breathing fast and shallow, fear thrumming though him. There was a hand on his back, rubbing softly in circles and a sweet voice in his ear.

"It's okay Blaine, it was a dream. You're okay."

Blaine swallowed and looked up to meet Kurt's gaze-his blue eyes filled with worry and his brow furrowed. Behind him, Blaine could make out the curtains in the room fluttering heavily as if carried on a breeze not coming from the window. But they died down quickly.

"Blaine are you okay?"

He looked back at Kurt who was sitting beside him in his pajamas, his hair sleep mussed and his lovely face illuminated by the light of the moon streaming in through the window. "Blaine?"

Blaine's tense muscles relaxed a bit as he remembered falling asleep next to Kurt in his bed. They hadn't done anything more than some light making out before bed, but still, it felt wonderful to sleep so close to Kurt.

"Blaine, talk to me," Kurt said tensely, his jaw tightening, "Are you alright?"

That's when he noticed that Kurt didn't just look concerned, he looked scared.

"Fine. I'm fine. It was just a dream."

Kurt let out a breath of relief, his hand moving from Blaine's back to brush some curls away from his face. Blaine shivered pleasantly at the touch. "It wasn't just a dream," Kurt said quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"I woke up because you were tossing and turning in your sleep, but then I saw that there was some kind of… of wind coming into the room from the hall, it kept circling like it was waiting for something and I…" Kurt swallowed deeply and scooted closer to Blaine, "I would have sworn I heard a woman's voice calling your name."

Blaine nodded slowly, "Saffron. In my dream… she wanted me to go to the mirror… and I wanted to."

Kurt's eyes widened and he quickly got up from the bed, Blaine leaning a little after him. "That's it. We're leaving."

"Wait… what?"

Kurt pulled his suitcase out from under the bed and then plopped it down on top of the dresser, opening drawers and tossing his things in. "We're leaving. We can't stay here. Not when the mirror is after you."

"It isn't."

"First with the lights, and now with that wind circling the room and someone calling your name. And your dream."

"I think I've had that dream before and just didn't remember, maybe that's why I'm always tired here."
Kurt took a moment from his packing to glance at Blaine, and Blaine could see his blue eyes that were pale in the moonlight, his hair, soft and hanging over his brow, and his beautiful lips that were pursed. And Blaine's pulse sped up looking at him. "It wants you Blaine, we should have left as soon as we realized that."

"Us."

"What?"

"It wants us," Blaine said, thinking it over as he slowly got out of bed. "The lights drew you in too, and your brooch back at the museum, which led you to the mirror."

"Okay… maybe," Kurt said, considering it, "Or maybe I'm just a bystander. Either way it isn't safe here." He started packing again. In the short time he'd known Kurt in person, Blaine had already learned that his clothes were very important to him, but now he was just piling them in his suitcase without a second thought.

"We can't just leave." Blaine glanced to the ceiling, picturing the mirror upstairs. He had wanted to leave before, he'd wanted to burn the whole place down, but now… now he wasn't sure. The mirror was fascinating and powerful and Blaine was so intrigued by it.

"Blaine. Blaine," Kurt called to him and then snapped his fingers in front of his face — that got Blaine's attention. "We are leaving."

"But the mirror."

"Will still be here in the morning. I'm not saying we give up, but I don't think staying here is a good idea. Let's find a hotel or something."

Something hot and irritated turned over in Blaine's chest and he almost wanted to shout at Kurt; he could leave but Blaine wasn't going anywhere. Blaine shook his head and took a step back, the strange anger in him dying down as quickly as it started, "Yeah, um… okay. I'll go pack."

"Thank you." Kurt sighed. "We'll bring the magic books and Saffron's diary. We aren't giving up, just playing it safe."

"Okay," Blaine repeated and smiled, reaching out to take Kurt's hand in his own and giving it a squeeze, "Thank you for looking out for us."

Kurt blushed a little and smiled tentatively, "Just go pack, Blaine."

"Got it!" Blaine said with a salute, and then he turned on his heels to go gather his things, but not before noticing the small shy grin that spread over Kurt's face.

Kurt didn't relax until they were in the truck and pulling up to the White Pinecone Inn, a beautiful, spacious Victorian home that had been converted into a small hotel. They wheeled their luggage in and Blaine greeted the woman at the front desk.

Once safely in their room, Kurt fell down backwards onto the bed as Blaine slung the duffle bag of books he was carrying down on the table in the corner.

"Look at that," Kurt said, pointing, and Blaine looked at a large mirror over the dresser. "A nice
boring, non-magical mirror. I bet if you tapped it nothing would tap back."

Blaine smiled and walked up to the mirror, tapping on the glass. It was of course silent in return.

"Amazing. Who knew I'd be so excited about an object that doesn't have magic." Kurt grinned at him from the bed and then patted the mattress next to him.

Blaine came over and sat down, Kurt still grinning up at him.

"You're in a good mood."

"I feel suddenly reenergized and free."

Blaine glanced at the clock on the bedside table, "It's 3:30am."

Kurt sat up enough to lean back on his elbows, smiling at Blaine. "Do you want to go back to sleep?" His eyes scanned over Blaine's body in a way that made goosebumps rise on Blaine's skin.

"I… um…" Blaine swallowed and glanced to Kurt's lips, "Did you have something else in mind?"

Kurt sat up all the way, leaning in so his face was just a breath's distance away from Blaine and he ran his hand down Blaine's chest stopping at his belt buckle, "I might."

Blaine chuckled nervously, "Um… really? This is sudden."

Kurt quickly withdrew his hand, "If you don't want to-"

"No! I wasn't saying that." Blaine scooted in closer to assure Kurt that it wasn't that he didn't like the idea of them doing something, "I just don't know where this is coming from."

Kurt quirked an eyebrow and Blaine wanted to kick himself for putting a stop to what Kurt was trying to start. Eventually, Kurt's face softened and he let out a sigh, "When I woke up and you were stuck in that dream and some creepy voice was calling your name… I… god Blaine, I was terrified. And I was mad at myself for letting it happen-"

"You didn't-" Blaine tried to interject but Kurt kept going, determined.

"When you touched the mirror and it seemed like it wanted to pull you in, I should have known right then that you were in danger. I guess, I don't know. We are both here and we're safe and I was just feeling… grateful." He shrugged and looked up at Blaine with deep blue eyes that were so earnest Blaine's heart stuttered a little.

Blaine swallowed deeply, glancing from Kurt's eyes to his lips, not knowing what to say. His mind was full of shining mirrors and gold fiery eyes and the fear and excitement he'd left Callaway Place in, but Kurt seemed to want to put that behind them for now.

Kurt tentatively placed a hand on Blaine's arm, and when Blaine smiled at him, he leaned in to brush his lips ever so softly against Blaine's lips. Blaine's eyes fluttered closed as Kurt's hand ran up his arm to cup his neck and move in for a true kiss, lips only slightly parted as they fit perfectly against Blaine's.

Blaine smiled into the kiss, his mind slowing down and Kurt coming into focus, the house and the magic and the mirror fleeing his thoughts as Kurt moved his soft lips against Blaine's.

"Blaine I…" Kurt whispered, warm and tender against his skin. "God you feel good."
Blaine wondered if that was really what Kurt had meant to say, but he wasn't going to press; he brought his hands up to hold both of Kurt's arms.

Kurt kissed him again and then pulled him down on top of him until they were both lying on the bed. Blaine's hands moving all over, trying to find one place to linger, Kurt holding him lightly around the back as their kisses deepened.

If Blaine hadn't been sure what Kurt wanted already, he would have figured it out as soon as Kurt rolled his hips and Blaine felt him hard and wanting against him.

"What do… do you… think?" Kurt asked breathily as Blaine kissed down his neck. "It could be fun. A good stress relief."

"Yes," was all Blaine could manage to say; it was more than just fun stress relief for Blaine and he had to ignore the way his heart twisted at those words, but he wanted this and would take what Kurt was able to offer. He'd be a liar if he'd said he hadn't thought about this before. About Kurt's lips and skin and body. He would have never made a move, though, not when Kurt seemed so unsure of Blaine, when he still seemed to be holding back something.

"Are you sure you want to?" Blaine asked even as Kurt flipped them over and slowly started unbuttoning Blaine's shirt, "Because we don't have to- ohgod"

Kurt had ducked his head to sweep his tongue over Blaine's nipple.

"Blaine, I'm a grown man and I know what I want and right now it is you."

"O-okay," Blaine breathed.

Kurt ran his hands up Blaine's arms, taking his shirt with him; it slipped off easily and was tossed aside. Kurt kept undressing Blaine, swatting away his hands when Blaine tried to help. He took off his shoes and undid his belt and then pulled off Blaine's pants painfully slow. Then he was back kissing Blaine needily as Blaine's hands tried to get under Kurt's shirt.

Kurt, for his part, didn't seem interested in undressing yet; instead, he started to place hot kisses all over Blaine's skin from his jaw to his chest to his sensitive stomach and the insides of his thighs. Blaine was squirming and panting, each kiss like a spark that ran through his whole being "Please, please Kurt."

Kurt looked up at him with a playful smile, "What do you want?"

"Could we at least… take your shirt off?"

Kurt laughed and then sat up, straddling Blaine's hips, as he slipped off his shirt and then started unfastening his belt. Blaine put his hands over Kurt's, stilling him for a moment, and then he just let his eyes graze over the beautiful smooth skin of Kurt's defined chest. "You are so fucking gorgeous."

Kurt laughed again, his cheeks reddening, as he slipped his pants down over his hips and lifted himself up so he could kick them off. They were both left in nothing more than their underwear now as Kurt laid himself over Blaine and tangled both of his hands in Blaine's hair and kissed him deeply.

Blaine let his hands wander again down Kurt's strong back, up his smooth sides, and then down again over Kurt's underwear to lightly squeeze his ass. Kurt moaned and bucked his hips at that and soon they were rutting against each other, their gasps and groans filling the room. Blaine's body was trembling, his skin hot, as Kurt pressed his lips against any patch of skin he could reach, and they continued to rock against each other.
"So… hot…" Kurt said as he lifted his body up to straddle Blaine again, and Blaine didn't know if he meant what they were doing or the temperature, as both of them were glistening with sweat. Kurt quickly pulled off his underwear and Blaine's eyes grew wide as he took in the sight of him. Perfect. That was the only word for Kurt Hummel. Perfect.

"Yours too?" Kurt asked, and Blaine was nodding like a mad man and lifting his hips to pull his own briefs off.

Kurt was laughing at him and the sweet sound made Blaine's heart grow warm. He stopped laughing, though, once Blaine was completely naked, and Kurt moved his hand down, his fingers gently tracing patterns over Blaine's erection. Blaine lost track of all rational thought after that-Kurt's naked body moving against him, fitting perfectly against him-and with each drag and roll of his hips, Kurt was taking Blaine apart. He'd never felt like this with anyone, he'd never felt like this about anyone.

Kurt was his best friend, his childhood friend and his childhood love. And he'd grown into a man that Blaine couldn't help but fall for all over again. Strong and brave and snarky-Blaine loved all of it. And god, Blaine didn't know what to do about anything going on in his life right now… but he did know one thing for sure...

Kurt was trembling now, their bodies a heated concerto of increasingly erratic movements. Blaine was close-he knew he wasn't going to last long. He crushed his lips against Kurt's as Kurt rolled his hips against him again, and then Kurt was coming, gripping Blaine's shoulders tightly, his mouth open in a breathy cry of pleasure, which was all it took for Blaine to shout Kurt's name before he bit down on Kurt's shoulder and fell over the edge himself, relishing the perfect culmination of Kurt's skin against his, his scent around him and his lips sliding over him.

They were both breathing deeply, trying to catch their breath, as they lay on the bed unmoving. Kurt was heavy and hot on top of him, but Blaine would rather be smothered by him than dare ask him to move from where he was. They were quiet for a moment. The world was still and quiet and perfect.

Blaine leaned up to kiss Kurt's brow, still coming down from his high, but he was sure in what he knew and how he felt. "I love you, Kurt Hummel," he whispered.

Blaine's heart sped up as Kurt was silent in return… he wasn't going to say it back. Blaine let out a long breath. Kurt wasn't going to say it back, and that was okay; it didn't stop what Blaine said from being true.

Kurt lifted himself up, and instead of speaking, he just kissed Blaine, slow and tender and passionately, as if he was trying to put everything he wasn't saying into that one kiss. And that was good, that was okay; Blaine had foolishly made Kurt wait on him for six years. He could be the patient one now.

Eventually, Kurt did roll off of him; he scrunched his nose and looked to Blaine next to him. "I feel sticky."

Blaine laughed and got up from the bed, kissing Kurt quickly and hurrying to the bathroom. He brought back two wet cloths and they cleaned off, Kurt yawning as if he wouldn't be able to keep himself awake much longer.

They both scooted themselves under the covers, not bothering with pajamas. Kurt draped an arm over Blaine's stomach and pillowed his head on his chest, "Thank you." Kurt yawned and Blaine laughed lightly, not sure what Kurt was thanking him for.
"Thank you," Blaine answered, and soon they were both drifting off to the most peaceful sleep Blaine could remember having in a very long time.

Kurt woke up feeling cozy, content, and satisfied all the way down to his toes. There was something warm and pliant beneath him and he snuggled in closer craving that warmth. Kurt smiled as his head rose and fell with each breath Blaine took and he realized he was nestled closely against his chest. Blaine's strong arm was around his back and keeping him close, as if letting go were impossible.

Kurt was fine with that; he couldn't think of anywhere he'd rather be than safe and warm under the comforter with Blaine. He couldn't remember ever waking up feeling like this, so safe and happy and peaceful. Blaine just made him feel that way, and last night... oh god last night had been amazing, it had been perfect... almost.

Blaine's hot skin against his own, their lips sliding together, their bodies in unison, and then Blaine had said I love you.

Kurt's stomach plummeted at the memory.

Blaine had been so sweet and sincere and he looked at Kurt as if he was the only person in the world. Kurt had wanted to say the words back, he could feel them lodged in the back of his throat, but he couldn't. He just couldn't. Not this soon. Not when the future was still so unknown.

Instead, he had kissed him and held back the words that were ringing like bells in his mind, and Blaine had accepted that. He just held him tighter and kissed him deeper and made Kurt feel like he was coming apart but also being put back together again.

Kurt closed his eyes at the memory, they stung a little with unshed tears, and tilted his head to place a soft kiss on Blaine's chest, right over his heart. He felt, rather than heard a chuckle rumble through Blaine.

"You're awake then?" Kurt said, looking up at him and blinking his tears away, as he found a smile on Blaine's lips even though his eyes were still closed.

"Almost."

"Hmmm... maybe I can help with that." Kurt kissed his chest again and then traveled up his neck and over his jaw until he reached Blaine's lips, kissing him sweetly.

"Awake now?"

Blaine opened his beautiful golden eyes. "Very." He lifted a hand and traced his fingers down Kurt's face. "This is perfect."

"I was just thinking that," Kurt said, kissing him again—long and deep—and he could feel himself stir against Blaine's still naked body. He broke the kiss, panting a bit. If he didn't get up right then, they were going to end up in bed all morning. He wasn't sure his heart could survive that.

He rolled away from Blaine and out of bed, looking around the room for his boxer briefs that had been so quickly discarded the night before. He found them and pulled them on, turning to look back at Blaine who was lying on his side, his head propped up on a hand and the sheets draping low over his hips. He was breathtaking, all that tan skin and firm muscles. Kurt had known, of course, that Blaine was gorgeous, but seeing him last night, and now knowing what that beautiful body felt like moving against Kurt – his throat suddenly felt dry. "I'm going..." He coughed, "Um, I'm... to take a shower."
Blaine's eyes were roaming over him as if hungry for him. "I'll take one after you." He smiled and got up out of bed, completely nude and completely dazzling.

"Uh yeah!" Kurt squeaked, grabbing some clothes without even looking at them and his toiletry bag and rushing to the bathroom.

Kurt scrubbed his hair roughly under the cold spray of the shower, as if he could wash the tangled thoughts out of his head. Last night had been a mistake… hadn't it? How could something so pure and wonderful be a mistake? But Blaine had said I love you, and that wasn't okay. Even if something deep inside of Kurt had wanted to echo the words back to him.

What had he done? Why couldn't this just be a fun fling? Why did it have to mean something? But sex always complicated matters even without an unrequited I love you. Kurt got out of the shower with a sigh, towel dried himself, and pulled on his clothes. He'd do his hair back in the room so Blaine could shower next.

He was relieved when he entered the bedroom to find that Blaine had at least pulled on some pajama bottoms. He wasn't sure what he'd have done if greeted by the very agreeable sight of a naked Blaine again.

"There is a breakfast buffet downstairs until ten," Blaine said as he grabbed his things for a shower.

"I'll wait for you."

Blaine shot him a stunning smile and Kurt all but melted down into a chair as Blaine disappeared behind the bathroom door.

"Fuck," Kurt hissed to himself and hung his head in his hands. He was in deep, and it wasn't just the sex – though that had been incredible – it was Blaine. Silly and sweet and handsome and brave and just Blaine. Everything Kurt remembered of him and so so much more. Kurt had been a fool to think he could actually guard his heart against the romantic onslaught that was Blaine Anderson.

He groaned and reached over for the duffle bag on the table next to him. He just had to think of something else, and a powerful, dangerous, cursed mirror seemed like a good distraction. Besides, he'd seen something in one of the books yesterday that he couldn't stop thinking about.

He flipped through, skimming over passages about glass magic and reinforcement symbols and traveling mirrors, until he found it. A strengthening spell, not for people, but for spells. It was meant to be used in combination with any other spell to make it twice as strong. Maybe with this spell and the spell Kurt had already tried on the mirror, he could actually destroy it. He'd hurt it last time, he was sure of that, having twice the power might finish it off for good.

There had been nothing in Saffron's journal about removing magic for the mirrors, though there were missing pages. Maybe they had been torn out by accident over the years, maybe on purpose, but they were lost now. Meaning, his magic destroying spell still seemed like their best shot.

Blaine came out of the bathroom dressed casually with his hair in wet ringlets over his head. Kurt had to let out a long breath as he closed his book and looked up at him.

"Find anything interesting?" Blaine asked, nodding to the book in Kurt's lap, his dark eyelashes framed against his tan skin and biting his lip shyly in a way that made Kurt want to get up and bite it for him. Pull yourself together Kurt!

"Maybe."
Blaine's eyes locked on Kurt's. He walked over and straddled Kurt's lap in the chair, his arms looped around Kurt's shoulders. "You should tell me all about it," he said, kissing him.

Kurt moaned and wanted to just melt into the kiss. But honestly, they couldn't be distracted; they had an evil mirror to destroy.

"I think… I have..." Kurt said between kisses, "An idea."

"Yeah?" Blaine kept kissing him.

"Why don't… we talk about it over breakfast?"

"Okay." Blaine stood and Kurt wanted to whine and pull him back down. He didn't.

Blaine smiled at him and rubbed the back of his neck shyly, "Maybe we could talk about some other things too?"

Kurt's stomach twisted, "Yeah… okay."

They sat across from each other, brushing hands and feet and smiling and flirting like they had been all week. It felt different now, though, more charged and electric. Kurt knew what Blaine looked like under his jeans and purple Henley, he knew what his skin tasted like, he knew the sounds he made when… Kurt cleared his throat and glanced down at the book of spells he'd brought down from the room with him.

"I think I found a spell that could help us."

Blaine took a bite of his English muffin and nodded, "What kind of spell?"

"It is a pairing spell, meaning you use it in conjunction with another spell – it makes the spell you combine it with stronger."

"And… how does that help us?"

"If I use it with my spell to destroy dark magic, I think we could finally destroy the mirror, Blaine."

Blaine put his muffin down and folded his hands on the table, "What if... what if we didn't destroy the mirror."

"Excuse me?"

"I mean, every time we've tried, it's fought back. And now it seems to be working against us even when you aren't throwing spells at it. It's dangerous. Blaine's face and voice were solemn but there was a spark behind his eyes Kurt couldn't place.

"I know it's dangerous, that's why we have to destroy it."

Blaine chuckled and looked away from Kurt, pushing hash browns around on his plate with his fork. "First, I want to leave, then you want to leave, and then I want to leave." He looked up at Kurt, his eyes earnest. "Maybe that means we should just leave it."

Kurt shook his head, not believing what he was hearing, "We can't just leave it."

"I could rent a storage space; we could lock it up there. Board up Callaway Place, put up 'No Trespassing' signs and be done with it."
"That isn't a long-term solution." Kurt's pulse was starting to pound; was Blaine really giving up now, after all they'd learned?

"Why not? I'll pay for the damn storage unit for the rest of my life if I have to."

"And what if the mirror starts calling out to other people?" Kurt's voice was raising a little, "What if someone decides to break into Callaway Place? Blaine, I understand why you don't want to go back, I do." He reached out towards Blaine, but Blaine moved his hands back. The gesture stung more than Kurt would have thought. He cleared his throat. "But what you're suggesting is just a band-aid not a cure."

Blaine sighed and kept looking down at his plate.

Kurt pressed on, "The mirror does seem to have really woken up though; it is far less passive than it once was. And I truly do believe it is after you. I don't know why. Because the house is yours? Because you're a Callaway? In any case," Kurt tried to meet Blaine's eyes but he wouldn't look at him, an idea that had been floating in the back of Kurt's mind was coming together. "I don't think going back to Callaway Place is a good choice for you."

Blaine finally looked up, "So then you agree? Lock it up and throw away the key?"

"I don't think you should go back," Kurt said tentatively, watching Blaine's expression closely. "I still could. I have to finish this, Blaine. I can't leave that kind of magic just lying around, it's my duty to--"

"No," Blaine said sharply, surprising Kurt with the abruptness of his reply.

"No?"

"Like hell am I letting you go back there alone to face that… that thing. It's my fault you're involved in this at all. I won't allow it."

"You won't allow it?" Kurt said, bristling, "You won't allow it?" He let out a hollow laugh, "You don't get to dictate what I do."

"Kurt. You are not going back there."

Kurt's jaw dropped; Blaine's face was fierce, his eyes flashing and his jaw set. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Kurt knew Blaine was only saying this to keep him safe; still, he'd never been good at taking orders.

Kurt shook his head and scoffed, "I get to do whatever I want with that mirror." He crossed his arms over his chest and looked away from Blaine. "I mean technically the mirror belongs to me. I own it. It was my bonus at work."

"Well, it's my house."

"And it's my mirror."

Kurt heard Blaine's chair scrape against the floor abruptly, and when he looked up, Blaine was standing. There was a brief moment where they locked eyes before Blaine grabbed the magic book off the table and started marching out of the dining room. "Blaine! Wait!" Kurt stood hurriedly, what was left of his breakfast long forgotten.

He followed Blaine outside and hurried to catch up until he was able to meet his purposeful strides.
"You know, Kurt, I could just destroy this book and Saffron's diary. I mean technically they do belong to me, my Aunt left them to me."

"Blaine, please. I shouldn't have said that. Don't be mad."

Blaine stopped walking and turned to face him, all trace of annoyance leaving his face. "I shouldn't have tried to order you around or fight about whose house it is. I'm not mad, Kurt, and I don't know why I'm getting so upset about this…" Blaine trailed off with a long intake of breath. "I'm scared. I'm scared for you. If anything happened to you… I…" Blaine swallowed deeply, the apples of his cheeks red. "I just want you safe."

Kurt stepped close to Blaine, pulling him in with a hand on his waist and one on the back of his neck. "I just want you safe," he said, whisper close, before brushing his lips against Blaine's. It was true, he needed Blaine to be safe he couldn't bare the though of anything happening to him. The intensity of his own emotions were worrisome to him, but he'd have to short that out at another time. He could feel Blaine's whole body relax as he leaned forward into Kurt's embrace. "But I can't leave the mirror." Kurt continued, "It has to be stopped."

"And I can't let you go back to Callaway Place alone."

Kurt nodded, his nose bumping Blaine's, there was no deterring either of them. "So we finish this the way we started it. Together. Okay?"

"…Okay." Blaine nodded and then surer, "Okay."

"I'll need some more ingredients for this strengthening spell. Some fresh herbs and some pyrite."

"Pyrite?"

"Fool's gold."

"I know what it is, I'm just not sure where to get it."

"A jewelry store maybe?"

"Okay," Blaine held out a hand for Kurt, "Jewelry store and then the farmer's market it is."

Kurt wanted the morning to last forever; they dropped by a small touristy jewelry shop where Kurt found a necklace with a pyrite charm that would work perfectly. He also couldn't help but admire a Victorian serpent and acanthus leaf brooch, which, despite his protest, Blaine insisted on buying for him. Blaine pinned it to his coat as they stood in the parking lot.

"We still haven't talked about what happened last night," Blaine said, hands softly moving down Kurt's chest.

"Your dream?"

"Kurt."

"That voice calling your name?" Kurt said, going for teasing.

"Kurt."

Kurt nodded; he knew what Blaine meant. "I know... I mean, I know what you said and I know I didn't say it back and-"
"Kurt, no. No, no. We don't... I didn't expect... I..." Blaine sighed and reached out to adjust the brooch on Kurt's lapel, "I just mean us sleeping together, don't we need to talk about that?"

"Yes," Kurt breathed, looking Blaine in the eyes, his heart pounding in his chest. "But not yet."

Blaine nodded, "I can wait."

Next, they went to the Farmers Market, which was full of colorful fall vegetables and fresh smelling herbs. Kurt bought the ingredients he would need and a few small Asian pears for them to munch on since they didn't finish breakfast. They walked, swinging their clasped hands between them and smiling at everything. Kurt so wished that the rest of his visit to Maine could be like this. Just being with Blaine, peaceful and sweet, getting to know each other better working out his muddled feelings for this man who was so important to him.

"There is this beautiful old lighthouse down the coast," Blaine said, licking pear juice off his lips. "I'd love to take you there."

Kurt closed his eyes and sighed, "I would love that too."

"We could go this afternoon," Blaine suggested tentatively.

Kurt opened his eyes and looked at him.

"Or not."

"I want to, Blaine, really."

"When this is all over?"

"Yes. It's a date."

"A date?" Blaine grinned at him and Kurt's heart rate sped up.

"Um, well you know... I mean... it's just what people say."

"A date." Blaine winked at him and Kurt just chuckled and shook his head.

They grabbed a late lunch and headed back to the Inn where Kurt decided to practice the strengthening spell. Blaine helped him put it together. "Okay, now mix the lavender petals in with the rose oil," Kurt instructed as he read over the spell.

"This smells really pretty."

Kurt glanced up at Blaine and smiled, "We haven't added the beet juice yet."

Blaine's nose scrunches up, "I hate beets."

Kurt laughed and stopped himself from swooping in and kissing him; he didn't want to get distracted in the middle of putting a potion together. "Well, we aren't going to eat it."

"What are we going to do with it?" Blaine said, glancing over to the book as Kurt dangled the pyrite over the potion and murmured something.

"We're going to dip these in it," Kurt said, finishing with the charm and holding up two nails.

"Nails?"
"Iron. We have to coat iron in this potion and then recite a spell over them."

"Of course we do." Blaine laughed and Kurt's stomach swooped again. He was in so much trouble here.

Once they were done with the mixture and Kurt had dipped the nails in it, he held them out on his palm and recited the charm; they immediately buzzed and bounced in his hand, the potion evaporating off them in a little puff of steam. "Now we test them," Kurt said, closing his eyes and curling his fingers around the nails while he chanted the word of the light brightening spell he often used.

The lights in the hotel room buzzed and immediately grew brighter and brighter until several of the bulbs burst, filled with too much power. Blaine gasped and Kurt's eyes snapped open. "Oops."

Blaine smiled at him, his eyes warm as he leaned forward ever so closer to Kurt, "I guess it works."

Kurt bit his lip and smiled back, "Good."

All too soon, it was time to head back to Callaway Place. They wanted to get there and perform the spell before nightfall. Kurt gathered the books and Saffron's journal as they prepared to go back to the old mansion.

Kurt thought about the day before, first those lights drawing Blaine to the mirror and then the voice calling out to him as wind rushed through the bedroom. Kurt trembled thinking of it. He'd been terrified for Blaine, and he'd still much rather go finish this on his own. But he'd never let Blaine go back there by himself, so he couldn't expect Blaine to be alright with him doing that. They kept their room at the White Pinecone Inn just in case they needed to come back that evening.

They'd only been gone a day, but walking into Callaway Place, it already seemed like a foreign place. The downstairs wasn't so bad, well windowed and bright, it felt lived in; however, the closer they got to the third floor, the heavier Kurt's stomach became.

They stood outside of the doorway, their hands clasped, "This could be it, Blaine. After this, the mirror could be destroyed."

Blaine nodded but didn't say anything.

They walked up the stairs together until they got to the mirror and Kurt's spine prickled. That morning, when he decided they should use the strengthening spell, Kurt had been sure it would work; he knew he could destroy the mirror, but now, standing in front of the gilded glass, it seemed stronger than ever.

"Ready for this?" Kurt asked and turned to look at Blaine. He only had eyes for the mirror, though – shining, almost feverish, eyes. "Blaine?"

Blaine blinked and turned to look at Kurt, "I almost hate to do it."

"What?"

"I mean you've said yourself there is so much we don't know about this mirror, it's almost a shame to destroy it."

"I don't feel that way anymore," Kurt answered.

"Right, right. It doesn't matter anyway; I know it has to go, Kurt."
Kurt leaned in and placed a soft peck on Blaine's cheek. Almost tempted to pull him away from this place and talk to him—really talk to him—about the night before, about the trepidation that Kurt had been approaching their rekindled friendship, about the fluttery feeling he got in the pit of his stomach every time Blaine said his name.

"Want help putting the spell ingredients together?" Blaine asked, nodding to the bag in Kurt's hand.

"Yes. Sure," Kurt smiled. They had a lot to talk about, but it could wait.

They sat on the ground and started mixing ingredients—the toadflax and spider legs and everything Kurt had become so practiced with by this point.

"I'm going to hold one of these," Kurt said, fishing the iron nail out of his pocket, "And you hold one too.

"Why do I need one?"

"Because I'm going to hold your hand as I perform the spell, and maybe you holding the iron will give me…it extra strength." Kurt didn't really know that it would work that way, but Blaine sighed in relief as he took the nail, and Kurt knew he was glad to have something to do that felt helpful.

Kurt took a deep breath and closed his eyes. Blaine squeezed his hand. The last two times they'd tried this, the mirror had fought back; there was no way to tell how it would try to ward them off this time, especially now that their magic had extra punch to it.

Kurt opened his mouth to start the chant, but just as he did, a heart-piercing wail sliced through the air.

Kurt's eyes snapped open.

"You haven't even started," Blaine breathed, his hand gripping Kurt's.

The mirror was shaking clattering, as its legs bouncing against the ground.

"What's happening!"

"I don't know!" Kurt answered, heart hammering.

Then the mirror became completely still.

Kurt's pulse was pounding in his ears, something was wrong, something was very wrong.

Another wail pierced the silence and Kurt's heart all but leapt out of his throat. "That… that didn't come from the mirror."

Blaine was staring at him with wide eyes, the blood drained from his face. "Was that from downstairs?"

A cold shiver ran down Kurt's spine like ice, and then in an instant, both he and Blaine were on their feet. Another yell was echoing through the house and very obviously not coming from the third floor.

"There is something in the house," Kurt said, his voice coming out barely audible.

Blaine shook his head minutely in disbelief and then rushed towards the stairs. Kurt's hand was still in his, so he had no choice but to follow. They ran to the second floor and past the portrait of Saffron
Callaway – Kurt craned his neck as they passed her because he could almost swear that her eyes were glowing. Blaine wasn't stopping, though. Which was a good idea, they needed to just get out of there.

Kurt had been so foolish to come back, to think that he was strong enough to face such ancient magic. Was that part of the mirror's enchantment? To make you think that it wasn't all that powerful when you weren't near it? Or had it just been Kurt's own stubbornness that had led them here? Blaine had been right; they shouldn't have come back. That noise, that cry that had filled the house, was both angry and terrifying, and Kurt did not want to face whatever was causing it.

Blaine came to an abrupt stop at the top of the wide open staircase to the first floor.

"Come on!" Kurt said, tugging his hand, but Blaine didn't budge.

"Do you… do you hear that?"

Kurt's heart skipped a beat as he stood and listened, but there was no more wailing; he didn't hear anything outside of his and Blaine's labored breathing.

"Blaine, let's go."

"No." Blaine shook his head. "Someone is calling to me."

Kurt was already terrified, but those words made his mouth go dry and his stomach drop. "$Blaine.""

"Come on," Blaine said, starting down the stairs again.

"Are we leaving?"

"Not yet."

"Blaine!"

Blaine had let go of Kurt's hand as he rushed downstairs and to the back corner. Aunt Helen's room had to be his destination.

"Blaine, you were right!" Kurt said, following him and then stopping as Blaine came to an unexpected halt outside of the bedroom's closed door. "We should lock the place up, leave it be. And get away from here!"

"Not y-" Blaine started but stopped, the words cut off as a scream came from behind Helen's bedroom door.

"Oh my god." Kurt was trembling from head to toe; he could tell that Blaine was every bit as scared as he was, from his colorless face to his unsteady hands, but still, he wasn't moving from the spot where he was standing. "Don't!" Kurt shouted as Blaine lifted a hand to push open the door. He grabbed Blaine's arm with both hands and started to tug, but it was too late, the door swung inward.

For one terrible moment, Kurt held his breath expecting some kind of creature to burst out of the room, but nothing happened; it was deadly quiet again.

"Nothing's here," Blaine said, sounding almost disappointed.
"The mirrors." Kurt sucked in a breath as realization struck him. "The noise came from the mirrors."

"The magic moved down here," Blaine said, gesturing to the over two dozen mirrors in the room. "It's like it knew you were coming to try the spell again and it ran from you."

"Oh god oh god." Kurt reached for Blaine's hand. "I can't even destroy one magic mirror, what am I meant to do against a room of them?"

Blaine, who hadn't met his eyes since they left the third floor, finally turned to him. "You don't have to do anything, Kurt. You don't have to solve this, it isn't on your shoulders."

"Then let's leave. I don't understand this magic, Blaine. Magic that flees one magical object and goes to another? It isn't right. Magic just doesn't work that way – not on its own at least – it would…"

Kurt trailed off as things started coming together in his mind. Of course. The magic wasn't working on its own, it had never acted like regular magic. The way it kept Kurt and Blaine from knowing where each other were when they were growing up, the way it sent them new and creative roadblocks both to keep Kurt from destroying the mirror and to draw them in when their defenses were down. The magic was being strategic and magic wasn't like that. It didn't have a mind of its own. "Someone is controlling all of this." Kurt said, finally realizing the truth.

Blaine nodded his head. "This whole time, I thought we were fighting magic, a something, but if we are fighting a someone," Blaine grinned, his eyes dancing in a way that sent a shiver down Kurt's spine, "A someone can be dealt with."

"No." Kurt felt frantic, "We're leaving." Just as the words left Kurt's mouth, one of the mirrors directly across from them started glowing, and then little golden lights began to dance in its reflection. That was proof enough for Kurt that they should leave. If the mirror was trying to draw them in again, it was time to run.

Blaine took a step towards the mirror.

"No!" Kurt hurried to move in front of him, his arms out and his hands flat against Blaine's chest, Kurt's back to the mirror with glowing lights. "We're leaving," Kurt said very deliberately.

Blaine blinked a few times as if clearing his head and then nodded.

Kurt lowered his hands from Blaine's chest just as there was an unsettling tug at the base of his spine and then he was yanked backwards, there was the clash of breaking glass and everything went completely dark.

Kurt blinked his eyes a few times as a cold breeze glided over his shoulders. He was surrounded by complete darkness, the only light a rectangle of color a few yards in front of him. He ran towards it, not able to understand what had just happened. The light was shaped like a door, no not a door – a mirror.

Even as Kurt ran forward, he instinctively lifted his hands, as if he somehow knew what was going to happen. His hands bounced off of the glass and Kurt fell down with a hiss of pain. He looked up to see the rectangle of light, which was like a window; he could see through to the other side, but he couldn't get there. Kurt stood, tears making his vision blurry and his throat ache.

He could see back into Aunt Helen's room with the mirrors and… Blaine. Blaine stood in the center of the room staring at him with his jaw dropped and terror in his eyes.

"Blaine!" Kurt shouted and banged his fist against the glass.
Blaine moved forward and started doing the same thing from the other side, pressing against the mirror as if it would let him in. He was shouting, or at least it looked like he was, Kurt could see him but not hear him.

"Blaine, help me please!" Kurt cried on the edge of panic. He didn't know where he was or what was going on.

Blaine was crying, and then a long crack ran down the mirror and across it, and smaller cracks started bleeding out through the glass. There was a frozen moment where Kurt and Blaine just stared at each other in terror—then the pieces of broken glass started to fall.

They were dropping on Blaine's side; he tried to catch them—Kurt saw him cut his hand—and as each piece dropped, a black space was left in its place, allowing Kurt to see less and less of Blaine and the room he was in.

"Please no!" Kurt pounded against the glass again, but it didn't matter. The pieces kept falling. He got one last glimpse of Blaine's horrified face as the last piece fell and Kurt was left in complete and utter blackness.
Chapter 12

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear." – Mark Twain

There was a ringing in Blaine's ears and a throbbing in his chest. He stood frozen in place as his hands trembled and his eyes remained locked on the empty mirror frame in front of him.

Kurt.

Broken pieces of glass littered the ground in front of the frame-long, splintered shards that used to hold Kurt's reflection. He blinked his eyes, noticing a few red drops splashed across the glass and numbly looked down at his own hand. His palm was cut—either it was deep enough not to really hurt or Blaine was in too much shock to notice any pain.

Kurt.

He swallowed deeply, his throat scratchy, as he looked around the room—mirror after mirror reflecting his wan, horrified face back to him.

Kurt was gone.

"Please no," Blaine whispered to himself, feeling numb and a little sick. He took a tentative step towards the largest mirror near him; feeling desperate, he pressed his palms against the glass. "Take me. Take me!" Nothing happened. "Please." Blaine begged, his knees feeling like jelly as he sank to the ground.

There was a sharp buzzing sound and Blaine lifted his head, hoping maybe one of the mirrors would suck him in the way the other mirror had stolen Kurt, but instead, all of the mirrors started to crack. Blaine ducked his face and covered his head just in time as the mirrors splintered, shooting glass throughout the room—tiny shards flying in every direction as Blaine crouched down in a ball trying to protect himself.

His breathing was labored and too fast, and when the buzzing sound stopped, Blaine looked up to see every mirror in the room had shattered, their frames empty and their glass spread over the ground. "Oh god." Blaine stood shakily, turning slowly around the room and surveying the destruction. "Oh god."

There was a sharp rap on the front door and the unexpectedness of the sound made Blaine's heart leap in his chest.

He didn't move for a moment, trying to place the noise, but when he realized what it was, he rushed forward, racing out of the room and sliding over broken glass until he got to the foyer.

Kurt, it had to be Kurt.

The unlikelihood that Kurt had been sucked into an enchanted mirror just to land on the doorsteps of Callaway Place wasn't a thought Blaine allowed himself to entertain. If only it would be Kurt at the door, he would grab his hand and keep running, leaving Callaway Place behind and getting Kurt as far away from this place as possible.

He wrenched the door open, heart in his throat, and almost sagged to the ground again when he found a young man in a blue delivery uniform and hoodie. "Package for Kurt Hummel?" The man
said, looking up at the sky as thunder rolled over them.

"What?" Blaine blinked at him, not able to understand what was happening.

"I have a package for Kurt Hummel." He held out the large brown box in his hands. "Are you Kurt Hummel?"

"No." Blaine shook his head and a piece of glass fell from his hair to the carpeted floor. Both he and the delivery man looked down at it.

"Are you okay?"

Blaine couldn't find the words to answer him.

"Uh, can you sign for him?" The man looked at the sky again, "It's about to rain."

"I..." Blaine was trembling as he reached forward, taking the man's scanner and scribbling his name without thought. He was given the package as the delivery man nodded to him and rushed back to his truck before the heavy rain clouds above could burst open.

Blaine shut the door and glanced down at the package in his hands. It was addressed to Kurt Hummel from Jane Hayward at Britton's in New York. He walked dazedly to the side table in the foyer and placed the package on top of it, tearing it open.

He found a hand-written note on top.

Kurt,

Here is your book and the mirror you asked for. I hope you're having fun on whatever crazy adventure you're on. Come home soon though. It's boring here without you!

Love,

Jane

Blaine blinked back a few tears and pushed aside the packing paper to find Kurt's book. He almost reached for it but stopped when he noticed the blood on his hand, irrationally thinking of how upset Kurt would be if he got blood on his newly restored book. Instead, he went for the object in the box that was wrapped in bubble wrap, the mirror. Blaine tore off the wrapping and glared at the silver framed hand mirror. He had the sudden urge to chuck it across the room and have the satisfaction of seeing it shatter against a wall. But he couldn't do that, this was Kurt's mirror. The mirror he'd spent years talking to Blaine through. Instead, he held the mirror to his chest and held back a quiet sob.

He took only a moment, standing there in the eerily silent foyer, to let his despair wash over him like the lapping waves outside of Callaway Place. But only a moment. He drew in a deep breath and then glanced over to the coat rack near the front door, his book bag hanging from one of the hooks. He walked over to it, placing the mirror carefully inside and then back to the box, packing Kurt's book in as well.

He strode back to Aunt Helen's bedroom and slowly looked around the old dusty room, empty frames lining the walls and broken glass littering the floor. He took a step towards one of the vacant frames, leaning down to carefully pick up a piece of glass. It was silent, and Blaine knew deep inside of himself that there was no magic there. The mirrors had shattered—not to spread their enchantment but to break it.

He dropped the piece of mirror as he stood and walked deliberately from the room, shards of glass crunching under the soles of his shoes. These mirrors here were broken, but Blaine knew of one
mirror that was more than likely still undamaged and powerful. It had wanted him this whole time, calling to him from his dreams and trying to trick him when awake. Fine. If the mirror wanted him, it could have him.

He stomped purposefully up the staircase to the second floor, and then down the south corridor, only stopping briefly to glare at the portrait of Saffron Callaway. "You can't have him," Blaine spat out before opening the carved door to the third floor and climbing the staircase.

He'd been right. The third floor mirror was still whole. Tall and gleaming and alive with magic, the twining vines of the frame were nearly red with a burning light like metal in a flame, the glass was heaving in and out like a fierce mythical creature about to breathe fire. Every instinct was telling Blaine to flee. He took a step forward.

Saffron's diary was on the wooden floor in front of the mirror; Blaine scowled at it but bent down to pick it up, stuffing it in his bag. He was very close to the mirror now; he could feel heat radiating off it. And it was beating, like a heavy bass line, thrumming in Blaine's chest.

Tiny golden lights began to spark on the other side of the glass, twirling hypnotically. For the first time, Blaine didn't feel compelled by them, he didn't feel drawn in. This time, he didn't want to be anywhere near this mirror. He took one final step forward.

Kurt. This magic had taken Kurt and Blaine would do anything, anything, to get him back.

Blaine reached out an unsteady hand towards the glass, pressing first his fingers and then his whole palm against it. The glass was warm and pulsing, and it had a give to it in a way that glass really shouldn't. Blaine shuddered and closed his eyes, drawing on all the courage he had. Then, he opened his eyes and pressed his hand harder against the glass; his hand started to sink in, like moving through thick warm mud.

Blaine wanted to scream, but he stuffed it down, pushing forward until the mirror had engulfed his arm up to the elbow. Blaine cleared his throat, trying to sound steady, "I'm coming Kurt," he promised and then took a step forward.

There was a whooshing, fluttering sound echoing in Blaine's ears; his whole body felt on fire for a moment and he squeezed his eyes shut, nearly blinded by a bright yellow light. Then, he stumbled forward, losing his balance and falling to his knees.

Blaine opened his eyes.

Then closed them and opened them again. He sucked in a breath of fear, terrified for a moment that he had actually gone blind. His surroundings were as pitch dark as coal and he couldn't see a thing. His whole body started trembling and he held his stomach as he lost its contents. Blaine heaved for a moment, trying to catch his breath, and then he slowly stood on unsteady legs.

He turned in a circle, hoping to see something, but it was oppressively dark, and he couldn't even see his hand in front of his face. It was cold here, a chill breeze whipping through the air, and his palms and pant legs were wet from where he had toppled down on the ground, so he felt like he was probably outside. He readjusted the book bag on his shoulder and cleared his throat, "Kurt!" He called out to the darkness hopefully. "Kurt, can you hear me?!"

He waited in silence, nothing but the wind whistling around him. He thought, for the first time, just how much of a chance he was taking here--the third floor mirror had sucked him in just like the one downstairs had taken Kurt--but did that actually mean they were in the same place? Blaine shivered and pushed that idea out of his head. He couldn't think like that; it would break him.
He stood shivering as he called Kurt's name a few more times, but there was no answering call. No sweet clear voice of the man he loved. Blaine didn't know what to do, he had no plan, no idea where he was, where Kurt was, no precedent to tell him what to do when captured by an evil magic mirror. He just knew he couldn't stay there and do nothing.

He felt like he could see a little better now, lighter black shades against darker black, so he took a few tentative steps forward, calling Kurt's name again. He didn't get far before his feet tangled in something, snagging him and causing him to topple down to his knees again. He caught himself on his palms with a hiss.

This wasn't working, he couldn't just wander around in the pitch dark. He'd never find Kurt and he'd probably hurt himself and then what use would he be? The problem was Blaine had walked through a magic mirror with about as much thought as swatting away a fly. He hadn't brought light, or a weapon or even a jacket – which would have been a welcome addition as he was shivering uncontrollably now in the biting cold.

He sniffed back a few tears and then stood again, reaching his arms out in front of him and taking a careful step forward, "Ku-" he began to call again, but his hands collided with something. Blaine yelped in surprise and then started to feel the object in his path. It was circular and maybe a couple feet around, and tall. Its surface was rough like many pieces of something smaller suck together, and yet cold, and if it weren't for the polished feeling of the surface, Blaine would guess he was touching the bark of a tree.

Blaine leaned his forehead on the object and tried to clear his thoughts. He needed a better plan than wandering aimlessly though the overbearing darkness around him.

If only he'd thought to bring a flashlig– of course! *He was an idiot!* He had a flashlight, in a manner of speaking. Blaine quickly fished his phone out of his back pocket, shouting in victory as the screen illuminated his hands. Thank god. He swiped to the flashlight app and turned it on, relief like a warm mantle around his shoulder. *He could see.*

His hands were trembling, but he lifted the light to inspect the object in front of him; it was a tree. Well, it was mostly a tree. It shimmered and gleamed against the light of Blaine's phone, and as he ran the pads of his fingers down the trunk, he realized the bark was made of *glass.*

Blaine took a few steps back in surprise and tripped over the same thing that had snagged his foot before. He fell down with an *oof* and directed his light to the object on the ground; it was a thick gnarled root protruding from the earth, also shimmering and reflective, as was the moss on the ground, and as Blaine craned his neck up and his phone illuminated the bottom few tree branches, he saw that even the leaves seemed to be some kind of peculiar hybrid of organic material and glass.

"*Jesus,*" Blaine swore under his breath, "*Where am I?*" He slowly stood, wiping his muddied hands on his pants, the mud here at least seemed to be real, and glanced around at his surroundings with his phone.

He seemed to be in some kind of sparkling, reflective, glass forest. A shiver ran up his spine. "*Kurt!*" He called out, and for the first time, worried that something other than Kurt might hear him.

He continued onward, no real plan in mind and his thoughts growing sluggish and tired. Even his feet seemed uncoordinated, and he really just wanted to sit down against one of these strange trees and go to sleep.

"*Kurt where are you?*" He whispered to himself, shining his light to and fro and yawning widely. He didn't know what to do other than to keep looking and hope that by some miracle he might actually
find the man who had come to mean the entire world to him.

Kurt was panicking. His heart pounding hard against his chest, his breath coming in short shallow gasps and his thoughts swimming with dread. A small steady voice in the back of his mind was telling him to slow down, to calm down, to take a deep breath. He couldn't focus on that voice. Not when he was surrounded by utter darkness, in a cold, unknown place with no visible way of escape.

His panic made him desperate and foolish, and before he knew it, he was wildly running away from the spot where he'd first been sucked through the mirror. It didn't make sense, and it certainly wasn't helpful, but Kurt wasn't actually thinking straight. All he knew was that an evil mirror had pulled him from the relative safety of Callaway Place and Blaine and into a dim, freezing, nameless midnight.

Kurt wasn't sure how long he'd ran like a madman before he stumbled and rolled down an incline, banging his shoulder on something hard and coming to a stop on the cold wet ground.

Kurt stared up into the blackness, his heart still hammering madly, but forcing himself to take slow steadying breaths. It had been years since he'd had a full-fledged anxiety attack; the last time was when he was nineteen and was alone in New York for the first time with his whole unfamiliar future ahead of him. He'd been able to calm himself then, he could do it now. He closed his eyes, even though it made no difference, and drew in a long breath, counting to five, and then exhaling out while counting to five again.

His situation was monumentally worse now than it had been last time he did this, but soon his heart rate felt less like a rabbit about to have a heart attack and his mind less like a swirling cyclone of fear. He blinked his eyes open and rubbed them. The darkness was still jet-black and inky around him. He surprised himself by yawning as he sat up, body trembling a little but feeling much more relaxed.

Okay, he had been incredibly foolish; running away from his point of origin had to have been the worst thing he could have done. And he would never find his way back now, not in this overbearing darkness. There was no way to retrace his hasty steps. Instead of worrying over it though, he just yawned again and laid back down on the cold wet ground. Why was he feeling so tried? Sure, he was usually exhausted after an anxiety attack, but this wasn't right… he shouldn't… be… this sleepy.

"Kurt." An unfamiliar voice called out to him, but he kept his eyes closed, allowing his mind to drift off to sleep.

"Kurt!"

"Leave me alone," Kurt mumbled with a yawn.

"You can't go to sleep."

"Wanna."

"Kurt, Blaine is in danger!"

Kurt's eyes snapped open at that and he sat up. "What?" He shivered, not knowing who was there, who he was talking to. "Where are you?"

"Kurt." The voice, a woman's voice, and maybe it was a little familiar, "You have to find Blaine. He is here."

"Blaine?" Kurt shook his head, his thoughts muffled. "How? I can't see anything."
Kurt was waking up now, and the fact that he'd almost curled up in the mud to sleep was horrifying to him. He immediately stood.

Blaine was in trouble. If the disembodied voice — that he wasn't sure hadn't been part of a dream — could be trusted.

"Hello!" Kurt called out, but there was no answer. The Theia spell. Kurt cursed under his breath. Of course, he'd been too frantic to think of the spell before. It was one of the very first spells his mother had taught him, a light bearing finding spell named after the goddess of sight and the shining light of the clear blue sky. Kurt smiled at the memory of his mother teaching him the spell, but his heart constricted in his chest when he thought of Blaine in danger.

He quickly moved back down to his hands and knees and felt around until his fingers slid over something hard and smooth. "Perfect." He lifted the stone up to his face trying to see it, but it was just too dark. It didn't matter, he didn't need light to perform this spell.

"Bring light to the dark, Theia brighten and shine. Help find what is lost, show the way of the divine," he whispered over the stone and then placed a kiss to the cold surface, wiping mud from his lips with the back of his arm. He whispered the charm again, and again and again until a pale blue light started to emit from the stone. He repeated the words one more time, adding Blaine's name to the charm, "Bring light to the dark, Theia brighten and shine. Help find Blaine, show the way of the divine." Suddenly, the rock lit up, illuminating the area in a strong blue glow.

"Thank god," Kurt breathed in relief. If he'd just thought of magic instead of panicking when he'd first arrived, maybe he'd still be standing by the mirror that brought him here and not lost, short of breath and covered in mud. That didn't matter now, though; what mattered was finding Blaine, and if the light of the stone was any indication, Blaine was here — wherever here was — somewhere.

Kurt took a steadying breath, he was trembling all over and it was probably more due to the fact that he was wet and cold, but it didn't matter. If Blaine was in danger, then he had to find him. He hoped his dream — because that's what he was deciding that voice was — and his glowing rock were wrong. As much as a comfort it would be to have Blaine with him — and his shoulders almost relaxed at the thought — he didn't want Blaine to have been dragged into this nightmare.

"Please be safe, Blaine," Kurt whispered to himself, his heart squeezing painfully in his chest.

He followed where the glowing blue rock led him; it would brighten or fade to indicate which direction to go, like playing a frustrating game of "hot and cold". The process was further complicated by the fact that Kurt was getting more and more nervous about the place he found himself in. A forest of some kind, but not like anything he'd ever seen before. The trees, and vines, and shrubs all glimmered and reflected the light of his rock back at him. It was like everything here was made out of broken pieces of mirror.

"I am definitely not in Kansas anymore," Kurt murmured beneath his breath and tried to make himself laugh. He couldn't, he was too terrified. In fact, it was only the idea of Blaine in danger that kept him grounded and not panicking again — he couldn't afford to panic if somehow Blaine was here and needed him.

Kurt kept his breaths steady as he walked alone in the dark otherworldly forest. He diverted himself with memories of the night before — had it really only been last night? — Of being with Blaine, skin to skin, lips to lips, heart to heart. The words I love you Kurt Hummel kept echoing in his mind. "Damn it, Blaine." Kurt sniffed as he nearly slipped in the mud. "You better be okay when I find you! And
if you came here just for me, I'm going to kill you."

Thunder crashed above him making Kurt start—that would be just what he needed—rain on top of everything else. The light from his stone was glowing brighter now and his heart rate quickened; he must be getting close. He thought he saw movement ahead of him, and he leaped backwards with a terrified gasp as something came scurrying out from behind a bush.

The creature stopped in its tracks looking up at Kurt with big round glossy eyes and a twitching nose. It had soft looking gray fur, and long floppy ears—a rabbit-Kurt had almost jumped out of his skin because of a rabbit.

He took a step closer, there was something off here; amongst the gray fur were patches of smooth glass, one of its floppy ears didn't really flop as it seemed to be made of glass, and its little fluffy tail was just a crystal sphere. The animal was like everything else here, part mirror.

Kurt swallowed deeply as the rabbit darted away. "Holy shit."

This place was becoming more frightening the longer he was here.

Kurt followed the glow of his rock a little longer, the air cracking with thunder occasionally, and soon a light shower started pelting down on Kurt's shoulders. He hunched against the rain and continued forward until his stone shone so brightly that Kurt had to shield his eyes for a moment, and then it faded to a gentle pulsing glow. That meant the spell was complete—the stone would keep emitting light, but it had found what it was looking for.

"Blaine?" Kurt called out, scanning the area, but he didn't see him anywhere. Maybe the spell had gone wrong, maybe Blaine wasn't really in this awful place after all maybe—Kurt's eyes landed on something a few feet away from him and his breath stuck in his throat.

It was a shoe. A brown leather chukka boot that was unmistakably Blaine's.

Kurt's stomach dropped and he sprinted forward, scooping the boot out of the mud and holding it up as if it would tell him where to find Blaine. "Blaine!" Kurt shouted frantically, circling, "Blaine!"

The rain was coming down harder now and mixing with the tears on Kurt's cheeks. Oh god Blaine please, please be alright.

Kurt heard a noise behind him and spun around, it was a moan or—Kurt saw him. Blaine was right in front of him sitting on the ground with his back against a tree trunk. Kurt hadn't seen him before, not only because of the limited light, but because Blaine was practically camouflaged in mud.

Kurt ran and then skidded to his knees to kneel by Blaine. His eyes were closed and he didn't seem responsive, and this close, Kurt realized it wasn't just mud that had made Blaine hard to find; there were thick strong tree roots growing out of the ground, and they had somehow managed to wrap themselves around Blaine's body, pinning him to the tree.

"Blaine," Kurt reached out to wake him, but one of the tree roots moved to whip his hand away with a resounding crack. Kurt hissed in pain and held his hand to his chest, and the other roots started moving as well, more thoroughly wrapping themselves around Blaine. More of them even sprang up from the wet ground, twisting and pulling as if they wanted to meld Blaine to the tree itself.

"No! Stop! Blaine!" Kurt reached forward again, hoping to yank Blaine forward, but the roots just whipped at him and tightened their hold. He seemed to be making them angry, and if Blaine's now labored breath was any indication, he wouldn't be able to take much more of this.
Kurt's mind was running a mile a minute, trying not to panic, as he went through, spell by spell, all the magic he knew trying to come up with something that could help.

"K-Kurt?"

Kurt looked up to see Blaine's eyes open as he stared at Kurt sleepily. It was such a relief to see him awake that Kurt had to hold back a sob. "Blaine, can you get up? Can you move?"

"I was looking for you."

Kurt smiled and scooted closer, careful not to touch any of the roots twisting around Blaine. "Well, I'm right here, but you need to move."

Blaine blinked at him sleepily, and there had to be some magic in the air to make Blaine so tired, something about this place that just made you want to curl up and take a nap despite the danger around you.

"Please, Blaine."

Blaine glanced down at himself and his eyes grew wide, "Oh my god. Oh my god." Blaine tried to get up, but the tree roots just held on tighter, causing Blaine to cough.

"Stop stop. Don't move!" Kurt held his hands up, wanting to help but scared that he'd just make things worse. The rain was pelting them now, icy cold, but Kurt barely noticed it.

"Hard... to... br-breathe," Blaine wheezed out and Kurt held in a whimper of fear.

His hands hovered over Blaine's constrained body, "Okay... I... um I know a spell, something used to unbind ropes or knots... It might work for this." Kurt's mind was working a mile a minute trying to remember exactly how the spell went.

"Anytime," Blaine rasped with a smile, but his eyes looked scared.

"I just... um. Unbind, untie... make loose these binds?" Kurt recited, but then stopped, how did it go? It wasn't like Kurt had actually used this spell very often. "Um, Unbind, make loose... or um... unbind unknot?" Kurt's throat was dry and his chest hurt, he couldn't remember.

"It wouldn't be..." Blaine coughed and the roots shifted more snugly around him. "In your magic book?" Blaine's voice was high and tight.

"Yes!" Kurt was on the edge of freaking out, "But that doesn't help!"

"It does." Blaine made a movement with one of his hands, not able to move his whole arm as it was pinned to his side. Kurt glanced down to see half a book bag protruding from the roots. "G-grab it."

Kurt didn't really understand, but he did as he was told, carefully pulling the book bag from the roots; they let him have it, but they stayed firmly around Blaine. Kurt opened the bag and pulled out a big black leather book that he'd recognize anywhere. Kurt brushed rain out of his eyes, hardly believing the sight, "How?"

"Kurt," Blaine gasped.

Kurt hurriedly opened the book, not caring how it got there or that it was getting drenched, *again*. He came to the passage he needed "A spell of untying."

*God this better work.* Kurt wasn't sure what else to do. The spell would be better if he had some
Beetle Toe or even Rosemary, but just focusing and repeating the words would have to do. "Unravel, untie, unloose these binds. Unknot, undo, make these ties unwind," he read and looked up at the roots, directing the words at them, "Unravel, untie, unloose these binds. Unknot, undo makes these ties unwind!"

The roots twitched and then there was a crackling noise, and suddenly the roots started snapping away from Blaine's body. Kurt grabbed Blaine's arm and hauled him forward with all his strength. Blaine was released and he came toppling down on top of Kurt. Kurt lay on the muddy ground holding Blaine's arms and looking up at him. "Are you alright? Blaine, are you alright!"

Blaine nodded and smiled. "I think so."

Kurt sighed in relief as they both moved to stand up, backing away from the tree. Blaine was rubbing his chest and wincing.

"Are you sure you're okay?"

Blaine nodded again and took in a long deep breath. "Maybe a little bruised."

Kurt's vision was growing a little blurred, tears of relief in his eyes. He threw himself forward wrapping Blaine in his arms and pressing their lips together. Blaine stumbled a little at the onslaught, but when he regained his footing, he held onto Kurt and kissed him back. Rain was pouring over them and Kurt was cold down to his very bones, but he didn't care. "Oh my god, Blaine." Kurt sighed, breaking the kiss, "Don't scare me like that!" Before Blaine could respond, Kurt kissed him again, slotting their lips together and kissing until his cheeks felt warm.

When he finally broke the kiss and backed up, Blaine was looking at him with shining eyes and an awed expression. "Wow."

"How are you here, Blaine?"

"I went through the third floor mirror."

"On purpose?"

"Yes."

"Blaine, how could you!" Kurt swatted at him, but there was no force to it; he hated that he was relieved to have Blaine here.

"As if I could let you be trapped here alone."

"Oh, Blaine." Kurt cupped the back of his neck and leaned his forehead against Blaine's. Thunder shook through the forest. "What are we going to do?" Kurt's eyes were closed, but as lightning split through the sky, he opened them.

"Did you see that?"

Kurt looked behind his shoulder in the direction Blaine was staring.

"See what?"

Lightning struck again and Kurt could just make out a structure of some kind in the distance. "Is that a building?"

"It almost looked like a… castle."
"Where in hell are we?" Kurt shivered and wondered if hell was actually cold and wet and dark instead of hot and burning. Not that he believed in such things.

"We should go check it out."

Kurt raised his eyebrows. "You don't actually want to go there."

"Kurt, we can't just stand out in the pouring rain. We need somewhere to sit and think and come up with some kind of plan for getting home."

"And you think some random castle in the middle of a dark mirror world is the place to do that?"

"We could at least get closer and see what it is."

Kurt sighed, he didn't have any better ideas. "Okay, let's go."

Blaine leaned down and picked up the now sodden book bag, and Kurt slipped his magic book back in it.

Blaine smiled and reached for Kurt's hand, bringing it up to his lips and placing a soft kiss to his knuckles. "I didn't know if I'd ever see you again."

Kurt blinked back tears and brushed some of Blaine's soaked hair from his face. "Same here."

At first, they tried to hold hands as they made their way through the dark forest, only illuminated by Kurt's rock and the occasional flash of lightning, but soon found it wasn't practical with how slippery the terrain was, and as they neared the silhouette of a castle, the ground became steeper.

"Where did you get the glowing rock!?" Blaine shouted over the rain and thunder.

"It was just a rock, made it glow with a spell!"

"Of course you did!" Blaine sounded proud of him.

"How did you get my book?"

"It was delivered from Jane right after you… right after…" He stopped and Kurt turned to face him.

"After the mirror took me?"

Blaine nodded, looking grave.

"Come on," Kurt sent him a reassuring smile, "We're almost there."

The lightning did two things: one, it gave them their first good glimpse of where they were, and it was indeed a glassy forest of shimmering reflective trees; the other thing it did as they climbed up the hill to the castle was illuminate their destination. As they neared it, Kurt was relieved to find it wasn't a castle really, not anymore; it had been one once – now it was the ruins of a castle, large and sprawling over the plateau of the hill.

They reached the ruins and stood gazing at them for a moment, lightning illuminating the structure off and on and giving it strange shifting shadows. The castle must have been impressive and gorgeous in its day, but now it was the skeleton of a once great palace. It seemed to be made out of some kind of limestone, intermixed – as everything here was — with glass fragments. They carefully picked their way around fallen stones until they found a section of the building that looked less dilapidated than the rest.
"Over here." Blaine nodded, reaching out for Kurt's hand as they ducked under a low hanging stone arch. Kurt shivered as they finally got out of the cold rain and into the relative safety of a small, mostly intact stone room. There were some cracks in the mortar letting rivulets of water run down the walls and silvery vines were growing out and up the walls, but it was still a far cry better than the pelting rain.

Kurt wrapped his arms around himself as his teeth started chattering; now that he could relax a little, his body seemed to be realizing how cold it was. "We need to start a fire," Kurt said, looking around the empty room for some kind of kindling.

Kurt spun back around to face Blaine as he heard him clear his throat painfully, his hand was rubbing his chest again.

"Blaine, you're hurt." He rushed forward, but Blaine just shook his head.

"Just sore. And cold. A fire is a great idea."

Kurt bit the inside of his lip but didn't argue. Instead, he walked to the wall and started ripping ivy off the stones. Blaine lifted an eyebrow in question. "These are part glass, so be careful not to cut yourself, but I think they are enough plant to burn."

Blaine joined him and soon they had enough vines for Kurt to make a large nest surrounded by stone as a fire pit. He sat down cross legged on the, thankfully, mostly dry ground and held his hands over the vines whispering a fire charm under his breath. Within moments, a warm cheery flame blazed over the vines. "That should last a while."

"You sure are handy. I bet you earned all the boy scout badges."

Kurt grinned up at Blaine who was staring down at him with a smitten look on his face. It made Kurt's stomach flip over pleasantly. Kurt patted the ground beside him, but instead of joining him, Blaine just peeled his wet shirt off. Kurt watched with wide eyes as Blaine glanced around the room and then moved towards the doorway, and finding a couple large fallen stones, he rolled them one by one near the fire.

"What are you doing exactly?"

"Sitting around in wet cold clothes is miserable," Blaine answered, unzipping his pants and pulling them down. Kurt swallowed deeply. Blaine laid his clothes out on a stone and then stood there in nothing but his underwear with his hands on his hips. "You could dry yours too, you know."

"Blaine Anderson, are you trying to get me out of my clothes?"

Blaine placed a hand over his chest, his broad muscled lovely chest, and with a mock severe expression exclaimed, "Only for your own comfort."

Kurt stood with a chuckle, marveling that even in some strange otherworld surrounded by uncertainty and fear, Blaine could still somehow make him feel safe and cared for. He slipped off his sweater and shirt and pants, very aware of Blaine watching him, and laid them out on a stone near the fire. He wasn't really any colder than he had been with his clothes on, seeing as they were muddied and wet. But he did feel much more vulnerable. Blaine seemed to be very comfortable in his own skin, though, and easily sat cross-legged by the fire, holding his hands over the cobalt flames.

Kurt joined him, sitting almost shoulder to shoulder – for warmth of course. "Are you sure your chest is okay?" Kurt asked, reaching out without thinking and gently placing his hand over Blaine's heart.
"No broken ribs or anything serious?"

"What would you do if there were?"

"Worry," Kurt answered with a grimace.

Blaine smiled and shook his head. "I bet it will bruise tomorrow, but I'm fine." He leaned in and kissed Kurt's cheek. "I promise."

"You shouldn't have come, Blaine," Kurt said, his heart breaking a little. He couldn't bear the thought of being here on his own, but if it meant Blaine would be safe, he'd suffer it.

"I shouldn't have led you to Aunt Helen's room when we both knew we should have left." Blaine's voice caught a little.

"I shouldn't have insisted we go back to Callaway Place when you didn't want to. We... we could be at that lighthouse right now if it weren't for me." He felt a hot tear on his cheek and angrily swiped at it.

Blaine just ducked in and kissed him. "This is not your fault. My family. My curse."

Kurt shook his head, but he didn't want to argue. He was tired. And scared. And he felt helpless – a feeling he hated with a passion. "What are we going to do, Blaine?"

"We are going to sit here at least until our clothes are warm and dry, and we-" He leaned over to the book bag and pulled out Kurt's magic book, "We are going to look in here for anything you think might help us get home."

Kurt took the book, opening it and laying it out by the fire to dry, "If Jane saw that I drenched this book again she would be outraged."

"I still can't believe it arrived right after you vanished."

"That was fortuitous."

"You're going to see her again."

Kurt looked up from the book to Blaine's earnest face.

"Jane. You're going to get home again."

"We both are," Kurt said, putting on a brave face. He wanted to flip through his book immediately looking for some magic to try, but he needed to let it dry, one page at a time before flipping to the next. It still wouldn't be in as good a condition as when Jane restored it, but it would have to do.

"So where do you think we are?"

"Saffron thought the other side of the mirror was a fairy world filled with unimaginable power. This place is magical and as eerie as all get out, but I don't know that it is an all-powerful fairy realm."

"It used to be something more though," Blaine said, looking around their small room. "People must have lived here? I mean someone built this castle. Or maybe not people... but something built it."

Kurt shivered, "They seem to be long gone now though."

"And we definitely aren't on earth, right? I mean the trees and the stones and just everything is made
"I saw a rabbit," Kurt added, "It was also part mirror."

"Disturbing."

"Do you think there's a chance that..." Kurt hesitated, loath to bring up a subject that might hurt Blaine, "Do you think this is where your aunt was those three days she went missing?"

Blaine worried his lip before nodding slightly, looking down at his lap, "Undoubtedly."

They both remained silent for a moment, neither of them bringing up the fact that three days here had driven Helen mad.

"Saffron!" Blaine cried out, lifting his head.

Kurt's heart all but stopped beating. "Wait! What?"

"No no. Sorry." Blaine was quick to assure him, "I'm so sorry." He took both of Kurt's hands and held them in his own, until Kurt started breathing normally again. "I just remembered I have Saffron's journal too." He let go of Kurt's hands and reached in the book bag again, pulling out the diary and handing it to Kurt.

It was wet as well, but not as bad as Kurt's book since it had stayed protected in Blaine's bag this whole time.

"Oh my god Blaine I lo-" Kurt stopped, cleared his throat, "You are amazing."

Blaine gave him a small half smile and then moved closer to him. They leaned side by side as they went through the journal meticulously reading every word on mirrors they could.

"Listen to this," Blaine said, finding a section that confused him, 'I quickly concluded that a traveling mirror would be necessary in my endeavors, I must conjure one before I continue on. I hope it will be as simple as I believe it will be, but I know it is essential even if it takes me some time to perfect it.'

What is that? A traveling mirror?"

Kurt's brow was furrowed as he scanned the passage Blaine was referencing; he tried to not be distracted by Blaine's warm skin pressed against his side. "That's... that's just the third floor mirror isn't it?"

"I don't think so, I mean this is after she already had plans to endow her family's mirror with power, this seems separate."

Kurt sighed and rubbed his eyes. He was tired, not the strange enchanted sleepiness that he first experienced here, but actually bone deep tired. So much had happened so fast and it was catching up to him. "I mean, I did travel through the mirror in your aunt's room, so maybe she had several traveling mirrors? But one all-powerful one?" Kurt yawned and looked up from the book to Blaine's face.

He was close, his eyes warm and tender and his red lips tipped up in a smile.

"What?"

"You're adorable when you're sleepy," Blaine said.

Kurt's cheeks flushed, "You aren't so bad looking yourself."
Blaine chuckled at that. "God, Kurt, I'm tired."

Kurt chewed his lip for a moment and then glanced at the warm bright fire. He shut Saffron's journal and placed it next to his own magic book before getting up to his knees and shuffling over until he was straddling Blaine's lap, "We should rest."

Blaine gulped, his eyes wide, "Rest?"

Kurt nodded and leaned down to kiss him, lips gentle but needy, working against Blaine's lips until they parted and Kurt was able to deepen the kiss. Their now warm and dry chests pressed together and Kurt's fingers tangled in Blaine's unruly curls. Blaine's strong hands were anchored on Kurt's hips as he kissed him, his breath on Kurt's skin as he tightened his grip.

Kurt pulled back breathlessly, but Blaine just lay down backwards taking Kurt with him, kissing him again from his lips to his chin to his neck. Kurt wasn't sure how much time passed before he found himself lying side by side with Blaine, the lights from the flames dancing off Blaine's bronze skin.

Kurt felt much more at ease; while the danger of their situation was still in the back of his mind, he let himself enjoy this moment lying close to Blaine and softly tracing patterns up and down his arm. "Do you still think Saffron is behind all of this?" Kurt asked and Blaine sighed.

"You said yourself you don't think magic could act this way on its own."

"I just don't understand what is going on. Other worlds are well out of my scope of magical knowledge."

Blaine nodded and brushed his nose against Kurt's. "We'll rest now. We have the books and... and each other. We're going to find a way out of this."

"Okay," Kurt said, placing a soft kiss to his lips. "Okay." And he believed him.

Kurt awoke sometime later, lying on the dirt ground and not able to place where he was. He was cold and shivering and practically naked. He sat up quickly, fear like a knot in his stomach. He saw the magical fire almost out and remembered where he was; his relief was only momentary, though, as he remembered that where he was was someplace awful.

"Blaine?" He looked around; he'd fallen asleep curled next to Blaine, but he wasn't there now. Which might explain why Kurt was so cold. "Blaine!" Kurt jumped to his feet. "Oh thank god."

Blaine was huddled against the wall of the building by the doorway, dressed again and with Saffron's journal in his hands, apparently reading by the light of his phone. "Blaine, what are you doing?" Kurt asked, pulling on his pants and slipping on his shoes.

Blaine didn't look up from the diary.

"Blaine?" Kurt slipped his shirt over his head and grabbed his sweater, moving to kneel in front of Blaine. "Couldn't sleep? You could have read by the fire where it is warmer." Kurt noticed the sky outside was a dull bloody red and he hoped that wasn't what daytime looked like in this place. "Hey, Blaine? You with me?" Kurt smiled at him and ducked his head to try and meet Blaine's eyes.

Blaine looked up slowly from the pages he was studying, his expression was grim, brow creased and lips pressed into a straight line and his eyes... Kurt swallowed deeply—they were bloodshot and severe and his gold irises danced with some kind of strong emotion Kurt couldn't place.

"Blaine," Kurt said quietly, reaching out to place a hand on his arm, "What's wrong?"
Blaine shook Kurt's hand off him and stood with what almost sounded like a growl.

"Blaine," Kurt stood as well. "What's going on?"

Blaine's lip curled up in a snarl and his eyes burned; they almost seemed like they were on fire like Saffron's eyes in the painting. Something was very wrong here; this was not the face of the kind, tender man he knew. Blaine pushed Kurt roughly out of the way. Kurt stumbled but didn't fall.

Blaine marched to the now dying fire and tossed Saffron's journal in the flames.

"NO! What the hell are you doing!" Kurt ran towards the fire, reaching carefully for the corner of the book and trying to pull it out without burning himself. "What's wrong with you? We need this!" Kurt hissed as he burned his fingertips but was able to fish the book from the flames. He looked up at Blaine whose eyes were still burning and who was raking his hands through his hair.

"Blaine?"

"Shut up!" Blaine shouted and then clamped his mouth closed.

Kurt stood slowly and stepped towards him like approaching a frightened animal, "What happened, Blaine?"

"Don't come near me!" Blaine growled, "Just fucking leave me alone!"

Blaine was frightening when he was angry; he was smaller than Kurt but seemed giant now with this fury flowing through him, his cheeks flushed and his eyes hot. Kurt was worried he was going to start pulling his hair out with the way his hands were scrambling over his scalp. "Just leave me alone please." Blaine's voice was much quieter now, desperate, as he turned on his heel and fled the little room they'd been so relaxed and happy in just hours before.

"Blaine!" Kurt called after him, heart in his throat. Something was wrong with Blaine, and as Kurt hurriedly collected Blaine's bag and his magic book and rushed to follow after him, he couldn't help but think of Aunt Helen – muddied and confused – found wandering the third floor without her wits.

Kurt ran faster.
"It is said that power corrupts, but actually it's more true that power attracts the corruptible. The sane are usually attracted by other things than power." - David Brin

She sat, back straight, shoulders squared, and pale neck long – she had always prided herself on her perfect posture – she was reading in the drawing room, going over her own journal, her sharp golden eyes scanning every word, every incantation, every spell.

That one would have to go.

She carefully tore out a few pages, setting them on the table beside her to burn with the others.

"Saffy."

She breathed through her nose and tried to keep from scowling; he knew how much she hated that nickname. She looked up with a tight smile as her nitwit of a husband entered the room.

"What are you doing? More reading?" Henry slumped down into the chair opposite her, "You know too much thinking isn't good for pretty little feminine heads."

Saffron's smile soured as she tore one last page from her journal. "Too much thinking," she stood taking the pile of torn out pages with her, "has never been a problem you have suffered from." She tossed the pages in the fireplace and then turned to face her husband, "Dear."

They just stared at each other for a silent moment, neither saying what they wanted to say; they were always painfully polite to each other when they were fighting – unless Henry had been drinking of course – and then he was a loose cannon, a dangerous cannon at that.

"Where are the children this afternoon?" He asked, changing the subject; her steely look must have quelled him – this time.

"With your mother," Saffron smoothed her skirt and walked to the drink cart pouring some sherry into a glass for her husband.

"They are there too often Saffron," Henry said sternly, "They should be with their mother."

"And when was the last time you spent time with the twins?" Saffron wasn't holding her tongue the way she'd trained herself to, not today. It wouldn't really matter soon anyway, she just had to remain civil long enough to get her husband out the front door. She popped open the tiny latch in the ring she wore on her right hand and poured the contents into the sherry; it dissolved quickly and she whispered an incantation over it under her breath.

"- and honestly Saffy, I don't know where the woman I married has gone. One does grow tired of your mercurial nature." Henry was ranting again, but she only heard the last part. She wanted to laugh, to throw the drink in his face and tell him she was still every bit the woman he'd married. Strong, independent, vastly smarter than him, he just had never really cared to understand her. All he saw was a pretty face, and she was so much more than that, especially now.

"I apologize for behaving disrespectfully dear," Saffron said, turning to him and handing him the glass – she gave him a real true smile, the kind she knew turned men's heads and had attracted Henry to her in the first place. "Have a drink before you go to the club."
Henry grabbed the glass, taking a swig and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, "Some changes need to be made around here."

"Of course," Saffron folded her hands in front of her meekly, "you would know best."

Henry lifted his chin proudly, "Make sure cook has dinner on the table as soon as I get home this evening."

Heat rose under Saffron's skin but she just smiled and nodded, walking him to the front door. Henry kissed her cheek before he left, making her skin crawl.

Saffron closed the door behind her imbecile of a husband, her one comfort being that she would probably never have to see him again. She turned quickly and made her way up the wide staircase to the second floor, lifting her many skirts and petticoats as she went. Henry didn't know their cook wouldn't be making dinner that night; she'd given the entire staff the rest of the day off and carted the children off to their grandparents. She paused a moment thinking about the children. Would she miss them? Children she had never wanted in the first place?

They were sweet children, and it wasn't their fault they'd been born into an unhappy home. Yes, she might miss them a little, but she knew they'd be alright. Both her son and daughter were strong and smart like her, not like their father – and honestly their grandmother would raise them better than she ever could. Saffron wasn't the kind of woman meant to have children… not that she'd been given a choice.

Besides, she was leaving all her spells and knowledge behind; if her offspring were as bright as she hoped they were, they might discover magic for themselves someday.

She shook off thoughts of what would soon be her past and made her way down the south hallway, stopping in front of the portrait of herself in the corridor. Henry had had it commissioned right after their marriage and she prided herself that she still looked as young and as handsome as she did when she sat for it. Of course, her youth and loveliness spells had helped with that, but in a society where beauty was her only currency, casting beauty magic was the shrewd thing to do.

Saffron closed her eyes and slid her polished fingernail down her face in the portrait while whispering incantations, and a breeze started in the hallway, making her skirts flutter and her perfectly curled golden hair ruffle. She opened her eyes to stare into matching painted ones. A grim smile slipped onto her lips.

She'd taken many precautions, done everything she could to ensure safe travel. She'd torn out parts of her journal that might make it possible to undo her magic, she'd put a stupefying spell on her husband (not that it made much difference as he was already an imbecile), she'd enchanted her traveling mirrors, and now this, this was the last safeguard.

"Fulfill my magic, make it strong," Saffron whispered the incantation again, "Protect me from all that would go wrong. Have this likeness watch for me, until one comes to set me free."

"Quoadusque aliquis reponere mihi." The eyes in the portrait blinked and then sparkled back at her.

The breeze gushed through the hall almost knocking Saffron off her feet; she smiled in excitement. It was time. Saffron winked at her portrait and turned away, letting her fingers glide over the carving of a stag on the door that led up to her third floor salon. It was the only place in the whole house, in the entire world, that was just for her. Originally meant to be a nursery for the children and converted when the nanny insisted three flights of stairs was just too much for her.
Saffron was happiest here, if you could count anything she'd felt during the last ten years as happy. There was a plush blue rug on the floor and gold flower-patterned wallpaper on the walls, there were tables and chairs and medical tools and contraptions – she'd studied medicine for some time and its links to magic – there was a wardrobe on the far end where she kept her ingredients and extra supplies. She even had a few human skulls and a full skeleton of a boar back in the smaller rooms.

This is where she practiced magic. No one in the house entered the third floor; if the protective spell she'd cast over it wasn't enough of a deterrent, the powerful and too sweet smell of sulfur, candied pigs feet and drying Geranium would be enough to keep them at bay – just a few of the ingredients she kept on hand.

Of course, only one thing on the third floor drew her attention today – the tall gleaming full-length mirror her father had brought over with him from their homeland in Denmark. She smiled when she saw the glass smoothly bending in and out, a light clinking noise coming from the mirror. It was time. She ran her hand down the cool metal of the frame and over the fairy emblem she'd etched there. Leaning her head against the glass as she breathed in the honeysuckle she'd coated it in.

She stood back and reached to the small table nearby and grabbed a silver handheld mirror – part of a pair she'd carefully enchanted as a sort of backdoor, a safeguard for if things went wrong and she needed to get back to earth. Then, she grabbed the suitcase she'd packed beforehand.

It really was time. She stared hard at her reflection in the glass, eyes narrowed as she called upon all the magic within her and all her excess magic hosted in the mirror, "Open!" she commanded and then took a step through the glass to the other side. To her new life – a life of freedom, of enchantment and of unrelenting power.

Blaine ran through the forest, hearing someone following quickly after him – Kurt it was Kurt chasing him. It didn't matter, he wouldn't slow. Things had changed drastically since he'd fallen asleep next to Kurt last night, watching Kurt's face by the light of the fire. He'd fallen asleep frightened of the world they'd found themselves in, but comforted to know at least he wasn't alone.

That had all changed this morning. He woke up as a cold shiver crawled down his back and sat up quickly, suddenly feeling like he and Kurt weren't alone. Blaine glanced around the empty room, illuminated only by the fire that Kurt had lit with his magic. There was no one else here, still, the tingling in his spine didn't go away. He glanced down to Kurt, sleeping with his hands folded under his cheek and his lips gently parted and wearing only his boxer briefs, his pale skin lit by the dancing flames.

Blaine smiled and softly brushed some hair off Kurt's forehead so he could see his face better. "I love you," he whispered.

He'd been careful not to say the words out loud again to Kurt since the first time. Even though, when he'd been freed from that tree, they'd almost come tumbling from his unbidden lips. He even thought that Kurt had almost said the words himself once – but still, he wasn't going to push. He suspected Kurt might feel the same way he did, or if he didn't, maybe he could someday, but Blaine wasn't going to pressure him, especially with everything else going on. Kurt had reasons to be wary around Blaine, and he knew that.

Blaine glanced back up to the room, whipping his head around to look behind him when he could have sworn he felt a presence just at his back. "Who's there?" Blaine hissed out, not wanting to wake Kurt. Which was silly really because if they weren't alone he should definitely wake Kurt.

It had to be his imagination, but he was too tense to go back to sleep now, no matter how unbearably
tired he was. Instead of trying to sleep, he grabbed Saffron's journal from where it lay next to Kurt, leaned up against one of the stones their clothes were drying on, and started to read.

"Fairy magic, stronger than anything known in this realm... Unquenchable power... Worlds of freedom and magic and light." Blaine read Saffron's words under his breath to himself and huffed out a skeptical breath. Worlds of magic and light? That wasn't this place.

He started to shiver despite the fire and decided to slip on his clothes even though they were still slightly damp. He couldn't stop reading the journal, keeping his eyes on it even as he fumbled one-handed into his clothing and slipping on his still muddy shoes.

"Once I find it there will be no return," Saffron had written. Blaine didn't like those words. He found he'd moved away from Kurt and the fire as he'd read; he wasn't sure why, but he didn't want to go back, be that close to Kurt right now. Instead, he sat down by the door. There was a pale red light coming from outside, but it was not bright enough to read by, so Blaine fished his phone out of his pocket and used its light.

"I won't be subject to another, not again. Not in this life." Blaine's throat tightened, most of what Saffron wrote was of magic, with little insight into her personal life; still, Blaine got the distinct impression she was unhappy.

In his previous perusals, Blaine had skipped over this particular passage because it didn't deal directly with magic; he couldn't turn away from it now. "Only power will satisfy me, only power will free me," Blaine found he was still reading out loud – not a usual habit of his – and as he said the words out loud, he felt them.

"Never again will my love be wasted on a useless man," Blaine spat Saffron's words out and glanced up at Kurt's still sleeping form, a shutter of anger ran through his body. Not anger at Kurt... why would he be angry at Kurt? His eyes flitted back to the journal. Saffron seemed to be on a rampage, "I will find my way to the fairy realm and master their power, I will not be stopped."

Blaine felt too warm, his blood pumping through his veins like fire and his chest crawling with an anger that didn't belong to him. He should put the journal down, he should stop reading. He'd felt this unexplainable anger before since coming back to Callaway Place and he'd excused it as exhaustion, but now he was scared it was something else. Something that he couldn't control. He read on.

Saffron's anger was like sharp knives over his skin, his hands were shaking and his vision blurred, the writing on the page started to dance, the letters moving around and forming new words. The red of the sky outside reflected off the pages and Blaine's breathing became labored. "I will not be stopped even now I cannot be tamed. You have come to set me free."

"Hey, Blaine? You with me?"

Blaine blinked, his eyes stinging as if he'd been crying. Kurt was crouched in front of him, a tender smile on his lips. Anger bubbled inside of Blaine, ready to boil over.

Kurt reached out, touching Blaine's arm and Blaine tossed it off; he wanted to shout at Kurt not to touch him, but he was having trouble finding his voice. He surged to his feet, Saffron's journal in his hands. Destroy it. A voice echoed in his head. Destroy it and come to me.

Blaine was standing in front of the fire – he didn't even remember moving there – he glanced down
at the journal in his hand and then tossed it into the flames.

"NO! What the hell are you doing!"

Kurt's words felt like fire in his belly. Kurt needed to be quiet. Kurt needed to go away. Kurt needed to stop trying to control him. Stop telling him what to do.

"Shut up!" Blaine screamed; as soon as the words were out of his mouth, a part of him wanted to laugh in relief.

"What happened, Blaine?" Kurt asked tentatively, and Blaine could barely lift his eyes to look at him the anger inside of him so intense.

"Don't come near me! Just fucking leave me alone!" Blaine could hear the words coming out of his mouth; he knew it was him yelling at Kurt, but it didn't fully feel like him, he couldn't rein it in, he couldn't stop it. Amongst his anger there was fear, fear of what was happening to him, fear of this place, but also fear of what he might do to Kurt if he came any nearer to him. "Just leave me alone please."

_Come to me, it's your destiny._ The voice in his head gave him a solution, a way out, he didn't have to face Kurt – he could flee.

Blaine ran. Past Kurt, through the stone arched doorway and into the red-dappled landscape beyond. The glistening mirrored world was morbid and harsh in the light of what had to be a dull red sun. Its rays reflected off the mirrored stones of the ruined castle. _They wouldn't listen._ The voice said. _They wouldn't help me. They got what they deserved._

He ran, almost tumbling down the hill, back to the forest, the glass in the trees and on the foliage and stones reflecting blood red light over everything. _This world was meant to be my escape. It betrayed me. It had to be punished._

That's how Blaine found himself running through the forest, heart in his throat as he kept sprinting and his feet guiding him through a world he shouldn't know how to navigate.

He only stopped when he tripped and sprawled down on the ground, his chin hitting the hard forest floor and his chest aching from the bruises he'd sustained the day before. Thick gnarled tree roots started inching their way towards him. "Stop!" Blaine shouted, but he wasn't even sure it was him shouting, and the roots immediately recoiled.

"Blaine!" Kurt fell to his knees beside him, panting hard and looking terrified.

"Hurts," Blaine moaned as he shifted to his hands and knees and then slumped down to sit in the dirt.

"What?" Kurt's eyes were wide, his hands hovering near Blaine but not touching him.

"It hurts. My chest hurts," Blaine repeated, drawing in a ragged breath; he hadn't realized until this moment how much his chest hurt from the tree roots squeezing him the day before. One good thing about the pain, though, was it distracted from the anger. Right now, his words and thoughts felt like his own.

"Okay I… Blaine, I don't know what's going on." Kurt's fingers twitched, as if not reaching out for
Blaine was physically difficult for him. His voice was strained and his eyes were a little damp.

The things Blaine had said back at the ruins started flooding back to him, making him feel unsteady and deeply remorseful, "Oh god, Kurt, I'm so sorry."

Kurt bit his lip, looking conflicted, "Can you show me where it hurts?"

Blaine nodded, reaching down to the hem of his Henley and lifting it over his head. He shivered, the bloodshot sun of this place did very little to warm him.

"Oh, my god."

Blaine glanced down to see what Kurt was staring at. "Oh," he whispered, seeing the purple and blue blooming like pressed roses over his chest and abdomen.

"Blaine, why didn't you tell me it was this bad?" Kurt's voice had gone high with worry. "I need… I need ginger and frog legs… and mint."

"I didn't pack any of that," Blaine joked, trying to lighten the tense air between them.

Kurt glanced up to meet his eyes, "No, you didn't come very prepared."

Blaine smiled.

"Though neither did I." Kurt sighed and ran a hand through his thick messy hair. Blaine had never seen Kurt so unkempt. Muddy clothes, dirt streaked down one cheek, hair in disarray. He was still the most beautiful man Blaine had ever known. And the kindest. The memory of the way he'd yelled at Kurt just moments ago hurt almost as much as his bruises.

"I know an incantation that could at least help with the pain until I figure out what else I can do. Can I…" Kurt swallowed, looking suddenly shy, "Can I touch you?"

Blaine furrowed his brow in confusion, "Of course you can."

"Well, you didn't seem to want me near you just a moment ago." Kurt very gently placed both of his palms on Blaine's chest and closed his eyes.

"Kurt, I'm really really sorry. I don't know-"

"Shh." Kurt soothed, "Let me do this and then we'll talk about it."

He started to whisper a charm, but Blaine was only half listening as he let his tense body relax under Kurt's careful, tender touch, and maybe this wasn't healing him, but god he felt so much better. The pain started to slowly subside at Kurt's words, but as the pain started to fade, the anger started to swirl in the back of Blaine's mind again, as confusing as before but warm and sharp under his skin. **No one uses magic on me.**

"Stop," Blaine commanded.

Kurt stopped whispering immediately and looked up at Blaine in confusion. "Did I hurt you?"

Blaine quickly stumbled to his feet, his shirt still bundled in his hand, bruises still marring his chest. He slipped his shirt back on quickly and took a step away from Kurt.

"I didn't mean to hurt you." Kurt rushed to his feet, eyes round and worried.
"Stop just stop. Stop using magic." No one uses magic here but me.

"I was trying to help," Kurt snapped, but his expression just looked hurt.

Trust no magic but your own. "I don't have any magic!" Blaine shouted to the voice in his head.

"Blaine?" Kurt's arms were folded against his chest protectively and he seemed wary of Blaine. "I didn't know that bothered you and... and you could have magic, it is in your family."

Blaine shook his head, not able to listen to Kurt and the voice at the same time. She was getting angry again and Blaine ran his fingernails up and down his arms in frustration.

Kurt's eyes followed the action, light dawning behind his eyes. "It's happening, whatever happened back at that castle. What is it?"

Ignore the boy. Come to me.

"Blaine, I can't help you if you don't tell me what's going on."

He can't help you at all.

Kurt took a small step forward, "Please, Blaine."

Don't let him near you! Stop him!

"Stop!" Blaine shouted, and then he was moving, feet sure, hands fast. He had hold of Kurt, pushing him backwards until Kurt's back collided with a mirrored tree, the red sun glistening off it like rubies. Blaine's hands held Kurt's arms tight, his face an inch away from Kurt's and his knee bent to lock Kurt against the tree. "This is your fault. This is all you fault!"

Kurt's eyes were huge and filled with tears, his hands up in surrender. "Blaine, please, you're hurting me."

It took a slow sluggish moment for Kurt's words to sink into his mind, which was swirling with so much rage and hatred that he could hardly breathe, but when they did sink in, something inside of Blaine broke – a snap and then the anger quieted, the rage stilled. It was still there but not in control anymore.

Blaine didn't think he'd ever moved so fast in his life. He jumped away from Kurt as if burned, hands raised and pulse beating in his ears.

"No no no no." Blaine's chest felt hollow – he'd yelled at Kurt, he'd frightened him, he'd hurt him. "I don't want to hurt you. I never want to hurt you. Why am I always hurting you?"

Kurt was still backed up against the tree, not making a move to come closer, but the fear had died down in his eyes, "Was that even you? You've never hurt me before. What are you—"

"I have hurt you before," Blaine mumbled under his breath, looking down at his shoes.

"What was that?"

Blaine took a deep, steadying breath and looked up at Kurt again, "I have hurt you before. When I was eighteen and chose not to speak to you through the mirror anymore and then didn't try to contact you again for six whole years. I know I hurt you."

Kurt swallowed, but didn't answer.
"I know we've grown up and we've both changed, but I don't think you've changed that much - I mean I don't think it is the fact that you're an adult now that has changed you. You used to trust me. You used to tell me everything. You hesitate now, you hold things back. You aren't completely you around me and I know why. I know it's my fault. I know I did this to us."

The anger was just a quiet murmuring in the back of Blaine's brain now; mostly, he felt all of the guilt and sorrow he'd been trying to ignore since going through the mirror in New York and finding his best friend again only to discover they weren't really best friends anymore.

"I know I apologized before… I think I apologized before? But, Kurt, what I did was... awful, it was selfish and it was... it was the worst choice I've ever made. I'm sorry I keep hurting you."

Kurt looked stunned, he was still a few feet away from Blaine, but he was leaning towards him again.

"Oh, and none of this is your fault. I don't know why I said that, I'm not sure I said that. Just... sorry about that too. What else do I need to apologize for?" Blaine ran his hand through his curls and winced at what they must look like, "Because I will, I'll do it, I'll do anything to earn your trust. That's all I want and... and here I am screaming at you and pushing you against trees and..." Blaine looked down at his muddy shoes again. They had been expensive and were ruined now. "I don't know what else to say."

Blaine heard the crunch of the forest floor beneath Kurt's feet and then he felt the light brush of fingertips against his cheek.

"Look at me?" It was a soft supplication and Blaine immediately looked up.

Kurt's blue eyes were watery, but he no longer looked afraid, and his cheeks were rosy, his lips slightly turned up in a smile. "I forgive you."

"No, Kurt, you don't understand, it isn't that easy. Six years and I lost your trust and now look where we are and..."

"And I forgive you." Kurt shrugged. "I hadn't really before this, you're right in thinking I've been holding back, but I do now. Forgiveness is a choice, Blaine. And you aren't perfect and I know I'm not, but I choose to trust and forgive you, Blaine." He cupped Blaine's face with his hand, and Blaine could feel his thumb swiping away tears. "I want to be best friends again."

"I want that too."

"But first." Kurt smiled, and there wasn't a real sun in this horrible place, but when Kurt smiled like that, Blaine didn't need one. "You have to tell me what the hell is happening to you so we can stop it and focus on getting home."

Blaine nodded and tried to smile back, "It's Saffron."

"Okay..." Kurt's thumb was still stroking Blaine's cheek. "What do you mean 'it's Saffron'?"

"The anger. The violence. The words. I was reading her journal out loud and then her words became my words, or no, maybe my words became hers? I don't know, but I can hear her in my head and she is pissed off."

Kurt blinked a couple of times, "Oh."

"Do you think I'm crazy?" Blaine asked, his voice barely above a whisper, as he thought about his
aunt.

Kurt shook his head, "No."

"Do you think she could be here? Saffron? She came through the mirror a century ago, I know, but what if she is still here? Is that possible?"

"Blaine, there is nothing to worry about, but I want you to very slowly turn around." If Kurt's voice hadn't been so calm, instructions like that would have made Blaine nervous, but trust went both ways and he trusted Kurt. He slowly turned. Kurt leaned in, his hands on Blaine's shoulders, until one pointed past his face, "Look in that tree right in front of us."

It took a moment, but then Blaine saw movement in the pale red light – there was something small scurrying across a tree branch – it stopped and stood on its hind legs, its crystal nose sniffing and its little tail twitching, casting red light off of it.

"Is that a… chipmunk?"

"Yes."

"A living chipmunk made of glass."

"Yes."

The chipmunk hurried off out of sight and Kurt rounded on Blaine, his hands anchoring his shoulders again as he faced him, "Blaine, I think anything is possible in this place. Yeah, Saffron could still be here, and of course I believe she is affecting you somehow because the angry frightening Blaine I've encountered this morning? That is… it is, he is so not you."

Blaine felt like crying in relief, he didn't feel like he deserved the loving trust Kurt was placing in him, especially after this morning. "Thank you."

Kurt just chuckled and leaned it to press his lips against Blaine's in a soft, short kiss. Blaine wanted to wrap Kurt in his arms and get him somewhere safe, but they had to deal with Saffron first.

"You're not going to like this," Blaine said, his face close to Kurt's, but not in a threatening way this time, it just felt right to be close. "But I think Saffron wants me to come to her, um, I know she wants me to come to her and I think… I think it is the only way to get her out of my head."

"She's still there?" Kurt asked quietly, his voice had a slight nervous edge to it.

"She isn't in control anymore, but I can feel her anger under my skin."

Kurt's eyebrows rose and he looked like he was very carefully schooling his expression not to show any fear, "Okay, great."

Kurt hadn't been pleased when Blaine explained he felt like he knew where they needed to go. "It's like I have a compass inside me. I know where we have to go," Blaine had said.

They'd argued over whether or not it was a trap, finally concluding that, of course, it was probably a trap, but what else could they do? Kurt had wanted to ignore Saffron's apparent summons and focus on getting back home.

"She'll still be there even if we get back, I could feel her there too." Blaine thought back to the few times in the past week that he'd felt irrational anger out of nowhere, and the dreams Saffron had been
haunting him with. "The pull is just stronger here, but now that she has hold of me… Kurt, she isn't
going to just let go. Even if we get out of here, and what… what if we leave and I end up like..."
Blaine didn't want to say out loud what he was thinking, but they both knew the worry.

If Saffron somehow had hold of Blaine, would running from her make him lose his mind like Aunt
Helen? It was pure speculation, of course, but a real fear nonetheless.

Kurt's face had gone a little pale at that, and so he agreed to follow Blaine's gut, but not before they
explored a little bit, trying to get ingredients for some protection and defensive spells.

"This is hogweed," Kurt said, plucking a few bunches of tiny white flowers, "Well, hogweed and
glass. I think we can separate it out, though. And that's arrow arum." Kurt pointed to a leafy green
plant.

Blaine knelt down to pick some.

"We need rose oil or clove oil as a conductor, but water will have to do." Kurt's voice was shaking.

Blaine glanced up from what he was doing to see Kurt's hands trembling as he separated hogweed
flowers from glass. Blaine moved to kneel beside him, covering Kurt's hands in his own, "Kurt."

"We are about to face a powerful angry witch with no plan, no back up, and only my slap-shot
magic as a defense."

"Kurt."

Kurt glanced up, and Blaine smiled when he saw more determination in Kurt's eyes than fear, "And
don't you dare tell me I can focus on getting home while you go face her on your own."

Blaine clamped his lips shut, that was exactly what he was about to suggest. Anger stirred in his
chest, but he knew it wasn't his anger so he resolutely pushed it down. "We shouldn't do this."

"But you just told me that you had to find her to get her out of your head."

"Not like this." Blaine felt like he was thinking a little more clearly now; he needed to be practical
and not base his decisions on his worry or Saffron's anger. "We should get back to our world. If she
is... if she still has some kind of link with me, at least there we might have the resources to fight her."

"And if we get back and you're... not you anymore?"

Blaine didn't have an answer that would help Kurt because what he wanted to say was at least you'd
be safe, and that wasn't what Kurt wanted to hear.

Kurt sighed, his shoulders slumping, "The truth is I have no idea how to get us back home anyway."
Kurt was sitting on a glassy fallen tree trunk, the red light from the sky making his skin look rosy.
Blaine moved from where he was kneeling in front of him to sit next to him on the log.

They were silent for a moment, Kurt looking at the flowers in his hands, Blaine's eyes taking in the
morose forest around them. "I don't think it was always like this here. Wherever here is."

Kurt glanced up to follow his gaze. "You mean the forest?"

"I mean everything. Saffron said some things… in my head. About punishing people, about giving
this place what it deserved. I think that castle may be in ruins because of her – I think something
really bad went down here and we are seeing the aftermath."
Kurt laughed and Blaine looked at him. "That doesn't make me feel better at all."

"Don't you see, though? If this world wasn't always so empty and dissolute, if there were people or beings here that had magic… they wouldn't really like Saffron that much would they?"

"Okay…"

"So maybe if we could find some of the original inhabitants-"

"No." Kurt cut him off, "If there are other beings here, who says they are friendly? And how would we find them anyway? We haven't encountered anything here that would make me think there's something here that wants to help us." Kurt stopped talking, his eyes growing round.

"What?" Blaine's pulse sped up. "What is it? What's wrong?"

"There is something here that helped me. When I was here alone, I panicked and ran around like a mad man until I slipped in the mud and fell asleep."

Blaine's throat felt suddenly dry picturing Kurt alone here in the dark and full of fear. It made him feel sick.

"I had this dream… except it might not have been a dream. And a voice told me to get up and look for you because you were in danger. The voice even reminded me about the Theia spell I enchanted that rock with that led me to you."

"A voice?"

"A female voice." Kurt was smiling like he'd just been given a gift.

Blaine's stomach churned. "You mean Saffron spoke to you too?"

Kurt quickly shook his head. "No. I recognized this voice, though I haven't had a chance to really think about it. Blaine, it wasn't Saffron, it was Helen. It was your aunt and she helped me find you."

"That… doesn't make sense."

Kurt lifted an eyebrow, "Really, Blaine? That's the part of all of this that doesn't make sense to you?"

"I just…"

But Kurt was on his feet pacing back and forth and talking with his hands, "Blaine, it does make sense, spectral transference, or something similar, it could explain why I heard your aunt and why she isn't… why she's been unwell these past few years since coming here."

"Spectral transference?" Blaine asked, feeling lost.

"Here, look." Kurt sat back down next to him and pulled out his magic book from the book bag at their feet. As Kurt flipped through the pages, Blaine noticed the book was rather worse for wear; he felt guilty about that. He remembered not even wanting to touch it when the book first arrived, worrying he'd bleed on it. Blaine glanced down to his own palm, a long cut still etched there from broken glass. He was a little worse for wear himself. At least Kurt's magic was holding and his chest felt mostly better.

"Look. Here." Kurt turned the book towards Blaine, "It is in a chapter called 'Specters & Daemons."

"Uh-"
"Yeah I know, there are some things in this book that are a little uncomfortable and creepy, but this might help us."

Blaine glanced down to the section Kurt was indicating, and there was some text about a person's consciousness being disconnected from their body – to call it creepy was an understatement.

"Please don't tell me that that is what you think happened to my aunt," Blaine said, his eyes prickling with tears.

"Oh Blaine!" Kurt reached out for his hand, "It isn't as dark as it sounds, I mean – and this is just a guess – but it could be good news."

Anger flitted through his mind, making his cheeks flush and his heart beat heavier.

"Blaine?"

"Give me a second," Blaine said, and he hoped he hadn't snapped; as he closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths, he felt Kurt squeeze his hand reassuringly.

"Spectral transference." Blaine looked up at Kurt, "Explain." That time, he knew he snapped. Kurt flinched a little but didn't let go of his hand.

"A very condensed version is that sometimes when a lot of magic is involved, a person's consciousness can detach. Their body would be one place while their mind is somewhere else."

"And Helen?"

"What if she got home, but not all of her mind went with her?"

Blaine was quiet for a long time thinking it over; it gave him a headache, and the anger just under the surface of his skin was bubbling again, a sign that Saffron didn't like this conversation – which was really what made Blaine think it might be true. "That gives a whole new meaning to my aunt losing her mind." Blaine stated and Kurt stared at him worriedly.

"Okay." Blaine pushed the book back into Kurt's lap as he stood. "Okay then... if Helen is somehow both back in a mental institution in California and here as well, how do we contact her?"

Kurt could tell Blaine didn't like this, not at all. They'd talked for a long time, ignoring their growling stomachs and the sparkling forest around them. Blaine told Kurt everything he'd heard in his head from Saffron – which was frightening – and Kurt shared his plan for contacting Helen. Blaine did not like it, his folded arms and bunched thick eyebrows said as much.

Kurt didn't know how to contact Helen other than what he'd done before – fall asleep. It was an imperfect plan, but it was all he had. He was busy patching together an incantation from two others he knew that might help him contact Helen. Blaine was sitting near him, sulking, though his sour mood may have had something to do with the fact that he was having to clamp down on someone else's anger—an anger that wanted to come loose inside of him.

Kurt was so proud of Blaine, he was much stronger than he thought he was. "I'm going to perform this spell, but, Blaine? I want you to try to perform it too."

Blaine lifted his brows, "Why?"

"Because if you do have magic – and from what you've told me Saffron has been saying in your
head, you might – it will help," Kurt explained; having Blaine's magic strengthen the power of the spell, of any spell they did here, would be beyond helpful. It would be comforting too, to know Kurt's magic alone didn't have to get them back home. Blaine wasn't convinced.

"And if I don't have magic?"

Kurt shrugged, "It won't do anything at all."

"I still don't feel good about this. You putting a spell on yourself to make yourself sleep in the middle of a forest."

"You'll be awake. You'll be right here beside me." Kurt reached out to place his hand over Blaine's.

Blaine frowned, but flipped his hand over to hold Kurt's. "I can't tell if you have too much confidence in magic, or too much confidence in me."

Kurt just smiled at him, "I think this is the best plan we have at this point."

"Well, it is better than mine. Just go off to meet Saffron head on."

"Vastly better," Kurt nodded his head teasingly and was rewarded by a soft smile from Blaine.

That was it then. Nothing left to do. Kurt looked down at the spell he'd scrawled in the margins of his magic book. He had spliced together spells before, and this was simple magic, so he felt confident about it. A spell to both fall asleep and keep your subconscious open and listening. Kurt glanced to Blaine. "You'll read it with me?"

Blaine nodded and Kurt lay down on his back, folding his hands on his stomach and closing his eyes, shutting out the dimly lit crimson forest around them. He could feel Blaine sit near him and scoot close. "Ready?" Kurt asked and smiled when Blaine's voice chimed in alongside his reciting the simple words of Kurt's spell. They repeated them a few times, and then Blaine took over as Kurt yawned, his mind feeling fuzzy and…

"Did it not work?" Kurt asked, blinking his eyes open; alarm momentarily overtook him when he couldn't see anything. He sat up in the darkness around him and heard a gentle voice behind his shoulder.

"Kurt?"

He turned to see an older woman approaching him, salt and pepper hair, a simple black dress, green glasses.

"It is so nice to see you, Kurt." Helen Callaway smiled. Her smile reminded him of Blaine, sweet and heartfelt.

She sat down folding her legs lady-like to the side.

"Where are we?"

Helen laughed, "You are in a fairy world, I seem to be in California."

"Not all of you is in California."

"No," Helen said sadly and sighed, "I may have gone farther with magic than I was really prepared for and suffered the consequences."
"You didn't deserve this happening to you," Kurt said, immediately wanting to comfort.

"Maybe not, but we aren't here to talk about me. We have to talk about saving Blaine."

"Saving Blaine?"

"And getting you both home, but Kurt, he is in such grave danger. Saffron has her talons in him... and there may not be a way to free him."

"I won't accept that," Kurt said, his heart thudding in his chest. "I'll do anything I have to for him."

"Why?"

Kurt was taken aback by the question. "Why?"

"You have already risked so much? Why keep risking yourself for a man you barely know?"

"I do know Blaine," Kurt insisted. He did. Blaine was passionate and impulsive, he was kind and silly and a very endearing mixture of confident and shy. Blaine was funny and smart and sexy and beautiful. They still had a lot to catch up on, but Kurt knew Blaine.

"Saffron has little use for you, Kurt," Helen said, interrupting his thoughts, "You risk your life standing up to her. Why do that?"

"Because..." Kurt stopped and swallowed, his heart constricting in his chest. Because you love Blaine. Kurt thought simply.

Of course he did.

He always had.

He'd been a fool to think he could pretend otherwise. And ever since Blaine's heartfelt and teary-eyed apology, any part of Kurt that had doubted how he felt had been ripped away. Forgiving Blaine had opened the floodgate of emotions he'd been holding back. "Because... because I-"

"Don't worry about telling me. I know." Helen smiled a little sadly, "You could maybe... tell him?"

Kurt nodded, unable to find his voice.

"Then let's talk about how to get you both out of here alive and intact." Helen smiled kindly.

"Tell me everything you know about Saffron and her magic," Kurt said, determined to find a way to stop her.

Helen talked and Kurt listened; he didn't know how long they sat there in the nothingness, how did time pass in a dream? But after some time, Helen drew in a sharp breath. "You have to wake up now, Kurt." She stood quickly and Kurt followed suit. "Kurt, wake up!"

"I... I'm trying," Kurt said frantically; he had no idea how to wake up from this.

"Hurry, Kurt!" Helen's form started to fade and her voice sounded far away. "Wake up!"

"How!?"

Helen disappeared and Kurt was left in the darkness. He heard her voice very quietly one last time.
"Oh god. She's here."

There was harsh steel-edge laugher floating around Kurt, and with a gasp of air like coming out of deep water, Kurt's eyes finally snapped open.

"Blaine!" He shouted, sitting up quickly. Kurt was no longer lying on the dirt floor of the forest surrounded by glassy trees and lit by cool red light. He was in a large round stone room with a dirt and moss floor and no doors or windows to be seen; in fact, he wasn't sure where the pale light he was viewing the room with was even coming from. And he wasn't lying on the ground. Kurt looked down to see he had been laid out on a glass and stone… altar for lack of a less sinister word.

His head whipped up when he heard movement behind him, and he turned to see a dark figure hiding in the shadows.

"Blaine?"

He knew it wasn't Blaine.

The figure took a step forward and then another until they came into the strange disembodied light. Kurt gasped at what he saw.

A woman wearing a gorgeous full skirted gown made of blue velvet and shimmering glass, her delicate white gloved hands folded in front of her, the bodice of the dress intertwined with gold thread and reflective crystal, the cut of the neckline showing off pale shoulders, gleaming golden hair tumbling over them and a long white neck and… her face was turned slightly away from him, still partially obscured by shadows.

"Kurt Hummel." A melodic, but distinctly ominous voice called out, "I've been watching you for years. How very lovely to finally meet you face to… face." With those words, she took a final step forward and lifted her chin to the light.

Kurt hurried backwards so fast he almost fell off the altar while getting to his feet.

Her face was gorgeous – what was left of it.

Half of it was smooth skin, wine-colored lips, a high cheek bone, a piercing golden eye. The other half was… was glass. Small slices of broken mirror fused together into the sharp angles of a young woman's face. When she smiled, only one half smiled; when she blinked, only one eye blinked. The other half of her face remained in a permanent glassy scowl that sent shivers down Kurt's spine.

She lifted a gloved hand, curling a finger and drumming it in time with her staccato words, "Tap, tap, tap!" She began laughing again, harsh and grating and Kurt backed farther away as terror washed over him.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

AN: Wheew, this chapter was a doozy to write and it would not have happened or been anything resembling readable without the help of my wonderful beta TheatreVicki. Big thanks to her for being awesome!
And a big thanks to all of you reading and reviewing and sticking with me through this monster of a story. Just a heads up we are very near the end now. xoxo

"The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return." - Eden Ahbez

Kurt's breathing stuttered as he continued to back away from a maniacally laughing Saffron Callaway – his back hit the stone wall of the circular room – there was nowhere to go.

Saffron wasn't coming any nearer; instead, she seemed to be trying to contain herself. Kurt was using the time to get the lay of where he was. His mind wanted to panic, but he knew he had to remain calm.

The room was empty aside from the altar in the middle, and as his initial scan had indicated, there was no door or windows. He looked over the ground for a trapdoor or something and then up to see what the ceiling was like, but there was no ceiling; the walls just went up a up until the top of the room was lost in blackness. All of this took seconds to put together, but the most glaring thing about this room was that Blaine wasn't in it.

"Where is he?" Kurt demanded, surprised when his voice came out only a little shaky.

Saffron had composed herself by now, wiping a tear from the cheek not made out of glass and then folding her hands demurely in front of her again. Everything about her posture was docile, from the bend of her head, to her delicate hands, and even the set of her shoulder. Kurt didn't believe it for a moment; he knew a thing or two about holding yourself in such a way to project something that may not be true. He'd mastered a confident stride in high school that belied how uncomfortable he actually felt.

Saffron seemed to be doing the opposite, making herself seem harmless when Kurt knew she was anything but.

"Where's Blaine?" Kurt asked again, his stomach feeling weak with worry.

"Blaine?" She arched an eyebrow as she took a step forward, "Ah, Blaine..." She smiled a little, "He's a handsome boy." She was still moving towards Kurt who was inching away, trying to keep the altar between himself and Saffron as they moved in a circular dance around each other. "He reminds me of a child I once knew." Her smile broadened, at least on the side of her face that could hold an expression, "My child in fact."

"Your child?" Kurt asked, still moving to keep a distance between them, "You had a child?"

Saffron laughed again and it sounded like broken glass. "How would I have descendants if I didn't
have children? And Blaine… Blaine is the one I've been waiting for."

"Please." Kurt's voice broke a little on the word, his head was spinning with spells and incantations and any magic he'd ever learned that might help defend himself. Saffron was like a cat, tensed and ready to spring, and Kurt knew he was the mouse in this scenario. "Where is he? Have you… is he alright?"

"Who?" Saffron blinked as if she honestly didn't know who they were talking about.

"Blaine!"

Saffron took a long stride forward, and Kurt moved until his back pressed against a wall as Saffron slammed both of her hands down on the altar, the action making a strange clanking sound. "Have I hurt Blaine? Of course not."

Her good eye was shining like fire, and Kurt recognized in her the anger he'd seen in Blaine recently, anger that had never actually been his.

"All I want is to get out of this hell, and I've been trapped here, losing my magic, losing my mind, losing… losing…” Her gloved hand wandered up to touch the glass of her brow… "I've been here for lifetimes and I just want out. And Blaine can do that for me."

Kurt nodded; hope small and eager blossoming in his chest. "So you just need help getting home?" If there was a way for them to get her out of here, well then fine, Kurt was willing. He understood the need to leave this place and he couldn't imagine being stuck here alone for over a century.

"Exactly," Saffron said sweetly, standing straight again and brushing down her skirt. "All I want is to leave, and if you are a very very good boy, then you can leave as well." Her voice took on a cloyingly sweet tone as if she were talking to a very young, very stupid child.

"And Blaine. Blaine can go home too."

Saffron's good eye narrowed. "Don't be a fool. Blaine can never go back."

Kurt's throat was dry and he swallowed, trying to remain calm, "I'm not going to help you unless Blaine and I get out of here."

Saffron's hand went to her chest and she actually looked surprised. "Help me? You think… you think I need your help?" She started to laugh again, quiet at first but louder as she pushed words out, "If I need anything from… from you… I'll take it!" She bent over laughing again, and there was that strange clanging noise again. Kurt's heart rate sped up. Looking at where Saffron's arm was slung across her stomach in laughter, he wondered how much of her was left… was it just that half of her face that was glass?

"No," Saffron sighed, "I'll get Blaine to do what I want regardless. I already have almost complete control over him. I just thought using you might be fun. But don't think for a moment that I won't snuff out your flame the second you are no longer amusing to me."

"I… I don't…” Kurt was stammering, fear like a hand squeezing his heart. He believed Saffron would and could kill him easily, and he had no idea what she'd already done to Blaine.

She seemed bored with this game of cat and mouse, and with a simple flick of her wrist, she was by his side, one of her gloved hands gripping his bicep. Then they were moving. Except they weren't moving. Or at least Kurt wasn't walking or moving his body, it was more like they were standing still and the room was whooshing past them. Kurt caught a glimpse of a few other rooms, a throne room
maybe? A courtyard? They all went by so quickly, but they all seemed to be made partially from glass and were completely empty. As far as Kurt could tell – wherever they were, there wasn't anyone else around.

They came to an abrupt halt in a dark, dank room that smelled of mildew and something rotting. Saffron's grip on Kurt's arm was painfully strong and Kurt tried to twist away, but he just ended up crying out in pain as Saffron tightened her grip. "Oh please." She rolled her eyes. "I'm stronger than I look."

She threw Kurt forward as she released him and he fell to the ground with a hiss of pain. The room looked much like the room they'd come from, except it was smaller and water dripped down the stone walls. The ground was damp and Kurt still couldn't quite figure out that smell, except it reminded him of death.

"You two wait here. I have things to prepare."

"Two?" Kurt got up on his knees and looked over the dimly lit room. Again, Kurt couldn't tell where the light was originating from, but there curled up against a wall, was a person, hunched over their knees with their face hidden. Kurt would recognize those glossy dark curls anywhere. "Blaine!"

He hurried over to Blaine, only looking over his shoulder when he heard a chime-like sound and found that Saffron had disappeared. "Blaine?" Kurt's hands hovered over Blaine, a little nervous to touch him; he wasn't sure which version of Blaine he was going to get here – the real Blaine, sweet, beautiful, and kind, or the Saffron Blaine, angry, dangerous and frightening.

Blaine looked up, his golden eyes round and almost empty. He didn't say anything; instead, he just stared blankly at Kurt.

Kurt brushed a curl out of Blaine's face and eased down to sit next to him. "Are you alright? Are you hurt? Did Saffron do any magic or anything on you?" He couldn't help but worry about her remark that Blaine was under her control.

"Kurt." Blaine whispered the name like it was sacred to him.

"Are you-" Kurt's question cut off as Blaine surged forward, cupping Kurt's face with both hands and kissing him soundly.

Kurt wasn't prepared for it and toppled backwards with a breathy laugh. Blaine pulled back and looked down at Kurt with watery eyes, "She wouldn't tell me where you were."

"Oh, Blaine." Kurt reached up to hold Blaine's shoulders as Blaine hovered over him, his palms on either side of his body.

"You were asleep and I was supposed to protect you. But then Saffron was there and… I don't know how she did it, but she just swept us away and I was here and you were… I didn't know where you were and she wouldn't tell me anything and."

"Blaine," Kurt said, trying to sound calm for Blaine's sake, as he seemed on the edge of losing it. "I'm fine. I promise I am. I think she has just been messing with us. I get the impression we entertain her."

Blaine nodded and sat up, Kurt following suit. "Did she say anything to you?" Kurt asked, "About what her plan is?"

"I'm going to help her get home," Blaine said, leaning up against the wall tiredly.
"How?"

He shrugged, "She didn't say."

They were both quiet a moment, backs against the wall, shoulders touching, "Did you talk to my aunt?" Blaine asked and turned to look at Kurt.

"Yes, for a long time."

Blaine's face brightened. "Really? How is she… is she… okay? I just… I hate that she's been here this whole time. Did she tell you about Saffron? Do you have a plan? Can Helen help?"

"She seemed okay. A little sad. I can't imagine what the past few years have been like for her."

Blaine winced.

"Maybe we can help her, but first, we have to help ourselves and get away from Saffron."

"Okay," Blaine nodded. "Saffron took the book bag, though; meaning she has her journal and your magic book and your mirror."

"Wait, what?"

"I'm sorry, Kurt, I couldn't stop her."

"No back up. My mirror? My hand mirror?"

"Yes… I… did I not mention I packed it in the book bag?" Blaine asked, looking a little sheepish.

"No."

"Oh god, Kurt, I'm sorry."

"No no, stop apologizing." Kurt leaned in and kissed Blaine's cheek. "You haven't done anything wrong. I don't know what I'd do with the mirror if I had it anyway. I just hate the thought of Saffron having it—that and my mom's book. She has her grubby hands on my magic."

"Glass hands," Blaine said. "I think that's why she wears the gloves. I wonder if she is more glass than person. I don't know how it happened; it's truly frightening though."

"I was wondering that myself." Kurt thought back to his conversation with Helen; the part that stood out the most was that she had helped Kurt see what he should have known all along – that he loved Blaine—but she'd also told Kurt more about this strange glass world. "Saffron did this to this place, all the glass that is—it wasn't always like that. Although, Helen only ever saw it this way. From what she gathered, it used to be green and lush and beautiful; it was basically a magical kingdom ruled by fairies."

"God, what happened?"

"Saffron happened. She came here wanting the fairies' magic, but they wouldn't share any of their knowledge with her, because they didn't trust her… which they shouldn't have and she just… Saffron went crazy apparently, started destroying everything, using magic to infuse glass into everything. I don't know why. She started killing fairies and they fled to some realm Saffron couldn't follow them into and Saffron was left in this world, a world she had corrupted. I'd almost feel sorry for her if she hadn't brought it upon herself."
Kurt sighed and leaned his head against the stone wall. "Helen is frightened of her. Apparently when Helen arrived, Saffron was ecstatic, thought Helen was her ticket home – but Helen wasn't the right person apparently, and she was sent back without all of her mind."

He heard Blaine sigh and Kurt looked up at him, hating to have to share this part, "That's the thing. Saffron could get back to our world but only the way Helen did – she'd leave part of herself here. Traveling back home steals your mind from you."

"Helen told you all of this?" Blaine asked.

Kurt nodded, keeping his eyes trained on Blaine for his reaction.

Blaine swallowed deeply and nodded, "So we're stuck here?"

"No, we can't be." Kurt said running a hand through his hair, "There's obviously another way; that's why Saffron lured you – us – here because she has some plan, but Helen wasn't sure what it was."

"Okay, so then, I'll help her. Right? I help her, we all get home and then figure out how to deal with Saffron."

"I don't." Kurt's chest felt tight, "I don't think we can all get back. Saffron said that you… that you were never going to leave this place."

"Oh."

"She said she and I could go, but not you."

"I see." Blaine leaned his head back against the wall and seemed lost in thought. Kurt could almost see the wheels in his head turning. "If you got back home, you might be able to find a way to get me home too."

Kurt sat up on his knees, moving as close to Blaine as he could and looking him straight in the eyes. "I'm not leaving here without you. We are going to find a way. I don't trust Saffron; if she can get back home intact, then there has to be a way for us to do it as well."

Blaine smiled. "Kurt, I can't even find a way out of this room."

"Don't give up," Kurt said, standing and reaching down to grab Blaine's hand and pull him up. "Saffron travels from room to room using magic; we just have to figure out how."

"Saffron's had a century to perfect that."

Kurt sighed. Blaine didn't look great; there were dark smudges under his eyes, his curls were tangled over his head and his clothes were filthy – he looked exhausted enough to fall over. Kurt knew Blaine was tired and injured, and who knew what thoughts Saffron was pestering him with. "Is she still inside there?" Kurt asked, brushing his fingers over Blaine's forehead, as Blaine's eyes fluttered closed and he leaned into Kurt's touch.

"I don't hear her right now, but I know she's still there. She's happy now, which is almost worse than her anger, because it means she's winning."

"It means she thinks she's winning. It means her guard is down. It means we still have a chance."

Blaine opened his eyes and smiled, small but genuine. "You're the most wonderfully stubborn person I've ever known."
Kurt could feel his cheeks heat up and was amazed that even under circumstances as grim as these were, Blaine could still make him blush. "Then don't give up on us yet."

"Okay," Blaine nodded and his voice grew stronger, "Okay. Let's find a way out of here."

The circular room they found themselves in was maybe 20 feet in diameter and completely empty and the walls were made of stone bricks fit together so tightly no mortar was even needed. The stones were partially formed out of glass – enough that if you tried to scale them, you'd cut your hands to pieces. There were thin rivulets of water coming down from somewhere high above what Blaine and Kurt could see, and the water stunk like rotting flesh. The ground was soft, but as they began digging with their hands, they found that the wall sunk down into the earth for who knew how far. Much deeper than they would be able to dig without any tools and without knowing how soon Saffron might return.

In short, there was no conventional way out of the room.

"So, magic then," Blaine said, wiping his muddy hands on his muddy shirt. "Magic is the only way in and out."

Kurt nodded.

"Luckily, you know magic," Blaine said with a smile. Kurt knew he was trying to be encouraging, but Kurt felt the pressure of it; it was all on him to get them out of there.

"I know a spell for unlocking locks, I could even get a door off its hinges if there were a door. Maybe a spell to blast a hole through the wall? Maybe?"

"Do you know something like that?"

"No." Kurt sighed and rubbed a hand down his face; he had a headache.

They were quiet for a moment until he heard a quiet yelp from Blaine. "What is it?"

Blaine was sucking on his finger. "Sorry, cut myself on the mirror in the stones."

"Yeah, it's a very effective deterrent."

"Kurt," Blaine said, dropping his hand, his eyes growing round. "Mirrors."

"Yeah?"

"That's how Saffron does it. I bet she can travel anywhere she wants in this world because she put mirrors in everything. She goes through them."

"I…"

"Every tree, every leaf, every stone – it's a portal."

"Oh my god." Kurt turned to look at the glinting stone wall. "Okay! We have to think. Remember what Saffron said in her journal – she talked about traveling mirrors, she put magic in all the mirrors at Callaway Place – Aunt Helen learned how to do it because the new mirrors had magic too."

"We don't need to put magic in these mirrors, though; they are already full of magic if Saffron uses them."

"We just need to find out how she triggers it," Kurt said, placing his palm against the wall. He
thought back to moving through rooms with Saffron, one after another flashing before his eyes in a hurried jumble. A courtyard, an empty throne room a bedroom that may have been Saffron's, it was quick view, but he remembered the big plush canopy bed and an iron-work vanity-

Kurt's body lurched sideways, his hand falling through the wall as he hit the ground; there was a whooshing sound in his ears and the world was moving too fast to focus on anything until… He stopped. He was lying on his back on the floor of the very bedroom he'd just been picturing. Kurt lifted himself on his elbows and looked around the room in amazement. A dresser and vanity and bed, the mirror on the vanity was actually ironically empty – just a frame there – but there was a small handheld mirror face down on the surface. Kurt leapt to his feet. "I did it! I think I did it unless-
" Kurt stopped midsentence, "Blaine?"

He had traveled from the circular prison to this bedroom on thought alone, but Blaine hadn't come with him.

"No!" Kurt ran to the wall of the room, this time it was made out of wood paneling imbued with glittering mirror pieces. He pressed his hand against the wood and closed his eyes, thinking of Blaine and the room they'd been in with its damp mossy floor and impossibly high walls. "Come on!" Kurt shouted at the wall and tried again. *Mossy floor, circular room, high walls.* He kept picturing them in his mind.

Kurt was better prepared for it this time and didn't fall to the ground. He saw spaces whistle by him – a long spiral staircase, an outdoor water fountain without any water – he thought he saw some small sparkling lights but they sped by so fast he wasn't sure. And then he was back, panting and head spinning. He was back in the prison he and Blaine had been left in.

Blaine was standing a few feet away from him, both hands pressed to the wall and looking frantic. When his eyes landed on Kurt, he sighed in relief. "Don't do that! You can't keep doing that! Being swept away through mirrors without me."

"I'm sorry," Kurt said, taking two long strides towards him, "I didn't mean to." He wrapped Blaine in his arms and felt him trembling against him. He rubbed his hand up and down his back soothingly, relishing the comfort that having Blaine in his arms gave him in return.

He felt Blaine exhale and then he pulled out of Kurt's arms to look him in the face. "How did you do it?"

"When I traveled with Saffron, I saw glimpses of these other rooms, and when I was thinking about one of them whoosh - I was there."

"If it is that easy, how did Saffron think she could keep us in here?"

Kurt shook his head. "Either she knew we would figure it out and it is part of a plan, or she underestimates other people's magical aptitude."

"Or she has just lost her mind and doesn't actually have a plan," Blaine said jokingly, but he was shivering and looked ill.

"That's a possibility too." Kurt agreed with a smile, "Meanwhile, I think we should go with the idea that not being trapped in this stinking hole of a room is a good thing."

Blaine looked a little nervously at the wall. "Okay, but how do I get through?"

Kurt took one of Blaine's hands in his own, "Put your other hand on the wall." Blaine did as he was told. "I'm going to think of the bedroom I just came from, and you just… just think of me okay?"
Blaine smiled, big enough to make Kurt's heart somersault. "Easy."

Kurt rolled his eyes, but couldn't help his matching smile. Then he took a breath, thought about the room, and gripped Blaine's hand hard.

The world rushed past them, like standing on a subway platform and watching a train speed by, except all around them. Kurt saw a few other rooms pass them and then they came to an abrupt stop in the middle of the bedroom Kurt had been aiming for.

"That's a little disorientating," Kurt said, feeling dizzy.

Blaine looked around the room with wide eyes; he was still holding Kurt's hand and Kurt could feel the shiver that ran down his body.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah that was..." He trailed off as he continued to scan the room. "I think... I mean this room is really familiar to me." He turned to Kurt. "It's absolutely Saffron's room, she's been here a lot."

Kurt just nodded, not knowing what to say when confronted by Blaine's link to Saffron; it scared him because he didn't know how to break it, even if they were to find a way home.

"Saffron said she'd been waiting for you. That Helen wasn't the right person but you are," Kurt blurted out.

"Yeah," Blaine nodded, "She kept mentioning my destiny to me in my head."

"Right," Kurt said, more determined than ever to put space between them and Saffron. "This is what I wanted to come back to this room for." He walked up to the iron vanity with its missing mirror and reached for the hand mirror lying on top of it. "Found my mirror!" He said, holding it up, but Blaine looked at it with his face scrunched up.

"Are you sure?"

Kurt looked down at the mirror in his hands, really looking at it for the first time; it was old, just like his mirror, but this one showed its age. It was rusty and worn and the glass was hazy. "It's just like mine." Kurt looked back up to Blaine, "That has to mean something, right?"

Blaine reached for the mirror, his fingertips gently brushing against Kurt's hand as he took it. "They both belonged to Saffron, this one and-" Blaine's face went white and he sucked in a loud gasp as he dropped the mirror to the floor.

"Blaine?" Kurt frantically looked from Blaine's ashen face to the hand mirror laying face up on the ground; he let out a shout of fear when he saw Saffron's glassy face scowling back up at them. And then she was there; in a swirl of movement, she was standing in the room with them, tightly holding the mirror in her gloved hand.

"What are you doing here!" Saffron yelled and the room was filled with a whirling harsh wind. "How dare you!" She was rounding on Kurt, choosing apparently to focus her anger on him. "This is all you! Why can't you just stop ruining everything!"

"Stop!" Blaine shouted, and she spun around to face him, swinging her arm in an arc and knocking Blaine off his feet without even touching him. "This is my mirror! Mine!" She shouted as Kurt ran to Blaine who was sitting up on the floor looking a little dazed.
Kurt had no idea what to do; he felt that anything he said would just further enrage Saffron, so he knelt by Blaine's side, his hand on his back and waited.

Saffron took a few deep breaths, as if calming herself. A foreboding half smile twisted on her lips and she carefully smoothed her hair down as she straightened her posture. It was remarkable really, to see her seething with anger one moment and completely composed the next.

She cleared her throat, "Your magic is stronger than I thought if you were able to get out of my prison. Not just anyone could do that."

"Just let us go, Saffron," Blaine said in a quiet voice. "What is the point of all of this?"

"It's funny isn't it?" Saffron continued as if Blaine hadn't said anything, "That out of all the people in the world who could have found this mirror's twin, it was a boy in love with magic." She laughed but it sounded strained, "You could have literally met anyone through this mirror but it was him." Saffron pointed at Kurt with the mirror and her eyes narrowed as she looked at him, "Someone with magic he would use to try and destroy me."

"I... I didn't," Kurt said, feeling nervous, "I never tried to destroy you."

Saffron crouched down, her thick skirts billowing. She looked at Kurt and Blaine at eye level. "Earth and salt and light take hope, thy powers called forth we now invoke," she mimicked in a harsh voice.

"That was for the mirror," Kurt said, looking from Blaine to Saffron. "It was just to stop your mirror."

Saffron looked at him shrewdly as if trying to determine if he was lying. "Still, it would have stranded me here for eternity."

"We didn't know," Blaine said, his voice shaky and his eyes looking a little glassy.

Kurt quickly grasped his hand. Stay with me Blaine, please.

Saffron stood, lifting her chin, "Stand up."

Kurt got to his feet. Blaine was a little slower to follow, blinking his eyes and shaking his head as if trying to stay awake.

"What are you doing to Blaine?" Kurt demanded, taking every bit of strength he had to keep his voice from sounding terrified.

Saffron smiled again, and really, it was a sinister sight with half of her face constantly twisted into an unpleasant glassy grimace. "Ever since I realized I couldn't stay here, all I've ever had my mirror do was try to bring me someone who could help me get home." Saffron seemed to not feel the need to respond to anything anyone else was saying. "My portrait had been watching over that house for a century; generation after generation, I waited for the right Callaway to come along to wake the magic embedded in that place."

She took a step towards them and Kurt and Blaine both scuffled to try to move in front of the other, but it didn’t matter because with an unexpected lurch that left Kurt feeling dizzy again, they were no longer in Saffron's bedroom.

Kurt craned his neck looking over the vast room they'd found themselves in – a large empty chamber made of white stone with high ceilings, gilded arches, and red light streaming in from long vaulted
windows. There was an elaborately carved marble platform in the middle and on top of it, an imposing metal and glass-worked throne that glimmered blood red in the light of the room.

Blaine reached for Kurt's hand and Kurt turned to look at him; he was pale and his eyes flashed and looked a little feverish, "I don't... I can't..." He murmured and swayed on his feet – Kurt quickly wrapped an arm around his waist to steady him.

"What are you doing to him!" Kurt knew they were completely at Saffron's will and that was a terrifying thought, especially as she seemed to have plans for Blaine.

Saffron again ignored Kurt, "I thought Helen Callaway might be the one, she started showing magical prowess later on in life – or so I thought – but don't you see? It is all so clear to me now. It was Blaine, it was always meant to be Blaine, it is his destiny. Helen didn't work, the enchantment that woke in the house wasn't because of her interest in me, despite the fact that I tried to reach out to her through the mirrors, no – it was Blaine who woke the dormant magic of Callaway Place, Blaine that I need."

"For what?" Blaine asked, his eyes clearing as if coming back to himself, "What do you want with me?"

"You get to sit on the throne," Saffron answered simply, and Kurt looked back at the glass and iron throne; it looked more and more ominous by the moment. "Helen was too weak, not enough like me. I sent her back the way she came and the fairies stole her mind as they will to any Callaway that tries to travel out of this world – damn emblem I used on that mirror all those years ago. If I hadn't used fairy magic, maybe they wouldn't have a hold on my mirrors, but as it is..." Saffron shrugged. "I can only go back if the right Callaway heir is on my throne. Not just anyone can be my replacement; it took a hundred years for a Callaway to come along with enough of me in them. When Blaine takes the throne, it will fool the fairy magic into thinking it has a hold of me forever."

"And Blaine will be stuck here. For good," Kurt said, his mind swirling. He knew a spell for keeping bad company at bay; if he combined that with a spell to protect against foreign magic, would it be enough to repel Saffron? Or at least keep her away long enough for them to try to make an escape? Kurt was frantic, shifting through spells in his mind, trying to think of ways to combine them to make them strong enough to use even without any ingredients on hand.

"A small price to pay for my freedom," Saffron said, starting to pull at the fingers of her gloves to remove them.

Kurt's anger was almost as strong as his fear, Saffron was so nonchalant about her plans for Blaine, it made Kurt's blood boil. "Light protect and soil-" Kurt started a spell but couldn't even get half-way through it before his mouth clamped shut and he was thrown backwards, much like how the mirror had tossed them around, and his body hit the white stone wall hard. He slid to the ground with a groan as he lifted a hand to rub his shoulder.

Blaine moved listlessly towards Kurt, but there was worry in his glassy eyes, "Kurt. Are you okay?"

"Yeah. I think so," Kurt answered; some minor bruising was nothing compared to what was at risk.

"Do you really think rhyming magic will stop me? How charming and pathetic." Saffron mocked, "Besides, I was going to take you back with me you cretin." Saffron fumed, walking towards them, "Don't make me change my mind!"

"Please don't make her angry," Blaine whispered, his eyes tearful and his voice trembling.
Saffron stood in front of them, tall and regal, her half mirror face lifted to the light, "You could be useful to me, but if you aren't, I'll have no need for you to remain alive." She looked away from Kurt and narrowed her good eye at Blaine, "Now, Blaine. It is time for you to sit on your throne."

"What will happen when I do?" Blaine asked.

Kurt's pulse pounded, Blaine was considering giving in!

Saffron lips quirked up, and it was an evil sight, "The fairies have been taking their revenge on me slowly for what I did to their land. I suspect if you sit on the throne, their revenge will be quick and mostly painless."

"No." Kurt said and turned to Blaine, "Don't."

"I have waited for a descendent of mine to come along who was suitable for this purpose, and all he has to do now is choose to sit on my throne."

"I have a choice?" Blaine said looking up, something like hope flashing in his eyes. Kurt's breath was coming fast. Don't give up. Keep fighting.

"Of course," Saffron sounded bored, "It only works if you choose to do it, just like you chose to go through the mirror."

Blaine stood slowly, squaring his shoulders and balling his fist, "Then I'm afraid we're at an impasse because I will not choose to go through with your plan."

Kurt couldn't help the small smile that tugged at the corners of his mouth. He stood, holding Blaine's hand again to hopefully lend encouragement and strength.

Saffron sneered and quickly finished pulling off her gloves. Her hands glistened in the red light of the room, both of them completely made of glass, each finger like a sharpened dagger. She lifted a hand and without a word waved a few gleaming fingers. Blaine squeezed Kurt's hand as they both tensed for an attack, but nothing happened to them.

Instead, small golden points of light started to appear around Saffron, one after the other, until there was a swarm of them.

"That... you can't do that. If those lights make me do something, then I didn't choose it," Blaine said as Kurt instinctively pulled him further from Saffron.

"Pixies can't make you do anything, they just suggest what might be best. The fairies themselves weren't accommodating, but pixies are such fun little creatures, they do whatever I like."

Kurt narrowed his eyes; the small golden lights, if you really looked at them, looked different here, more detail to them. You could almost make out tiny little shining bodies and translucent gold wings fluttering so quickly they were nearly invisible. Kurt would have been fascinated if he wasn't so worried about where this was going. "You mean they suggest what you think is best." Kurt said, "That's cheating."

Saffron lifted her chin and shrugged, "If that's how you want to see it." She waved her hand and the lights zoomed away from her towards Blaine.

Both Kurt and Blaine ducked, but soon the lights – the pixies – were circling them. Kurt felt himself let go of Blaine's hand even though he didn't really want to.
Blaine took a step, and then another towards the throne.

"Blaine, don't!" Kurt shouted, but then started to giggle.

Blaine looked back at him for a moment but his feet kept moving towards the throne.

The pixies were swarming around Kurt and Blaine, and Kurt heard little tinkling voices in his ear, "It's okay. Don't move. He'll be fine."

But it wasn't okay and Blaine wouldn't be fine if Saffron got her way – meaning Kurt should move. He took a stumbling step forward, his feet as heavy as lead. Blaine was almost at the throne now and Kurt didn't know if something would happen as soon as he sat on it or not, so he took another heavy step forward, straining to get to Blaine.

"Don't worry, Kurt. It's too hard. Saffron will take care of everything."

Kurt swatted at the pixies around his face as he stole a look at Saffron. She was standing still with an amused smirk on her face and the tips of her glass fingers were drumming against each other. She didn't look concerned; she knew exactly how this was going to play out.

Blaine was standing right in front of the throne now. "Blaine! Don't! Please!" Kurt cried, feeling helpless, but still too far away to reach out to him and pull him back.

Saffron moved to stand between them, still holding the silver hand mirror. "Hush now, or I leave you here." She lifted the mirror high above her head and let the red light from outside sparkle over it. And then, she unceremoniously dropped the mirror. Kurt watched in fascination, unable to pull his eyes away, expecting the mirror to hit the ground and shatter.

It hit with a too loud clang, but it didn't shatter – it started to stretch and grow until the reflective glass looked like a small pool, probably six feet long and wide.

"My plan was to go through this mirror to its twin back home, just to be safe, but since you brought it here with you…" Saffron said dryly, "I'll have to risk going through the mirror with the fairy emblem. Yes, it took Helen's mind from her, but once the fairies have Blaine, their need for vengeance on the Callaways will be fulfilled. You and I should travel through with ease no matter what mirror we use on the other side."

"Why… take me with… you?" Kurt grunted, still trying to take another step forward. Blaine's back was to him – he was just standing there frozen in front of the throne.

"I'm not cruel," Saffron answered.

Kurt thought she probably believed that.

"Besides, I respect power, and you have it. Not like a Callaway." Saffron smirked, "But once we get back, I am going to need… help." She grimaced like the word offended her, "I can't remain glass like this, your power could be useful to me."

"Of course, we're just going to be buddies after you abandon Blaine here." Kurt scoffed.

Saffron's eyes flashed, "I don't appreciate your mockery, I will not allow a man to speak to me like I'm a child!"

Saffron lifted her thick velvet skirts slightly and turned to look at Blaine, "What's taking so long grandson? The throne is yours for the taking."
"No." Blaine said, his voice gravely, "I won't."

"Yes, you will." Saffron waved her hand and more pixies lit up the room, all of them sweeping towards Blaine.

Kurt wasn't sure what they were saying to him, but Kurt's wouldn't shut up. "Go with Saffron. Go home Kurt. You'll be happy. You'll be safe. Go home Kurt."

"Blaine, don't listen to them!" Kurt shouted. He really couldn't move now and tears were prickling his eyes even as sickening laughter wanted to burst from his lips.


Blaine moved a leg, stepping up onto the platform, one foot after another.

Kurt was screaming for him to stop in his head, but he couldn't get it out, stuck in place and gagged with magic.

Blaine turned, standing in front of the throne with pixies swirling quickly and glowing around him; they circled above his head like a churning radiant crown.

"He's going to stay! He's going to stay! Once he sits he's here forever!"

Kurt heard Saffron chuckle behind him, but he only had eyes for Blaine.

Noooo! Kurt mouthed, but no sound came out as Blaine placed his hands on either armrest and slowly and deliberately sat on the throne.

A bright light shot out of the morphed mirror on the ground like a yellow spotlight and the pixies must have started cheering because the throne room echoed with a chorus of tinkling sound.

Blaine sat straight back on the throne, his eyes blankly staring forward and golden pixie crown still spiraling over his head.

"Come now, Kurt." Saffron's voice was an imitation of kindness, as she reached a hand out towards him, "Let's go home. There is no saving him now. He belongs to the fairies."

Kurt ignored her and kept his eyes focused on Blaine.

A tear ran down Blaine's otherwise emotionless face, "Go home, Kurt," he said in a voice that hardly even sounded like him it was so choked with pain.

Kurt didn't know if that was the pixies talking or if it was really Blaine, but it didn't matter. Kurt wasn't going anywhere.

The iron of the throne's armrest started to twist and reshape until strands curled around Blaine's wrists like vises holding him to the throne.

Kurt still couldn't get his voice out, it was stuck in the back of his throat. There was a moment of silence, only the chiming of the pixies to disrupt the quiet, as Kurt stared into Blaine's eyes willing him to wake up, to understand that Kurt needed him. Kurt couldn't go home without him; he couldn't even bear the thought.

Blaine was frozen, not moving an inch until… his left hand jerked in its restraints and then his fingers spread out stiffly as if in pain. There was something silver and metallic crawling over the back of
Blaine's hand and it wasn't the iron of the throne.

It took a moment for Kurt to really understand what he was seeing, but then he watched in horror as Blaine's hand spasmed for a moment and then grew still. And Blaine finally moved, looking down at his hand, as from the wrist up it started changing – hardening, turning silver and glittering and…

"Oh god!" Kurt's voice was suddenly back, the terror of what was happening to Blaine alarming enough to loosen his tongue.

Blaine's hand was swiftly transforming from flesh and blood to melded pieces of mirror in the shape of a hand. Blaine wasn't making a sound, but he watched with an expression that made Kurt think he'd be screaming if he could.

"No! NO!" Kurt's whole body was lunging forward, attempting to move, but his feet were still locked in place.

Amongst the terror clouding his mind, he made out Saffron's haunting voice, "It starts with the hands, then works up the arms and the neck… it's moving so quickly it will turn him completely in minutes."

Those words made Kurt snap his head towards Saffron. "Completely? You mean… he'll be all glass?"

"And the fairies will have their revenge. We'll wait till it's over to make sure our passage is safe."

Not cruel? Saffron honestly thought she wasn't cruel? She was going to stand there and casually watch while the man Kurt loved turned to glass.

Kurt looked back at Blaine, whose face was expressionless even though his cheeks were stained with tears.

"Blaine!" Kurt called. Blaine kept looking at his hand. "Stand up. Get up. Fight it!"

"I… can't," Blaine whispered.

The pixies swirled and Kurt's heart beat so heavy in his chest that it hurt.

"You have to Blaine because… because I'm not leaving without you. Blaine, I love you!"

Blaine's head lifted at that, and he looked Kurt in the eye as if just now realizing he was really there. "You… don't love me."

"Yes I do! Of course I do. I love you. I'm in love with you. So get up!"

"You're only saying that because I'm in danger."

"No. I'm saying it." Kurt said, struggling and finally pulling one foot forward, "I'm saying it because when you were twelve you wouldn't go see The Devil Wears Prada until I did so we could talk about it together. I'm saying it because when my dad was sick all I wanted was to talk to you because I knew you could make everything better. I'm saying it because for six years the summertime was the best part of my life, and when you didn't come back, it didn't feel like I had just lost a best friend, it felt like I lost a part of me. I love you, Blaine. I love your strength, and how you blush at everything. I love your singing voice and your unruly hair, and your cheesy romantic lines and the amazing pancakes you make and… and the fact that I always feel safe and connected when I'm with you."

Kurt managed another step forward, his voice shaking but strong, "I was afraid of how much you
meant to me and that's why I took so long to tell you – but now I can't think of anything more frightening than losing you."

Blaine blinked a few times, his eyes still wet with tears, and then a smile as bright as the sun broke out over his face and he started to laugh. To really truly sincerely laugh.

"Blaine?"

"You took your time," Blaine said, beaming at Kurt."

"I know. I'm sorry. I love you."

"Enough of this," Saffron hissed. "It makes no difference! Soon he'll be glass and we'll be gone. Or at least I will. You can stay here and rot."

Kurt didn't even look back at her, his mind clear as he looked down at Blaine's bound wrist. "Please, Blaine, try to get up."

"He can't," Saffron snapped, but no one was listening to her anymore. Even the pixies had stopped chanting, their only sound the buzzing of their tiny vigorously beating wings.

Blaine nodded and then looked down at the iron wrapped around his arms. He started whispering, but Kurt couldn't make out what he was saying until he began again, louder this time, "Unravel, untie, unloose these binds. Unknot, undo, make these ties unwind!"

Kurt smiled, his heart leaping; how had he not thought of that? He was about to join Blaine in the spell when the iron bonds snapped from Blaine's wrists, twisting backwards away from him.

"Blaine!" Kurt shouted, amazed. "You… you just used magic!"

Blaine lifted his arms, good hand rubbing over the glass hand and Kurt's breath caught in his throat. Blaine still needed to get up before more of him turned to glass.

"No!" Saffron yelled, and Kurt startled, remembering she was still there. She marched towards the throne. "Once you take the throne, you can't give it up! I've never sat there. I enchanted it for my replacement!"

But even as she shouted, Blaine's lips quirked up in a smile and he stood.

"You can't… you shouldn't be able…" Saffron stumbled over her words, "Sit down!"

"No," Blaine said simply and stepped down from the marble platform. Kurt noticed he was pressing his thumb harshly into the palm of his good hand; that's where he had a long cut from a piece of glass and Kurt's heart hurt thinking that Blaine was using pain to keep himself focused.

Kurt tried to move towards him but he was still stuck in place. Blaine waved his glass hand, "Let him go," he commanded, and there was a cry from the pixies and then they flew away from Kurt; he almost fell over, the release was so sudden. He rushed towards Blaine but snapped back suddenly when something, someone, gripped his arm.

"I have waited too long!" Saffron screeched, pulling Kurt back towards her, and she was strong, "Too long to fail now!"

"Let him go!"

But Saffron wasn't as obedient as the pixies. She wrapped an arm around Kurt, holding him against
her body as she lifted a hand to his neck, grabbing him and pointing four very sharp fingers to the soft flesh of his throat. "Sit back down or I swear I'll slice into him like gutting a pig," Saffron spat, and Kurt couldn't even fight against her without her nails driving into him. His heart was beating wildly and he watched as Blaine's face blanched and he slowly lifted his hands.

"Don't hurt him." Blaine's voice was hoarse. "Please, Saffron, don't."

"You think after being stuck here for a hundred years, frightening off an entire fairy race and watching idiot after idiot grow up in my house until you arrived, that saying please is going to stop me from doing anything I want!"

Kurt couldn't see Saffron's face from his precarious position but her voice was frantic and high-pitched; she sounded enraged and insane, and he knew her golden eye was probably burning the way Blaine's had when he was channeling her anger.

"I will kill him!"

"I believe you," Blaine said, his hands still raised, and even in the midst of all of this, Kurt couldn't help but feel sick at the way the red light glanced off the glass of his left hand. "But you don't have to. Let us help you, Saffron. With all of our magic, there has to be another way for-"

"SIT DOWN!" Saffron screeched as the tips of her mirrored fingers pressed into Kurt's flesh. He sucked in a breath of pain and could feel drops of blood pooling over his skin.

Blaine's face was sheet white and his eyes terrified, "I'm sorry," he whispered, but... but it seemed as though he was saying it to Saffron.

Blaine took a deep breath, closing his eyes, and then in a strong steady voice that echoed through the high-ceilinged throne room he recited, "From wind and shadow and dark did rise," the pixies flitting around in the air started to squeal, "evil called forth shall now demise."

"Stop!" Saffron shouted. Kurt was sure she was going to pierce his neck with her glass fingers, but she seemed frozen in place. He was still in her grip but she wasn't moving.

"Earth and salt and light take hope!" The ground started to shake and the red light from the windows grew brighter.

"Thy powers called forth we now invoke!" Blaine ended the chant by opening his eyes and shouting the last line – it felt like a physical force being hurled at Saffron.

Kurt couldn't see what was happening with her behind him, but Saffron let out a scream and then released him. He quickly moved away and spun around to face her as the whole room began to rumble and the pixies swirled around frantically.

Saffron stood still, planted to the ground. She looked at her outstretched hands and then up to Kurt and Blaine. She opened her mouth as if to scream but – the half of her face that was still skin and bone started to change. Mirrored glass spread over it, and with a loud crack in the air like thunder, everything went black for an instant.

Kurt's breathing was labored and his heart pounded in his ears – the red light from the windows came back brighter than before.

Saffron was grounded in place – a glass mirror statue from the bottom of her once velvet skirts to the tip of her once golden hair. She didn't move, she didn't scream. She wasn't anything more than glass.
And the pixies were gone, perhaps destroyed, perhaps released from their mistress's power, but no longer there to cloud Kurt's or Blaine's minds.

Kurt felt ill looking at what used to be Saffron Callaway and shining reflective glass – that could have been Blaine. He felt someone grab his hand and looked down to see Blaine lacing their fingers together.

"She isn't in my head anymore."

Kurt looked up at him. Blaine was crying.

"I didn't want to."

Kurt nodded, "I know." And then he leaned forward, pressing his lips against Blaine's, kissing him in utter relief and gratitude that they were both somehow still alive.

The room still shook and a few big pieces of stone fell from the ceiling landing only yards from them.

"We have to leave, now," Blaine said when the kiss broke and he tugged Kurt's hand until they stood in front of the mirror on the ground. It was still large enough to go through and beaming light up to the rafters.

"Are you sure?" Kurt asked, stomach twisting with nerves.

"Kurt, this whole place is coming apart at the seams and I don't just mean Saffron's palace."

Kurt looked around as the ground shook and the walls swayed, "But… if you go through the mirror…. I mean you're a Callaway… the fairies and what they did to your aunt…"

Blaine glanced over his shoulder to Saffron's glinting form and then back to Kurt. "I think the fairies have had their revenge, and in any case –" Another boulder crashed down near them with an echoing thud as the earth continued to tremble. "If we stay here we'll die."

Kurt nodded. He turned his back to the mirror and wrapped his arms around Blaine who held him tightly in return. "On the count of three. One."

"Two."

"Three!" Kurt shouted and then let himself fall backwards, taking Blaine with him and dropping through the mirror's glass into nothingness.
AN: Hello all! I wanted to let you know that this is the last chapter of this fic (though I am working on an epilogue) - I have loved working on this story and I really hope you have enjoyed reading it.

A huge shout out to my wonderful beta theatrevicki who not only is the best beta ever, she really helped shape this chapter with some plot suggestions.

Thanks for reading. Enjoy!

"Take a lover that looks at you like maybe you are magic." - Frida Kahlo

Blaine squeezed his eyes shut and clung to Kurt as they fell. His stomach plummeted as they did and his body tensed, ready for a fatal impact at any moment.

They hit the ground hard, the force separating him from Kurt as he bounced and rolled off him. When Blaine finally stilled, he couldn't even move. At least he didn't want to. He hurt from head to toe, his chest ached, his head pounded, and he was afraid he'd broken something in that fall.

He lay there for a moment, eyes still closed, just breathing, until he realized he wasn't sure if he heard anyone else breathing near him.

"Kurt!" Blaine sat up quickly, any pain forgotten. He looked across the dark room to see Kurt rolling from his back to his side, curling in on himself and moaning. Blaine got up and ran to him. "Where are you hurt? What hurts the most? Can you open your eyes?"

Kurt's eyes blinked open and he looked up at Blaine for a moment before a smile graced his beautiful face. "Blaine, I'm fine." He sat up slowly, looking around himself and wincing. Blaine kept his eyes on him.

"We're back."

"What?"

"Blaine, look at where we are!"

Blaine looked; the room was dark and rain pelted against the windows, but there was pale moonlight streaming through the thin curtains and a very recognizable full-length mirror nearby. "The third floor of Callaway Place." Blaine breathed.

"Thank god." Kurt got to his feet, only a little wobbly, and reached down to pull Blaine up with both hands. They stood hand in hand as Kurt grinned at him. "We lived. We're back."

Blaine was having a harder time catching up to things. His mind had been so muddled the whole time they were away – before that even – he felt like he'd been living in an increasingly dense cloud since he came back to Callaway Place.
"Blaine?" Kurt's hand smoothed down Blaine's cheek and then tipped his chin to look at him, "Are you okay?" Kurt's blue eyes shone brightly and he bit his lip in worry.

"I'm okay. I'm better than okay I feel, I feel… actually my body feels awful," Blaine said with a tired laugh, "But my mind is fine. Awake, alert, all here. You don't have to worry."

Kurt nodded slowly, studying Blaine's face, then he smiled slightly and leaned in for a kiss. Blaine was more than happy to oblige, all he wanted was to go somewhere safe and warm and hold Kurt and kiss him until their lips were sore and their eyes were drooping. Which probably wouldn't take all that long, Blaine was exhausted.

When Kurt pulled back, he looked on the verge of breaking down. "I could have lost you in so many different ways."

"You didn't."

"My head knows that, my heart is still catching up."

Blaine pressed his lips against Kurt's again briefly and then to the corner of his mouth and his cheek until he lifted his face up to plant a kiss squarely on Kurt's forehead. Kurt chuckled and was smiling again when Blaine met his eyes.

"I love you so much," Kurt said in a hushed breath.

Blaine's smile slipped.

"Blaine?"

"You do? You really do? Because we seem to be out of danger now and if anything you said was just because of the heat of the moment-"

"Stop. Stop talking." Kurt hushed, "Don't be ridiculous. I love you. I've loved you since we were kids."

"Oh." Blaine ducked his head and blushed, and then he blushed harder when he remembered what Kurt had said about loving how Blaine blushed at everything. He looked up through his eyelashes at Kurt, "You know I love you too."

"I do know that."

"With all my heart."

"Blaine," Kurt was crying now, but he was smiling too. "Can we maybe… get out of here?"

Blaine nodded and looked past Kurt's shoulder at the third floor mirror. He drew in a startled breath and Kurt turned to look. The mirror was shattered, pieces of glass piled on the floor in front of it. Though 'pieces' was a generous description for the glass, it was ground as fine a dust and lying in a mound at the mirror's feet.

"Well, finally destroying the mirror wasn't difficult at all," Kurt said; there was a beat of silence before they both broke into laughter, clinging to each other and crying a bit, drained and thankful and giddy with relief.

Once they'd calmed, they walked downstairs arm in arm and stopped at the portrait of Saffron Callaway. It had changed. It was duller now, the colors faded and Saffron didn't look as intimidating
or as clear, it just looked like a normal portrait of some normal woman who died decades ago.

Still, Blaine lifted it down from the wall. "I'm going to burn it."

"Okay." Kurt didn't argue. They went downstairs to the parlor and Kurt started a fire in the fireplace as Blaine took the painting out of the frame, and then broke the frame apart before tossing it all into the flames.

They watched it burn, Kurt clinging to Blaine's hand and standing close. Blaine looked down at his free hand, *his glass hand*, the light of the flames flickering off it. He lifted it up and turned it front to back, he wiggled his reflective fingers.

"Does it hurt?" Kurt asked softly as if he'd just now noticed Blaine's hand was still made of glass, which was obviously not true; Blaine wondered if Kurt had been afraid to mention it.

"It feels… I don't know. It hurt when it was happening, *a lot*, but now… I don't know. It doesn't feel right, but it doesn't necessarily hurt."

Kurt nodded and wrapped his arms around Blaine from the side, leaning his chin on Blaine's shoulder.

"The fingers aren't sharp like Saffron's." Blaine continued to inspect his hand, "I wonder if she did that herself. Still, it's kind of garish and grotesque isn't it?"

Kurt reached across him to hold on to Blaine's glass hand, pulling it in until he could place a soft kiss on his palm. "If it is part of you, then I love it too."

"And you say I'm the cheesy one." Blaine wanted to cry in relief that Kurt didn't think it was disgusting, "Do you think there could be a magical way to fix it?"

"I don't know, maybe? Saffron thought so. We can look into it. If you aren't done with magic after all of this."

Blaine shrugged not knowing how to answer that. Using magic back in the fairy realm had been exhilarating, up until the moment when he realized he was going to have to use it against someone. He hated what he had to do to Saffron.

Kurt smiled softly at him.

"If magic doesn't work, you'll have to help me pick out some stylish gloves."

Kurt's smile grew. "I can do that."

They sat by the fire until it had completely consumed Saffron's portrait, and then they made sure it was safely out before leaving Callaway Place, Kurt taking the driver's seat when Blaine couldn't keep his eyes open. They went back to their room at the White Pine Cone Inn – had it really only been a couple of days since they were here last? It felt much longer. Blaine collapsed onto the bed immediately, sprawled out on his stomach and hugging a pillow to his face. He probably would have fallen asleep right there on top of the covers if Kurt hadn't started to tug at him.

"We are both muddy and gross and I will not sleep in a bed covered in dirt."

"We slept in dirt back in the fairy realm," Blaine mumbled into the pillow, but he knew this was an argument he wasn't going to win.
"And now we are in Bluespruce and we have a shower," Kurt said. When Blaine still didn't budge, Kurt's voice took on a sing-song tone, "If you get up now, we can shower together."

Blaine lifted his head at that. A warm shower sounded amazing, but a warm shower with Kurt? That was irresistible. He got up from the bed, but found that, as excited as he was with the prospect of showering with Kurt, it was going to be difficult; he could hardly stand. Blaine leaned against the wall of the bathroom while Kurt adjusted the water to get the perfect temperature.

Kurt pulled off his soiled jacket and shirt, he slipped off his shoes and pants and then turned back to Blaine who was still just leaning against the wall and wearily watching him.

"Are you sure you're okay?"

"Tired."

Kurt nodded and walked up to him, pulling the hem of his shirt up and waiting for Blaine to lift his arms before pulling it all the way off. "Quick shower and then I promise you can sleep." His eyes lingered on Blaine's bruised chest. "You must hurt all over."

Blaine shrugged, which actually hurt a little.

Kurt helped him get out of his shoes and pants, everything he pulled off was filthy, and Blaine thought absentmindedly that he would probably throw it all away. He really was exhausted because he barely even registered Kurt pulling off their underwear until he took Blaine by the hand and started leading him to the shower.

"Wait," Blaine blinked down at his glass hand, it felt stiff and uncomfortable. "Do you think I can get this wet? Should I put it in a plastic bag like a cast?"

He looked up at Kurt to see tears brimming in his eyes, but he put on a brave smile, "It's glass. Glass can get wet, right?"

Blaine nodded and allowed Kurt to maneuver him into the shower and under the hot spray of water.

Blaine felt his shoulders relax and his muscles loosen under the warm cascade of the shower, he watched mud and water swirl down the drain and felt like most of his fear and worry was swirling away with it. Then, there were strong fingers in his hair massaging his scalp and he sighed and smiled up at Kurt as he shampooed his hair.

"Feels good." Blaine moaned and then leaned his forehead down on Kurt's shoulder, letting him work his curls into a lather and rinse them out. Kurt tenderly began washing Blaine's skin, soapy washcloth gently gilding over Blaine, taking special care to be easy on his chest. Blaine watched his every move with heavy eyes, not able to express the gratitude and love he felt towards this sweet, tender man.

Kurt hurriedly washed himself when he was done with Blaine, smiling at him as water streamed down his gorgeous body. They stepped out of the shower and Blaine dried off with a soft towel and then found a soft pair of pajama bottoms in the bedroom, forgoing the shirt in favor of toppling down in bed that much sooner. He shuffled under the comforter and glanced up and Kurt, who was also clad in pajamas and looking down at him with his lips pursed and his eyebrows drawn.

Blaine lifted up his good hand towards Kurt to pull him down to the bed, his glass hand tucked close to his body. He was going to have to worry about that problem later; if he thought too much right now, he'd break down and he honestly didn't have the energy for that.
"What's wrong?" Blaine asked when Kurt didn't take his offered hand.

"Should I take you to the doctor? Or get you food?"

"Kurt, I'm just tired."

"But-"

"I know there are things that need to be done and discussed-" Blaine yawned, "But can't we please rest first?" He opened and closed his hand again, wordlessly asking Kurt to take it.

Kurt's lips quirked up in a small smile and he took Blaine's hand, allowing himself to be pulled into bed. He laughed and immediately snuggled close to Blaine, wrapping him in his arms and burying his face in the curve of Blaine's neck. Blaine could only sigh in contentment thinking back to how stiff and formal Kurt had been with him when they'd first met face-to-face in New York. He drifted to sleep with the scent of Kurt's shampoo around him and Kurt's body warmly pressed against his own.

Blaine woke up sometime later to the room's phone ringing. The sun was streaming through the window as Kurt rolled over to answer the call, and there was a hushed one-sided conversation about extending their stay before Blaine fell asleep again. When he awoke next, thick curtains had been drawn over the window to shut out the light and Kurt was awake, leaning on his side watching Blaine with rapt attention.

"Are you watching me sleep?" Blaine's voice was rough with drowsiness and Kurt smiled at the sound of it.

"Just a little." He began running his fingertips up and down Blaine's arm. "Are you awake now? I thought you might sleep all day. I was debating whether or not to wake you up and feed you."

"What time is it?"

"Three in the afternoon."

Blaine's stomach did feel empty and he realized he hadn't eaten anything since before they were pulled into the fairy world. That could explain why, after sleeping for over twelve hours, he was still tired. His body was probably weak with hunger. "Yeah, food. Food is good."

Kurt hopped out of bed and went to the little round table in the corner of the room, "I have fresh fruit and a turkey sub and pasta salad and some baked potato left, but I ate most of it already."

"How?" Blaine lifted himself up until his back was against the headboard, and his stomach growled as the aroma of food drifted towards him "Where did this come from?"

Kurt turned around to look at him, a wide smile on his face, "I ordered it on my phone, Blaine. You've been asleep for a long time."

"Oh." Blaine noticed Kurt was still in his pajamas but his hair was styled and there was a collection of books out by Kurt's side of the bed — and god Kurt had his own side of the bed, what a lovely thought! — and a little reading lamp on. Kurt obviously hadn't slept as long as Blaine had.

"You could have woken me."

"I was going to, just so you could eat. But honestly, Blaine, you were so out of it when we first got here, I knew you needed the rest."
"You're wonderful. And that sub sandwich sounds perfect." Blaine's stomach growled again. Blaine moved to get up, but Kurt ordered him to stay in bed and brought him a plate with the sandwich, some chips and a bottle of water, which Blaine downed quickly.

"You're reading magic books," Blaine said between hurried bites, food had never been so welcome. Kurt had slid back into bed next to him, fingers tracing patterns on the fabric of Blaine's pajama pants.

"My book and Saffron's journal were lost to the fairy realm."

"Are you… trying to get them back?"

Kurt looked up to meet Blaine's eyes. "No. I am not messing with any of that."

Blaine nodded, feeling relieved, "I'm sorry about your mother's magic book, I should have never brought it there, or your mirror."

"Blaine, it's fine. The book helped us, and well…" Kurt looked down again and was quiet for a long moment, "You got out safe, that's all I really care about." Kurt's voice was soft and on the verge of tears.

Blaine swallowed his bite and put his plate to the side, his chest feeling heavy, "Please don't cry."

Kurt met his eyes again, blinking away tears and smiling, "I'm not crying. Not really."

Blaine reached towards him with both hands before quickly tucking his left hand partially under his thigh; he cupped Kurt's face with his good hand, thumbing softly across his cheek, and then leaned in to kiss him. "I love you," he whispered between kisses and Kurt looped his arms around Blaine.

"I love you too."

"I will never tire of hearing you say that."

"You know what I'll never tire of?" Kurt asked with a smirk and a quirked eyebrow, "This."

He kissed Blaine again, gently pressing him down onto the mattress, his lips warm and soft.

Kurt's hands smoothed up and down Blaine's sides, leaving goosebumps in their wake as his lips set fire to Blaine's skin, his lips, his neck, down down until Kurt was kissing just above his waistband.

"Are you too tired?" Kurt stopped kissing to look up at him with eyes so dark the blue was just a thin ring around his pupils.

Blaine hitched out a breath, "N-no." He was rested, fed, and already eager under his pajama pants.

Kurt's smile grew and then he ducked his head almost bashfully as he started to pull down Blaine's pajamas. Blaine shimmied out of them, Kurt's lips finding his thighs and working their way up.

"Wait," Blaine breathed, his voice trembling.

Kurt looked up in concern.

"I want to see you, face to face."

"Anything you want." Kurt crawled up Blaine's body, straddling his hips and pulling off his shirt.
Blaine watched him, letting his good hand reach up to smooth along Kurt's chest and abdomen to the elastic of his waistband.

"You can touch me with both hands, Blaine," Kurt said, his voice soft and a little needy.

"I…" Blaine's glass hand was still tucked by his side. "I'm a little scared too."

Kurt leaned down to kiss Blaine, lips sliding and tongue tasting, and he pulled back far enough to whisper, "You don't have to do anything you're uncomfortable with. I just wanted to let you know it wouldn't bother me. I'm not scared of it."

Blaine's throat was scratchy with tears.

"Okay?" Kurt asked.

"Okay."

Kurt slipped out of his pants and underwear after that, both of them still kissing and moving against each other. Blaine would have been happy if things had gone the same as they had last time, just moving against one another until they found release, but when Kurt's hand slipped under him and he raised a questioning eyebrow, Blaine could only nod eagerly.

They had to use lotion, which wasn't ideal, but luckily Blaine had a condom in his wallet. Kurt got up to fetch it, teasing Blaine about his intentions in having a condom on hand at all times.

There were smiles and laughter and moans of pleasure as Kurt prepared him, and when it was finally time for Kurt to move inside of him, Blaine could only arch his neck back and wrap his legs around Kurt's waist, praising any deities that existed that Kurt Hummel loved him and wanted him.

Their first time together had been everything, but somehow, this time was even more. Probably because this time Kurt, between grunts and incomprehensible mumblings, was the one to lean down – his lips puffing warm breath against Blaine's ear – as he moaned out his declaration of love.

"I love you, I love you, I love you."

Over and over until Kurt couldn't even speak anymore and Blaine's hands came up, both flesh and glass, to hold Kurt close as he trembled and panted and came with a cry. Kurt's fist around Blaine pumped a few more times before Blaine followed suit, Kurt's name a whisper on his lips.

They practically melted into each other, curling around one another's sweat-slick bodies until Kurt started shivering and Blaine reached awkwardly around him to pull the comforter over them. Still, Kurt clung to him, face buried against Blaine's chest. He heard his sniffling.

"Are you crying?"

Kurt looked up and his eyes were damp.

"Oh god Kurt, what's wrong?"

"Nothing. I'm just feeling a little… overwhelmed."

Blaine's expression must have shown his concern because Kurt hurried on to explain.

"A good overwhelmed, a really really good overwhelmed. I've never… I just didn't know it could be like that."
"Like what?"

"I didn't know being in love would make such a big difference."

Blaine could feel his eyes crinkling he was smiling so big. He brushed hair off Kurt's forehead with his fingertips, "I've loved you for so long Kurt, you were my first love."

"And you mine."

Blaine yawned, amazed that he could still be tired, but Kurt was warm and comforting against him and his fingers were trailing up and down Blaine's back and everything was perfect. Nearly. If he didn't think of anything outside this little bubble of contentment he and Kurt had created, then everything was perfect.

They were quiet for a while, just enjoying each other's nearness, when Blaine's eye caught the pile of books on Kurt's lampstand.

"What do you already need magic books for?" He hoped his voice sounded casual, and that Kurt's flipping through the books had been casual – that Kurt wasn't anticipating any problems.

"Blaine, your use of magic saved us back in the fairy realm. You aren't still against magic are you?"

Blaine shook his head, "No." He wasn't against it, but he wasn't about to start learning how to use magic himself. He couldn't shake what Saffron had said about him, that he was the first Callaway in over a hundred years to be enough like Saffron to take her place.

It made him feel sick. No, if he was anything like Saffron, he was going to avoid using magic from now on. He wouldn't say that to Kurt, though; he didn't want to worry him.

"I'm only looking through these books to see if I can find something…” Kurt licked his lips and looked nervous, "Something to help your hand."

Blaine had his left hand tucked partially under his thigh, he lifted it up now. "I care less about my hand than I do about Helen." Blaine's stomach twisted, the things he'd been trying not to think about since they escaped Saffron were starting to creep in on him.

"Helen?" Kurt prompted, sitting up on an elbow to look at him better.

"We just left her there, I mean I don't see what else we could have done," Blaine's mouth felt dry, his chest heavy with guilt, "But she… she deserved better."

Kurt nodded solemnly, "We can work on both things, Blaine. Your hand and maybe a way to help Helen."

Blaine just nodded. Kurt could work on those things – he hoped Kurt would – but not him. He was too dangerous. Anyone who was like Saffron had to be dangerous, right?

Kurt kissed him and they lay next to each other for a while longer, Blaine finally getting what he wanted, to hold Kurt and kiss him until his lips were numb. Eventually though, they got up to eat a little more and Blaine found Kurt had plugged in his phone to charge. Blaine picked it up to see several missed calls from Andrew. 

"Crap! He'd left Andrew high and dry again. And he even had a call from his mother and two missed calls from Cooper."

Which was odd really.
"As much as I would rather stay in a sex induced bliss bubble with you," Blaine said, and Kurt snorted out a laugh. "I think I need to make some phone calls."

Kurt sighed, "Agreed, I should call work and my dad. I usually call him a couple times a week and he and I haven't spoken since you came pouring though a magic mirror and flipping my life upside down."

"In a good way."

"Yes, of course!" Kurt kissed him with a loud smack and got up to retrieve his own phone, and Blaine watched him with a smile on his face. *God he was so in love,* Kurt scrounging around looking for his mislaid underwear was the most adorable thing he'd ever seen.

Blaine slipped on a pair of blue jeans and a t-shirt before going outside to make his calls, leaving Kurt some privacy to talk to his father and Nathan Britton. Blaine smiled when he found that he wasn't even jealous of Nathan anymore. Kurt *loved him,* what did Nathan Britton matter?

Nether his mom nor Cooper picked up, but he did get in touch with Andrew, who seemed relieved that Blaine was okay, but he didn't want too many details as to what was going on.

"Is it over? That's all I need to know." Andrew asked, "Whatever is going on with that house? I stopped by this morning looking for you and it felt… different."

Blaine was surprised by that, "Different how?"

"You should go back and see for yourself, but it felt… normal."

"Normal?"

"And Callaway Place has never felt normal."

Blaine took that information in; he knew he was going to have to go back there, to his Aunt's house, to *his* house. He wasn't sure how he felt about that. "All the mirrors are broken." Blaine said, "Um… I could use a hand cleaning the place up a bit."

"All the… what did you do?"

"I thought you didn't want to know."

"Yeah, yeah. You're right about that. Let me know when you're ready to get to work, I can bring my truck to cart away the rubbish."

"Thanks, Andrew, really. Thank you."

"Yeah, yeah kid." Andrew repeated, "You know I'm here for you."

Blaine sighed as he hung up, running his glass hand through his hair, he would need to get a glove for that quickly. There was no way to explain to anyone how his skin had turned to glass – he didn't want to explain it. He didn't want to think about it. He hoped Kurt would find a way to fix it but… Blaine took a deep breath… as long as Kurt didn't hate it, he could live with it if he had to.

Blaine walked back into the hotel room just as Kurt was finishing his phone call.

"I have to go back to Callaway Place-"

"I have to get back to New York-"
Blaine and Kurt said at the same moment.

Blaine blinked. New York. Of course. Kurt had to get back to New York – to his job. To his home. Kurt lived in New York and Blaine… Blaine was unsure where he lived. California or Maine, but it wasn't New York.

"Why?" Kurt asked, raising from the bed where he'd been sitting.

"Why go back to Callaway Place?"

"Yes."

"It's… it's my aunt's home and it's my responsibility now and I need to make sure it is safe."

"It should be," Kurt said, thinking it over. "Any dark magic that was there is probably gone now. Snuffed out with Saffron."

Blaine grimaced and his stomach tightened at the mention of Saffron, and he sat back down at the end of the bed, playing with the edge of the comforter, and Kurt came to sit next to him.

"I was hoping you'd come back to New York with me..." Kurt said softly, "For a little while at least."

Blaine's heart leaped in his chest and he looked up to meet Kurt's eyes. "I would love to."

Kurt smiled sadly, "But?"

"But let me get things squared away here first. The house needs a fresh coat of paint and all the broken mirrors swept out of it. And... I have to decide if I'm going to sell it. And once you get back to New York, you'll be catching up on work, right?"

"Yeah." Kurt shrugged as if he didn't want to admit that Blaine was right.

"So I'm going to come see you in New York as soon as I tie everything up here. Deal?"

"It's just... don't want this to be over. I mean I do... the bad, horrible, terrifying parts... but it's so sudden. We were just in a magical fairy realm Blaine, and now you're talking about getting on with life as if nothing happened? And... and what was all of this for? How can life be the same now?"

"It isn't," Blaine said simply as a smile tugged on his lips, "It's completely different now because... well, we got each other out of this, didn't we?"

"Blaine."

"And that's worth everything to me."

"God, you are so sappy."

Blaine bumped shoulders with him, "And you love it."

"I really do." Kurt smiled, "I love you."

"I love you too."

Blaine leaned in for the kiss, wanting to just leave his responsibilities behind and follow Kurt to New York right then. But he couldn't do that. He'd come here for a reason, and he felt like he owed Helen
even more now.

"I'll come back to Callaway Place with you," Kurt said, breaking the kiss, "Just to make sure nothing there is... dangerous. I wouldn't be able to get a flight out until tomorrow anyway.

"Okay," Blaine quickly agreed, he wanted to put off saying goodbye to Kurt for as long as possible. "Could we maybe go shopping for this first?" Blaine lifted his glass hand and wiggled the fingers. The sight still made his stomach lurch and he'd feel better with it covered up.

"Shopping? You think I'm going to turn down shopping?" Kurt winked at him, "Never."

Blaine wondered what was wrong with their planning skills as they pulled up to Callaway Place that evening. They seemed to always arrive as the sun was setting. He looked down at his left hand, which was now covered in a thin black leather glove. He'd have to tell people he'd been injured, burned maybe, and that's why he kept it covered. Kurt must have caught on to his thoughts because he reached for the gloved hand, lacing his fingers with Blaine's.

"You okay?"

"Yes. Fine."

Kurt smiled encouragingly at him and nodded towards the mansion.

Blaine's shoulders were tense and his heart beating a little faster than it should as soon as they walked into the house, but then -- Blaine relaxed. It was immediate; the change in the atmosphere was almost palpable. It hadn't felt this good to be at Callaway Place since his first summer here with Aunt Helen. It didn't feel heavy or dark or even magical. It felt... it felt like Aunt Helen's home.

"Oh. Wow," Kurt said, looking around. "Yeah... this is... good."

"What is?"

"Can you feel it? I don't think I realized how much dark magic was in the air until now because it's... gone."

"It feels light now. Weightless."

Kurt nodded, he turned to look down at the crystal doorknob of the front door, "Still whispers of magic here though."

"Good magic?"

"Yes."

Good, that was fine. Blaine didn't have a problem with good magic, what Kurt had was good magic. Blaine just wasn't going to mess with it himself.

They walked around the first floor, Blaine making plans; sweeping out the glass, discarding or selling the frames -- since Kurt assured him that without the glass they were completely magic-less -- he'd have to vacuum the carpets thoroughly. Blaine knew this was all good. Saffron's dark magic seemed to be gone, and he was developing a plan for the house in the back of his mind... the historical society might want it... but still he felt anxious, unsettled. He felt off in his own skin.

Kurt had been right, this was all happening suddenly. Kurt was about to leave for New York and
then Blaine would be left with Callaway Place and maybe Saffron's dark magic was gone, but what about Blaine's dark magic? What if there was something in Blaine's DNA that made him like Saffron? The first time he used magic, he'd killed someone, even if it had been self-defense. What if he was on a slippery slope to becoming a person who hurt others with magic? He already had the creepy glass hand, what if he was the next Callaway villain?

Blaine let go of Kurt's hand, stuffing both of his hands into his pockets as they made their way upstairs. Kurt gave him a look but didn't say anything about it.

The thing was Blaine needed Kurt. He *loved* Kurt, but he also needed him. He needed his goodness to balance out whatever was inside Blaine that made him like Saffron. And Kurt was about to go back to New York. What if he got to New York and away from all of this confusion and decided he didn't want Blaine after all? What if he remembered what a mess Blaine had made of things in the first place when he chose to stop talking to Kurt?

Blaine was spiraling. He knew he did this sometimes. Got so stuck in his head that he stopped being reasonable. But even though he knew it was happening, he couldn't stop it.

He walked into his bedroom and saw the glass mirror pieces on the floor.

"What if the mirrors keep coming back?" He said suddenly.

"What do you mean?"

"Like this one. I broke it six years ago and the glass just keeps coming back? What if this place is still cursed? What if it is as cursed as I am?"

"Wha-"

"Kurt, what am I going to do?"

"Blaine cal-"

"I don't want magic. I don't want to be like Saffron. I... *I don't want to hurt anyone.*"

"Okay, you woul-"

Blaine waited for Kurt to continue, biting his own tongue not to interrupt him this time. But Kurt stopped talking and was looking behind Blaine's shoulder as a smile spread across his face.

Blaine turned to see what he was staring at and his breath caught in his throat. The mirror. The mirror above the mantle, the one he'd covered with a sheet his first summer in Bluespruce, the one he'd spent countless hours talking to Kurt through, the one he'd so recklessly thrown a book at in anger, the one that had been broken for six years – the shattered pieces reappearing on the carpet time and time again.

It was whole.

It was unbroken. The only mirror in Callaway Place gleaming and intact.

"What's happening?" Blaine asked nervously.

Kurt just took a step towards the mirror, still smiling sweetly. "Blaine... it was you."

"What... what was me?"
"This mirror is different than the other mirrors here. They all broke because of Saffron's magic, but you broke this one and you kept bringing the mirror pieces back."

"I didn't."

"Not physically." Kurt explained, "With your magic."

"I don't understand."

"Blaine, just now, you put this mirror back together; as you were freaking out, the pieces just... fit themselves back in place."

"But... how?"

Kurt laughed softly in amazement and reached for Blaine's hand. "Did you regret it? Did you regret breaking this mirror?"

"Immediately."

"And that's why the pieces wouldn't go away; before you even knew you had magic, you were trying to repair the mistake you made."

"I-" Blaine opened his mouth and shut it again not knowing what to say, "So it has dark magic in it now?"

Kurt's smile turned into a frown and his eyebrows bunched up, "Of course not. Why would you think that?"

"Because my magic has to be dark magic."

"What on earth are you talking about."

"Saffron said I was like her, enough so that the fairies would have taken me in her place. That... that can't be a good thing."

Kurt's eyes grew round, "Oh my god, Blaine."

"I shouldn't have anything to do with mag-"

"No! Stop." Kurt was smiling again, "You're ridiculous." He started laughing and Blaine couldn't understand what was funny about any of this. "Blaine. Never in my life have I met someone less likely to be evil. You are... you aren't dark, your magic isn't dark. You are good. You are the best person I've ever known." Kurt sighed as his laughter died down. "Seriously, Blaine, that's not how you are like Saffron."

"Then how?"

"I don't know? Because you're both passionate? Because you're both determined? Because you both have strong magic? Hell, because you both have freakishly gorgeous golden eyes? It could be anything, but it is not because you are dark, Blaine. Please believe me."

"But the fairy magic was willing to take me in her place, and my hand..."

"I get the impression the fairies are kind of dicks, Blaine." Kurt said seriously, "I'm not saying they deserved Saffron, but honestly, if they were willing to take someone who is as good, and kind and gentle as you..." Kurt walked up to him as he spoke, "Then they're dicks." Kurt brushed his
knuckles down Blaine's cheek. "Do you love me?"

"God yes, Kurt."

"Do you trust me?"

"Yes."

"Then take my word on this. You are not some dangerous dark witch. I promise you."

Blaine nodded, a knot forming in his throat.

"Come here." Kurt tugged on his hand until they were both standing in front of the mirror.

"Not everyone with magic is a diviner, they can't all hear magic the way I do, but I think if you really
listen, you could hear this; your magic created it after all."

"What are you talking about?"

"Close your eyes."

Blaine followed Kurt's instructions.

"Steady your breathing."

Blaine nodded and concentrated on his breathing.

"Now listen."

Blaine took a deep breath and listened with all of his might.

"What do you hear?"

"Is that… laughter?"

"Yes, what else?"

"It's…" Blaine's eyes snapped open and his heart swelled as he heard laughter and the distant joyous
conversation of two young boys from the mirror. "Kurt. That's us."

"Yes."

"It's us as kids."

"It is."

"But how?" Blaine's mind was running a mile a minute; he could hardly keep up with what was
happening.

Kurt took Blaine's hand and laid it over his heart, "When powerful magic meets powerful emotions,
magic sometimes gets imbedded in an object. Your magic, Blaine, our friendship… our love. It made
that magic; you took a happy, beautiful memory from our past and infused it into this mirror."

Blaine swallowed, taking that all in.

"Now, please try to stand there and tell me it is dark magic." Kurt's eyes were shining and Blaine
could only shake his head.
"Do you believe me?"

"Yes." Blaine finally answered before crashing their lips together, the laughter and joyfulness from a lifetime of friendship ringing around them.

Kurt was the one to call the White Pine Cone Inn and cancel their reservation for that evening. Blaine was the one to pull Kurt onto the canopied bed of his childhood room and start lavishing Kurt's skin with kisses.

There was nothing to fear in Callaway Place anymore, and only new good memories to make there.

Kurt was naked and sedated and happy, Blaine's almost overly warm body curled around his. Kurt was combing through Blaine's hair, brushing the curls out to a soft fuzzy mess and staring up at the silk canopy as Blaine breathed heavily in sleep. Kurt was about to drift off himself when the ringtone of Blaine's phone startled him. It didn't wake Blaine, though; Blaine slept like a log. Kurt reached over him to the nightstand to see the name 'Cooper' appear on the caller ID.


"Hmm."

"Blaine, your brother is calling."

"Hm? Oh. On the phone?"

"No, Blaine, telepathically. Yes, on the phone." He handed the phone to Blaine and gave him a peck on the cheek.

"Umh, Cooper?" Blaine answered the phone groggily and Kurt caught himself smiling at Blaine like a fool.

Blaine got out of bed with a yawn, "I'll take it in the hall," he whispered to Kurt, "You go back to sleep."

Blaine stopped on his way to the door, "You don't have to be short with me Cooper, I did try to call you and mom back this afternoon."

Kurt hugged his knees to his chest and watched as Blaine's face morphed from tired to confused to… to something Kurt couldn't quiet read.

Blaine didn't make it to the hall, too consumed by what Cooper was saying, "What do you… I don't understand."

Blaine's face went a little pale and Kurt's stomach tightened with worry.

"Oh my god. No. Yes. Of course. I'll be on the next flight to L.A."

Blaine was turning around in a circle as if he wasn't sure what he was looking for. "No, you… you wouldn't believe me if I told you. Okay. Yeah. See you soon."

There was a pause and Blaine glanced furtively at Kurt, his cheeks growing pink, "Yes, Cooper, love you too," he said hurriedly before hanging up, and despite Kurt's worry, he suddenly had the urge to meet Blaine's family and know everything about them.

"What's wrong?" Kurt said, getting out of bed and grabbing Blaine's suitcase from underneath, as
that seemed what Blaine was looking for.

They both started folding Blaine's clothing and packing it.

"I have to get home. Right away."

"Okay, I'll pack for you if you need to go book a flight, but Blaine, can you tell me what's going on?"

Blaine paused in his movements and looked up at Kurt with wide eyes. "Aunt Helen hasn't put a coherent sentence together in six years."

"Okay..."

Blaine's lips twitched up in a tentative smile. "And now she is talking about fairies and magic books and Kurt, she's asking for me."

"You mean..."

"I think... *I think she's back.*"

Kurt dropped the shirt he was folding and threw his arms around Blaine "Oh thank god!" Kurt didn't understand it, and he was shoving the fact that Blaine was going to California when Kurt had to get back to New York to the back of his mind. Because what mattered now was the smile on Blaine's face and the fact that his aunt may actually be recovering.

Everything else would have to work itself out. As Kurt held Blaine in his arms, he had to believe it would – because this was certain, Kurt loved Blaine and *Blaine loved him* and now that Kurt had Blaine back in his life, he was going never to let him go again.
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

AN: Here we are at the very end of this story, I can’t believe it! I so enjoyed writing this and sharing it will all of you and I hope you’ve enjoyed coming along with me on this journey.
One more time I want to thank the best beta in the world, I really don't know if I'd still be writing fanfic if it weren't for Oleanna – she really is amazing.

And thank you to all of you who read, and shared and rebloged and commented. You are why I do this!

Enjoy.

"There is no real ending. It's just the place where you stop the story." — Frank Herbert

January 2019 – Bluespruce, Maine

"Blaine!"

Blaine looked up from where he was kneeling on the ground, wiping his brow with the back of his arm. He'd been working all day, moving furniture, unpacking boxes, throwing out garbage. Now he was in Helen's room putting together a new entertainment center for the TV that was being delivered tomorrow.

"Blaine, sweetie!"

He had heard someone calling him; Blaine stood with a slight groan, he'd been doing manual labor nearly non-stop for a day and a half, and hurried into the drawing room where the call had come from.

Aunt Helen was standing in front of the fireplace lifting a heavy framed picture over the mantel.

"What are you doing!" Blaine rushed forward, taking the painting from her and hanging it on the hook. "You are going to hurt yourself," he scolded as he turned to his aunt.

Helen shrugged with a smile on her face, "I can't leave all the work for you." She straightened her glasses and brushed hair out of her face. Her hair was more gray than black these days, and her frame thinner than it once was, but Blaine noted that she looked remarkably healthy, eyes dancing with life and an amused smile on her lips.

"You can leave all the heavy lifting to me and Cooper though."

"Cooper went out to grab us lunch and you were busy putting that contraption together in my room."

"Of course Cooper left to get lunch." Cooper was meant to be helping, and while he'd worked hard
for approximately three hours yesterday, it had been a challenge to get him to commit to one project at a time after that.

Helen placed a hand on Blaine's arm, "I know what you're thinking, but Cooper is a hard worker, he just…"

"Gets distracted?" Blaine finished for her with a knowing smile.

"And has the tendency to get me distracted," she lowered her voice conspiratorially, "I thought with him on an errand I might actually get some things done. He has the pent up energy of a four year old."

Blaine laughed, it was true, Cooper was always eager to help but didn't have the attention span for an all-day project.

"Besides, this is our drawing room," Helen said with a smile, looking around the cozy and familiar room, "Let Cooper finish the IKEA disaster in my bedroom when he gets back, you help me with this."

Blaine smiled as tears prickled his eyes. He wasn't going to cry, not on this happy day.

He had cried. He cried over two months ago when he'd arrived in L.A. from Bluespruce and quickly made his way to the home Aunt Helen had lived in for the past six years. He'd cried because, for the first time in half a dozen years, when he looked at the woman lying in that bed, he'd seen his Aunt Helen, her quick smile and sharp eyes, and her sweet voice as she'd held out a hand towards him and said, "Don't cry sweet boy everything is okay now."

There had been hours of conversation, and a few discoveries as well. Yes, Aunt Helen's mind had been trapped in the fairy realm, but it seemed that as soon as Saffron had turned to glass, she'd been released and had awakened back here in L.A. "I suppose the fairies had their vengeance." She'd shuddered as she'd said it and Blaine clenched his glass hand and nodded.

Aunt Helen surprisingly wasn't turned off from magic by everything that had happened to her, "I hope I'm not as foolhardy as I once was, but Blaine, magic is in us; we can't just ignore that."

Something that came out of all of this was that Blaine learned that there had been several Callaways throughout the years with magic, and those who didn't have magic often still knew about it. His mother was an unmagical Callaway and had left Bluespruce hoping her boys would never learn anything about it. That had obviously been a failure.

They talked about Helen's magic and the fairy realm, and the good magic left at Callaway Place, and they talked about Kurt.

"Oh I do like him," Helen had said with Blaine's good hand folded in both of hers, "I always did, but he has grown into such a lovely young man. Don't let that one get away."

Blaine had ducked his head and blushed, "I don't intend to."

It took a couple of weeks to get her release from the home cleared, mostly because the doctors could not explain her sudden and complete recovery. Then it took a little time to get the legal documents prepared that said she no longer needed a legal conservator and that Callaway Place was again hers.

"You can keep it if you want." Helen generously offered Blaine, "I know you just moved in."

Blaine shook his head, Callaway Place was Aunt Helen's home and he could tell she was eager to
get back there.

"What if you take it back and I come visit you every summer like always?"

"Deal."

They'd both spent the winter holidays in L.A. and it wasn't until the New Year that Helen, Cooper and Blaine had headed off to Bluespruce. Helen was overjoyed to be home, but she'd immediately rolled up her sleeves, put her hands on her hips and declared it was high-time she had some updates done to the house.

That explained the huge TV she'd ordered for her room and the current rearranging of the drawing room. Other updates included getting "the old place" ready for tours again – "It's been too long since there were people in this house and I think it needs it," Aunt Helen had said.

Andrew was helping with some of the spotty electricals in the house; after greeting Helen with teary eyes, a tip of the hat and a, "Welcome home Ms. Helen" he'd gotten straight to work. Helen even hired Millie's granddaughter as a cook seeing that Millie was well into her retirement by now.

The house felt alive again, alive and happy.

Blaine had spent some time standing in front of the mirror in his bedroom, his eyes closed as he listened to his younger self, laughing and talking to a young Kurt. It was still the only magic he could hear in Callaway Place, but it was the most important magic to him anyway.

He and Kurt had been in constant contact since they parted ways back in October, hugging tightly and not wanting to let go as they said goodbye before catching flights to opposite sides of the country.

They texted every day and called each other regularly and made sure to have at least two Skype dates a week. Long distance relationships were hard, even if their friendship had started that way. Now that Blaine had been with Kurt face to face, being away from him was near torture. Still, it was worth it, Kurt was worth it. And Kurt understood Blaine had responsibilities that had to be taken care of.

Blaine told Kurt he'd come to New York in February for a visit, but in actuality, he had plane tickets from Bluespruce to New York City leaving two days from now. He was going to help Helen make herself at home at Callaway Place and then he was going to finally, finally go see the man he loved for the first time in months.

He and Helen spent the next half hour moving furniture around in the drawing room, moving some of the knick-knacks out to other rooms while Helen brought in some more updated décor. Most of the house Helen was leaving in true historic form for the tours, but for this room and her bedroom, she was updating as spaces that tourists wouldn't have access to. Blaine thought it was a great idea, a fresh start, appreciating the past without clinging to it.

"I have returned victorious with burgers and fries!" Cooper called loudly from the foyer and Blaine and Helen shot each other smiles as the door slammed shut and they could hear Cooper stomping snow off his boots.

They made their way to Cooper and Helen greeted him with a, "My hero," before they all went to the kitchen to eat.

The kitchen was warm and inviting, bright winter sun streaming in through the windows, and Blaine couldn't help but think of Kurt as he ate a greasy cheeseburger and dipped his fries in ketchup –
Blaine remembered them making pancakes, bumping hips as they did the dishes and feet brushing under this very table. *God he missed him.*

Blaine's phone rang and he fished it out of his pocket to see it was a call from Kurt. He laughed a little, Kurt was thinking of him too, "It's Kurt," he said as way of an explanation as he got up from the table to take the call back in the dining room.

"What? Was sexting not enough for him!" Cooper called out and Blaine heard Helen scold him. Blaine just smiled into the phone as he answered.

"Kurt."

"Blaine! How is everything? Is Callaway Place doing alright, anything strange?"

They had talked last night after a long day of work; when Blaine had fallen into bed in his old bedroom, he'd stared at the mirror as he told Kurt that all was well at Callaway Place, but apparently Kurt needed more up-to-date progress reports.

"Nothing strange. We've just been busy unpacking a lot of Helen's new things and rearranging rooms and generally cleaning the place out. Cooper hasn't been here in ages and he is fascinated and sidetracked by every little thing."

"And Helen?"

"She is happy. The happiest I've seen her in… I don't know how long."

"Oh Blaine." Kurt sighed from the other end of the phone, "I'm so happy to hear that. I want to visit there you know. See her and the house again. See them together like they should be."

"I've been thinking about that," Blaine said, chewing his lip nervously, "What if you came with me this summer when I visited?"

"Isn't that your special time with Helen? Isn't that tradition?"

"I think…" Blaine chuckled a little nervously, "It'd be okay to start a new tradition."

He heard Kurt's breath of excitement from the other end, "In that case I'd love to."

Blaine could picture it, every summer here with Kurt, Helen showing them the sights, sharing his old bedroom together. Kurt telling Helen all about the magic he could hear in the house, the three of them practicing simple spells together. He loved the idea. "I miss you, Kurt," Blaine said, his heart swelling in his chest.

"God Blaine, I miss you too, but we just have to wait until next month, right?"

Blaine smiled so hard his cheeks hurt thinking about the plane tickets he had upstairs. "Yeah, next month."

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**January 2019 – New York City, New York**

Kurt had thrown himself into his work when he'd gotten back to New York. Not only because he was behind, but because it was the only way to keep himself from going mad with worry. Worry about Aunt Helen and her recovery, worry about Blaine and his newfound magic, worry about Blaine and his poor glass hand, worry about Blaine living nearly 3,000 miles away from him. Yes,
most of his thoughts and concerns were of Blaine. It couldn't be helped.

Kurt sat at his polished mahogany desk, day after day burying himself in work, as his eyes kept drifting to the picture sitting next to his laptop.

It was of him and Blaine smiling widely, cheek-to-cheek, the Bluespruce Farmer's Market behind them. A quick selfie they'd taken while shopping for spell ingredients. Twelve years of friendship and all he had was this one photograph. He'd be able to remedy that eventually, but for now, that picture meant the world to him.

Overall, Kurt was happy to be back in New York. He loved New York and he and Blaine spoke all the time. It wasn't like before when Blaine had disappeared from his life without a trace. This time, it seemed that Blaine, like him, couldn't bear to go a single day without talking. Besides, if Blaine ever did try to ghost on him again, Kurt knew how to find Blaine now and would hunt him down if need be. In the end, though, Kurt was determined to make a long-distance relationship work. Of course he would, because it was Blaine and being with Blaine was the most important thing.

They couldn't do long-distance for forever, though. Eventually, they were going to have to do something about the country between them. Kurt was determined that when Blaine came to visit in February, they would discuss it. He'd move if he had to – there were plenty of great museums and auction houses in L.A. – and Kurt loved New York, but he loved Blaine more. He could learn to love L.A., too.

For now, though, Kurt was going to have to suffer through the next twenty-three days without Blaine.

They'd already gone two months, Kurt could hold out another 20-something days! Right? Blaine was in Bluespruce with his aunt and that was important. Kurt would be patient, even if every day, he missed him more – he missed Blaine's voice, and his smile, and the way his hair got more unruly as the day went on, and he missed his kind eyes and sweet kiss and… and he was becoming as sappy as Blaine!

Kurt got up from his desk with a groan of frustration; it was after five and he really wasn't going to get any more work done today anyway. He started packing up his things when his phone chimed. It was from Blaine.

"Are you still at work?"

Kurt skipped texting him back in favor of calling him, "I'm still at work but heading out," Kurt said as Blaine answered the phone. "Do you have time to talk?"

"Uh, yeah," Blaine said, but there was something off about his voice, something jittery or full of excitement. "But do something for me first?"

Kurt paused by the door to his office, "Okay?"

"Go look out your window."

"What?"

"You're the third window from the left on the second floor, right?"

"I am..." Kurt answered, confused, but he made his way to the window, "What am I looking for? What have you done?"
"Look down."

"I am looking down b-" Kurt's stomach flipped over and his heart fluttered, "Oh god. Blaine!"

There, standing on the sidewalk outside of Britton's was a curly-haired man in a bowtie holding a bouquet of red roses.

"You… how. You're... here!" Kurt stumbled over his words and he heard Blaine laugh through the phone.

"If you aren't done with work, I can wait."

"No! I'm on my way down!" Kurt said, tearing his eyes away from Blaine and rushing out of his office, just barely remembering to pull on his coat as he left.

He almost ran smack into Jane on his way down the stairs.

"Kurt, be careful, you're going to break your neck!" She chided with a smile, and he even heard Blaine telling him to slow down through the phone.

"Blaine. Blaine is here."

Jane beamed at him and quickly moved out of the way, "What are you standing here talking to me for? Go!"

"I like her." Blaine's voice came through the speaker as Kurt rushed past Jane and through the marbled entryway and finally out onto the sidewalk and the cold New York air. He hung up his phone and stuffed it in his pocket when he saw Blaine.

Kurt ran to him and dove into his arms and Blaine laughed in his ear and held him tightly.

"I don't know what you are doing here," Kurt said, still holding Blaine tightly, "But god, I'm glad you are." The stems from the roses were poking into Kurt's back, but he didn't care, it felt like coming home to have Blaine in his arms.

Blaine finally pulled back, just enough so that they could look at each other, "I wanted to surprise you. Helen is all set in Bluespruce and Cooper is still there with her and I… I couldn't wait until February, Kurt."

Blaine's cheeks were rosey with the cold January air, and his eyes soft and earnest. Kurt looped his arms around the back of Blaine's scarf-covered neck before leaning in to kiss him.

Lips cold, but perfect against each other, and Kurt sighed, all the worry and longing he'd been holding onto for months released from his body.

"I love you," Blaine whispered against his lips.

"I love you too."

They pulled apart reluctantly.

"Do you have plans for the evening?"

Kurt arched a brow, "I was going to call my boyfriend."

"What if you let your boyfriend take you out to dinner?" Blaine said, handing Kurt the roses, "And
you can wish him luck on his interview tomorrow."

"I'd love to- wait, what?"

"Uh yeah," Blaine rubbed the back of his neck shyly. "I have a job interview with a non-profit children's organization tomorrow. I've already interviewed over the phone; I think I have a good chance of getting the position. I mean, if I'm going to move to New York, it would help to have a job here."

"I... you..." Kurt was rarely at a complete loss for words, but right now, he couldn't find any. He felt tears pooling in his eyes.

"Kurt! Oh no, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have sprung this all on you; it's too much."

"Don't apologize," Kurt said as Blaine looked like he was on the verge of happy tears himself. "I just need clarification. You're thinking of moving to New York?"

"Not thinking about it, Kurt, I am."

"But, Blaine, not for me right?" Kurt wanted this more than anything, but he couldn't let Blaine make such a huge sacrifice for him without even talking about it, "I mean you can't move away from California and your family and start a new job just for me, that could be a disaster for us down the road."

"Kurt." Blaine smiled, his voice calm, "If it were just for you, it'd be worth it. But the truth is I've always wanted to go to New York. When we used to talk about college plans and the mirror wouldn't let us say where we planned to go, I was always planning on NYU. Then everything with Helen happened and I needed to be near my family... New York got put on the backburner – but now feels like the perfect time."

Kurt nodded his head eagerly, his heart beating fast and his whole body tingling with joy, "Okay. Okay. But um... one change of plans."

Blaine's smile wavered.

"I'm taking you out to dinner. And you better not have gotten a hotel room because you're staying with me."

"I was hoping I was." Blaine smiled and leaned in for another kiss.

Later that night after having dinner and talking for hours, Kurt lay in bed curled around Blaine, skin to skin, both of them tired and perfectly happy after becoming reacquainted with one another. Kurt lifted Blaine's glass hand above them, stroking it and lacing their fingers together.

"You've been using the spell I got from Shelia every day, right?"

"Yes." Blaine nodded, "No change yet."

"She said it could take time and a lot of repetition."

"I know." Blaine squeezed Kurt softly. "Sometimes I worry it won't work and I'll be stuck with this glass hand forever."

"If it doesn't work, we'll find something else that does." Kurt turned his head, looking from Blaine's hand to his face, "While you're here, we can do the spell together, for extra strength. I have no doubt
at all that we'll find a way to fix it."

Blaine smiled softly, "It isn't the end of the world if we don't."

Kurt let go of Blaine's hand to turn on his side and better face him, "It's important to you, so I'm not giving up. Between you and me and Sheila and Helen. We're going to figure it out."

"Thank you." Blaine smiled up at him, his eyes sparkling in the dim light of the room.

"For what?"

"For always knowing what to say."

Kurt grinned back down at him.

"And when I move to New York, we can keep doing the spell together."

"Yes, we will," Kurt agreed, laying his head down on Blaine's chest and hearing Blaine's heartbeat. "When you move to New York," Kurt sighed happily and his head bounced with Blaine's chuckle. "Everything turned out pretty good in the end didn't it?" Kurt asked as Blaine trailed his fingers up and down Kurt's back.

"Being with you Kurt? Everything turned out perfectly."

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